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## THE CONTEXT OF *VQLUNDARKVIÐA*

By JOHN MCKINNEL

**M**uch recent criticism of *Vqlundarkviða* has tended to concentrate on investigation of the two archetypal stories on which its plot is based. The first of these is that of the other-world swan maiden who is married by a mortal man but subsequently leaves him; the second tells of the smith who takes vengeance for his unjust capture and maiming by murdering his oppressor's two sons and making jewellery out of their skulls, eyes and teeth; by seducing the unjust king's daughter and leaving her pregnant; and by telling the king of his revenge before flying away. Both stories are very widespread, and the study of them has been useful; but it is possible to rely too heavily on the archetypes, and occasionally they have been used to construct arguments about what the poet of *Vqlundarkviða* intended which are not supportable from the text of the poem itself. An example is Lotte Motz's tendency (Motz 1986, 61-3) to associate the swan maiden with *Böðvildr*, the king's daughter, and thus create a genuine romantic attachment and an implied happy ending (as in the version of the story found in *Piðreks saga*). So with real gratitude to the investigators of archetype, I want to turn back to two more traditional questions:

1. What can be said of the provenance and date of the poem?
2. What is distinctive in the way this poet tells the story?

### I

The once-ferocious competing claims about the poem's place of origin have long been in abeyance, perhaps more through exhaustion than solution. Most opinion has placed the poet in Norway, supposing that he had either an English source (Bugge, Jón Helgason) or an Old Saxon one (Jan de Vries, Schröder), though Ásgeir Blöndal Magnússon has, fairly lightheartedly, suggested that the poet may have been an Icelander. Not all of the elements which Bugge saw as Old English in origin can be accepted as such, but the following do seem significant:

1. *alvitr unga<r>* (*Vkv.* 1, 3, 10. In 1, 3, the plural *ungar* is required

by the sense, but the scribe mechanically uses the singular form of the phrase which is correct in 10; this may suggest that he did not understand it). In Old Norse verse the word *alvitr* occurs only here and at *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* 26, where it is used of a valkyrie and may be derived from the use here. In *Vǫlundarkviða* it is misunderstood by the prose editor as a proper name, though he does call the swan maidens valkyries. The corresponding Old English word *ælwiht* only appears in *Beowulf* 1500 (1941, 56), where it means 'alien creatures' and refers to the monsters swimming in Grendel's mere; but the form of the second element of *alvitr* corresponds to OE *wiht* rather than ON *vættr*, and consequently the prose editor took it to mean 'All-wise' and interpreted it as a proper name. There is no cognate word in Old Saxon.

2. *ørloq drýgia* (*Vkv.* 1, 3). Both words are common separately in Old Norse, but the whole phrase is paralleled only in the OE *Judgement Day I* 29: *orleg dreogeð*, where it is used of a soul in Hell. This parallel may be fortuitous, but if it is significant, it suggests the meaning 'to undergo their fate' rather than 'to experience battle' (for the latter, see Jón Helgason 1962, 55-6), since the sense 'battle' cannot apply to a soul in Hell (further see Crozier 1987, 6-10). In Old Saxon, *orlegas* means 'battle' at *Heliand* 3697, but the sense 'fate' must also have existed, since *orlaghuuila* (*Heliand* 3355) means 'fated time (of death)'. The phrase as a whole does not appear in Old Saxon.

3. *við gim fastan* (*Vkv.* 5). The simplex *gim* is not found elsewhere in Old Norse verse, and seems to have been misunderstood by the scribe, who made of it *gimfastan*, a single word which fails to make any obvious sense. In Old English, *gim* is the usual word for 'jewel', and occurs in a number of contexts comparable to the gold rings being described here, e.g. *Gim sceal on hringe standan* (*Maxims II* 22-3); *gold and gim* (*Vespasian Psalter* 118: 127; 1965, 123). The phrase should then be translated 'to/round the firmly-held gem' and scanned as a C-Type half-line (Type 2C1, Bliss 1962, 31). The word *gim* does not appear in Old Saxon.

4. *bast* (*Vkv.* 7), and possibly also *bestisíma* (12), where the manuscript form *bestibýrsíma* is meaningless. *Bast* is not found elsewhere in Old Norse verse with the sense 'rope', but cf. OE *Judges* 15: 13, *mid twam bæstenum rapum* (Crawford 1922, 411). The other word-element used for 'rope' in *Vǫlundarkviða* is *lind-*, in the compound *lindbauga* (5); *lind-* does not normally mean 'rope' in either Old

English or Old Norse, and comparison is usually made with ON *lindi* 'belt', but cf. also the OE *Épinal-Erfurt Glossary* 1017 (Pheifer 1974, 53) where Latin *tilio*, 'lime tree', is glossed *bæst vel lind*. Neither word appears in Old Saxon.

5. *álfa ljóði* (*Vkv.* 10). *Ljóði* is not found elsewhere in Old Norse verse, and is commonly explained as being derived from *lýðr*, 'people', and meaning 'leader'; however, cf. OE *leode*, plural *leodan* (e.g. *ASC* I, 136, 194-5, under the years 1006, 1065, where the clear meaning is 'people'); and the common OS *liudi*, 'people' (plural, e.g. *Heliand* 101, 187). These parallels suggest that the phrase should be translated 'citizen of the elves', or merely 'elf'; but other evidence that *Vǫlundr* was regarded as an elf comes only from England, see no. 6 below.

6. *vísi álfa* (*Vkv.* 13). This phrase is clearly related to the previous one, and has usually been translated in the same way, though de Vries (1952, 189) argues for derivation from an unrecorded Old Saxon phrase meaning 'wise elf'. There is no evidence to support this directly, but with the alliteration *Vǫlundr: vísi* in this line cf. the OE *Metres of Boethius* 10. 33:

Hwær sint nu þæs wisan      Welandes ban?

(and see also lines 35, 42, where the alliterating phrase is repeated). Here, the usual translation has been 'Where now are the bones of Weland the Wise?'; but *wisan* here could be either the weak masculine genitive singular of *wis*, 'wise' or the genitive singular of the weak noun *wisa*, 'leader'. The Old Norse phrase is equally ambiguous, and could equally mean 'wise one of the elves'; but at all events, it seems sensible to interpret the phrase in the same way in both languages. If the meaning is taken to be 'wise', no evidence remains in the poem (as opposed to the prose of the 13th-century Icelandic editor) that *Vǫlundr* is a king or aristocrat of any kind (unless we take his white neck as an indication of this, see below).

What is unavoidable, however, is the tradition that *Vǫlundr* is of elvish origin, and this is elsewhere found only in Middle English, in Laȝamon's *Brut* 10,544-5 (1963-78, II 550-1), where Arthur's mailshirt has been made by an elvish smith called Wygar, father of Widia; the son's name shows that the father was once Weland, the traditional father of Widia (see e.g. *Waldere* II, 4, 9).

7. *naudir* (*Vkv.* 11), used with the sense 'restraints' (or, less likely, 'fetters') is found in Old Norse only here and in *Sigrdrifumál* 1, where it must mean 'fetters'; but if the meaning in *Vkv.* is 're-

strains', the sense 'fetters' is unsupported elsewhere and may derive from a misunderstanding of *Vǫlundarkviða*. The sense here has been debated (see Hill 1983, 43; Stephens 1969, 371-4), but is apparently the same as in OE *Deor* 5-6:

sippan hine Niðhad      on nede legde,  
swoncre seonobende,      on syllan monn,

where the reference is to the same incident in the Weland/*Vǫlundr* story. OS *niud* appears only in the sense 'necessity', e.g. *Heliand* 182.

8. *iarnasteina* (*Vkv.* 25, 35). This word appears in Old Norse verse only here and in *Guðrúnarkviða I* 18 and *Guðrúnarkviða III* 9, in both of which it is used in a vague way to describe a rich and exotic jewel; both may be derived from *Vǫlundarkviða*. OE *eorcnanstan* appears in *Elene* 1024 and five other instances, in one of which, *Psalm Gloss C* 118: 127 (Wildhagen 1910, 316), it glosses Latin *topazion*; the word does not appear in Old Saxon.

9. *um sofnæði* (*Vkv.* 28). This metrical type of single-stress half-line (Bliss's d1, in instances consisting of a single prefixed verb) is found in Eddic verse only here and in *Þrymskviða* 1, but is not uncommon in Old English verse, cf. *Beowulf* 2619, *Dream of the Rood* 94, and seventeen instances in Cynewulf's poems, e.g. *Elene* 563 (see Kuhn 1939, 232-4; Bliss 1962, 30).

10. *barni aukin* (*Vkv.* 36). *Aukin* is not found elsewhere in Old Norse verse in the sense 'pregnant', but it is a common meaning in Old English, cf. especially *Deor* 11, referring to this story, also *Christ* 38, etc. OS *ocan* is rare in the sense 'pregnant', but appears at *Heliand* 193.

11. *níta* (*Vkv.* 37). This word has not been satisfactorily explained, but could be a variant of ON *njóta* influenced by OE *nyttian*, *nittian*, 'to possess, experience, have the use of' (for an example with the vowel *i*, see Whitelock 1930, 90, no. 34, l. 29).

Some of this evidence seems strong, while other parts of it are extremely uncertain, but taken as a whole it amounts to a strong case for English influence of some kind on the vocabulary and (in one instance) the metre of *Vǫlundarkviða*. In theory, this might be accounted for by any one of four explanations:

1. Translation from an English source.
2. The use of English vocabulary by a Scandinavian poet to give an impression of the exotic.



3. Composition in a dialect area influenced by Old English.
4. Composition in Scandinavia by an Englishman.

However, the last does not seem likely, particularly since composition in a language which is not one's own is much more difficult in verse than in prose. The use of English to give a flavour of the exotic seems at first sight a more attractive possibility; it might be analogous to the deliberate use of Norse words in such Old English poems as *The Battle of Brunanburh* 35 (*cneor*) and *The Battle of Maldon* 149 (*dreng*, see Robinson 1976, 25-40). But two things tell against it as applied to *Völundarkviða*:

1. If it were the case, we should expect the English-influenced vocabulary to be used very selectively. It might give a suitable air of mystery to the swan maidens and to *Völundr's* elvish origins, perhaps also to the jewellery, but it would hardly seem appropriate to apply it to a rope, a girl falling asleep before being seduced, or her unwanted pregnancy.
2. If this was the intention, the poet has failed to avoid the danger of being misunderstood by Scandinavian audiences; for quite a number of the probable instances of Old English influence have led to misunderstanding by the prose editor or the scribes (*alvitr*, *gim*, *bestisíma*, and possibly *nauðir*, *íviðgjarnra* (see below) and *níta*).

We could only maintain this view, therefore, if we also thought that the poet was in some respects incompetent, and every poem is entitled to the most favourable interpretation that the evidence will support.

This leaves two possibilities. But there are in fact three grounds for thinking that *Völundarkviða* is not a direct translation from an Old English source:

1. Considering the close relationship between the two languages, there is a surprisingly large proportion of lines (42 out of 158, or 27 per cent) whose alliteration cannot be derived from Old English, either because Old English lacks the cognate words to support the alliteration (14 cases), or because the Old English cognate word has a different and unsuitable sense or usage (12 cases), or would not alliterate (4 cases), or because the alliteration would breach the normal rules of grammatical preference in Old English (12 cases). And this is without considering half lines which would not scan at all if translated back into Old English.

It is difficult to find comparable examples of poetry translated from one early Germanic language into another, but one un-

doubted example is the short passage of the Old English *Genesis B* whose Old Saxon original survives (*Heliant und Genesis* 1984, 240-3). This has 26 lines, of which 20 have all alliterating words directly derived from the Old Saxon; five have the same alliterating sound but have one of the two or three alliterating stress-words altered (but one of these, *Genesis B* 809, where OE *forst* stands for OS *forð*, may be due to scribal error in either manuscript). One Old English line is without an Old Saxon original, but no Old Saxon line is omitted from the Old English. The proportion of alliteration which is the same is therefore about 86 per cent. Admittedly, the passage is a very short one, but it does suggest that if *Vǫlundarkviða* is a translation, its poet must have treated his Old English original with a great deal of freedom. And if that is so, it is strange that he has retained several words which his audience were likely to misunderstand.

2. Two of the points at which Old English influence is most prominent would not themselves be capable of being translated back into equally satisfactory Old English verse:

a) The phrase *alvitr unga<r>* (1, 3, 10). In Old English this would be \**ælwihthe geonge*, where the two words would not alliterate with each other. The alliteration of the whole line would still stand in each case, but this is clearly an important set phrase. It would be odd for an Old English poet to compose a phrase which alliterated better in Old Norse than in his own language, and equally odd for a Norwegian to invent one which is important to the understanding of the swan maidens episode but which his audience were unlikely to understand (as the prose editor did in fact misunderstand it, treating *alvitr* as a personal name). It is only for a poet composing in a form of Norse influenced by Old English that such a phrase would be natural.

b) Even clearer is the half-line *um sofnadi* (28/4). As Kuhn points out (1939, 232-4), this type of half-line, made up of a single prefixed verb, is distinctively Old English. But the poet of *Vǫlundarkviða* cannot have derived it from an Old English original, because the OE verb *swefan*, 'to fall asleep' is strong, and unlike *swebban*, 'to put to sleep', it never appears with a prefix; the exactly cognate OE verb *swefnian* means 'to dream', which is not an appropriate sense here. If rendered back into Old English, therefore, this half-line would become the single syllable *swæf*. The typically English metrical pattern here must therefore be due to the Norse poet himself.

3. Finally, at least one of the later misunderstandings of Old

English-influenced words (*alvitr*, and possibly also *vísi álfa* and *níta*) results not from the absence of a comparable Norse word but from the fact that the form used approximates to the Old English one. The poet could have used the familiar second element *vættir* (and the forms *viti álfa* and *njóta*, if that is what he meant). The fact that he did not do so suggests that the linguistic forms of his own speech were probably influenced by English, like his metrical practice — and this was only likely to happen in an area of England where Norse was spoken.

But if the poem comes from England, how do we account for the element of German influence on it? This certainly exists, and has even led scholars like de Vries and Schröder to assert that the poet was a Norwegian working from an Old Saxon source. The major German elements are as follows:

1. Several of the proper names: certainly *Hlqðvér*, *Níðuðr* and *Pakkráðr*, perhaps also *Njárar*, *Bqðvildr* and even *Völundr* itself (see Jón Helgason 1962, 27-9). But of course, names can easily be transferred from one language to another, and while this probably does suggest that the story first assumed something like its present form in a German, perhaps Old Saxon speaking area, it tells us nothing about the immediate origins of *Völundarkviða* itself.

2. The use of the verb form *dró* (the past tense of *draga*) in the sense 'wore' (*Vkv.* 2) reflects the usual German sense, but cannot be paralleled in either Old English or Old Norse (except in translations from Middle Low German, such as *Piðreks saga*, from which an instance is cited by Jón Helgason 1962, 56-7). This does suggest a fairly recent German source, at least for the swan maidens episode.

Four other claimed instances of Old Saxon influence seem much more doubtful:

3. *íviðgiarnra* (*Vkv.* 28, MS *ívið giarira*). The word is unique in Old Norse, which shows no similar compounds; it is therefore probably due to the influence of another Germanic language. It has been compared with OS *inuuideas gern* (*Heliand* 4628), but this shows a genitive ending to the first element, so is not strictly comparable; however, compounds without the genitive also appear in OS: *inuuidnið* (*Heliand* 4924), *inuuidrâdo* (*Heliand* 3373, and *inuuidrâdos*, *Heliand* 1755), *inuuidsprâco* (*Heliand* 5333). But Old English also shows a number of *inwit-* compounds, e.g. *inwitful*

(*Genesis A* 1273 and thirteen other instances), so the influence might equally well come from either language.

4. *vel ek*, the opening phrase of *Vkv.* 29, has been related to an alleged German *wola du* (see e.g. Jón Helgason 1962, 74), and is certainly hard to parallel convincingly in Old Norse. But in all the Old Saxon instances I have found, *uuola* is used absolutely, without a pronoun (typical is *Heliand* 4432: *uuola uualdand god*); nearest to *wola du* is *Heliand* 3024: *uuela that thu uuif habes*. OE *wel me!* is therefore as close to the expression here as the Old Saxon parallels (e.g. *wel me*, *wel me hlaford*, used as an exclamation in the *Life of St Giles* in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 303, p. 123, l. 2; and *wel þe* in Assmann 1889, 167, *Homily 14*, on the Last Judgement, ll. 94, 97). Admittedly, the closest Old English examples are in prose, but this sort of exclamation is very rare in poetry, and the absence of other comparable expressions in Old Norse verse may also be a reflection of this.

5. De Vries (1952, 192) suggests that the phrase *tenn hánnum teygiaz* (*Vkv.* 17) should be translated 'he shows his teeth', and cites OS *tôgean*, 'to show' (e.g. *Heliand* 3114), while ON *teygja*, 'to stretch out', seems to give poor sense. Even if de Vries is right about this, however, OE *teon forð* also occasionally appears with the sense 'to display' (e.g. *Order of the World* 53; *ASC* I, 134-5, under the year 1003); and in defence of the traditional translation 'he snaps with his teeth', one could cite the parallel of OE *togung* (f.), 'a violent spasm' (eight instances in *Leechdoms* 1864-6, e.g. I 20, twice on 136).

6. De Vries also argues (1952, 196-7) that the word *fitjar*, in the phrase *á fitjum* (29/2) should not be translated '(webbed) feet' or 'soles of the feet', as e.g. in *LP* and Jón Helgason 1962, 74, but rather 'wings', derived from OS *feðerac* and related to Middle Low German *vittek*. However, this interpretation creates more problems than it solves; it would imply that Níðuðr's men had deprived Vǫlundr of a pair of wings which he already possessed. This would conflict with the story told in *Þiðreks saga* (1951, I 112-3; 1905-11, I 125-8) and depicted on the Franks Casket; it has no support in any source; and it would mean that Vǫlundr must regain these wings in a way which the poet omits to mention. In any case, were such an interpretation necessary, a parallel could as easily be drawn with OE *fiðeru* (e.g. *Paris Psalter* 67: 13) as with OS *feðerac*. In fact, there is no need to reject the usual interpretation here:

*fit(jar)* is used of birds' feet in Snorri's *Háttatal* 32 (Snorri Sturluson 1900, 162) and by Þorleifr jarlsskáld, *lausavísa* 2 (late 10th century, Kock 1946-9, I 73), and as *Vǫlundr* is about to fly, its use here is poetically appropriate.

It does seem, therefore, that there is some German (probably Old Saxon) influence on the language of the poem, but the extent of that influence may have been exaggerated, and there is no reason why it should not have been exerted on a poet in England by an Old Saxon source. Indeed, this is one of the few explanations which can satisfactorily explain the fact that the poem shows both Old English and Old Saxon linguistic features.

The obvious next question is why, if the matter is as simple as I have suggested, Sophus Bugge should have concluded in 1910 that the poem emanates from northern Norway. To some extent, he seems to have been influenced by details in the prose introduction, but when these are removed, three arguments remain:

1. The name *Slagfiðr*, probably meaning 'the Lapp who strikes (with a hammer)', suggested to Bugge that the poet knew a good deal about the Lapps: that they were renowned for magic and as smiths, that they were skiers and hunters, and that their neighbours extorted wealth from them by way of tribute. But all of this represents a traditional poetic image, not personal knowledge. Bugge himself demonstrates the link between *døkkálfar* ('dark elves') and dwarves, and points out that *Álfr* and *Finnr* are both dwarf names (e.g. *Vǫluspá* 16), so there is nothing strange about linking the elf-smith with dwarves, and hence with the name element *Finnr* ('Lapp'). Further, the Lappish attributes of magic, travel on skis or snowshoes, and paying of tribute are all to be found casually referred to in 10th and early 11th century skaldic verse: for magic, see *fjǫlkunnigra Finna*, Sigvatr, *Erfidrápa Óláfs helga* 16 (shortly after 1030); for skiing or snowshoes, *erum á leið frá láði / liðnir Finnnum skriðnu* ('we have come to sea from the land where Lapps go on skis'), Anon. 10th century III C 3; for tribute paying, *Finna gjǫld*, Þjóðolfr Arnórsson, *Sexstefja* 14 (ca. 1065) (see Kock 1946-9, I 125, 93, 172). One could add that knowledge of Lapps as hunters and tribute payers had existed in England since the time of Alfred (*The Old English Orosius* 1980, 14-15).

Two other details support the view that this is poetic tradition rather than personal knowledge. One, which troubles Bugge considerably, is that *Vǫlundr* is said to have a white neck (*Vkv.* 2), whereas real Lapps are swarthy; in fact, fair skin is probably an

indication of noble birth here (cf. the phrase *háls hvítari* describing Móðir, the noblewoman in *Rígsþula* 29). The other is the curious coincidence that the Old English *Widsið* twice links the tribal name *Finnas* in the same line with *Casere*, the 'Caesar' who corresponds to *Kjárr*, the father-in-law of *Vǫlundr* and his brothers in the poem (*Widsið* 20, 76). This might suggest that they were already linked in a story known in England by the early 10th century.

2. Secondly, Bugge argues that the geography of the poem, with a remote lake and a fire made of fir wood and kindled with twigs points to northern Norway. But this is pure romantic imagination; lakes, twigs and fir trees are not confined to northern Norway, and even if they were, others might compose about them. Björn Magnússon Ólsen rightly points out (1894, 38-9) that Icelandic poets have never been inhibited from mentioning trees by the fact that Iceland has so few of them, or even by their lack of accurate knowledge about them.

3. Finally, Bugge argues that the wildlife portrayed in the poem also points to the far north of Norway. He is thinking chiefly of the swan maidens, who are said to fly from the south and alight on the strand, just as whooper swans nest for the summer on the edges of remote lakes in northern Norway; but he also mentions the bear hunting implied in *Vkv.* 9 and the place-name *Úlfdalir* ('Wolf Dales'). Again, this is romantic nationalism. The swan maidens come from the south because they are exotic and rich (*drósir suðrænar*, *Vkv.* 1), and the daughters of a possibly Merovingian emperor *Hlǫðvér* (15), and they depart again because the ancient archetype demanded that they should, not because the poet is independently allegorising the flight of migrating swans. And even if he were, he does not say they were whooper swans; mute swans are part resident, part migratory throughout Northern Europe, and winter as far south as Greece (Heinzel, Fitter and Parslow 1974, 44).

Wolves and bears are, of course, commonplace literary animals in all Germanic verse traditions; and in this case, the eating of the she-bear's flesh may be an instance of the belief that one acquired part of the strength, courage and cunning of a ferocious animal by eating its flesh (cf. *Brot* 4), as well as forming part of the imagery surrounding *Vǫlundr* as both hunter and hunted in this part of the poem.

As soon as one looks at it closely, the evidence for a northern Norwegian origin for the poem melts away. Still less is there any

objective reason to localise it in Iceland; Björn Magnússon Ólsen produced no concrete evidence in favour of this for *Völundarkviða* (as opposed to his general argument that nearly all Eddic poetry is Icelandic). The very tentative suggestion of Icelandic origin made by Ásgeir Blöndal Magnússon is based entirely on comparisons with rare words in modern Icelandic, of which the most interesting is *ogurstund* (41), which appears in a variety of local usages in Icelandic, all of which have to do with brevity and the state of the tide. But OE *egor* also means 'tide' or 'high tide' (see e.g. Napier 1900, 159, 180; Oliphant 1966, 145, where it glosses Latin *dodrans*, 'tidal wave', or *malina*, 'high tide'; for these Latin senses see Latham 1965, 154, 287). If this sense were assumed here, Þoðvildr might be speaking both literally and figuratively; *ogurstund* might have the sense 'a fleeting interval of time' suggested by modern Icelandic usage, and also mean quite literally that she had been trapped on the island with *Völundr* (*í hólmi*, 40/4, 41/4) while the causeway linking it to the mainland was covered for the space of one high tide. It is thus possible that this is another instance of Old English influence on the poem's vocabulary, and from there into modern Icelandic. Even if this idea is rejected, the existence of OE *egor* shows that this word must once have been more widespread in use than merely in Iceland, and so it provides no evidence for an Icelandic origin for the poem. Indeed, to do Ásgeir justice, his article succeeds admirably in elucidating the word *ogurstund*, and it is not really part of his purpose to argue about the poem's place of origin.

We are left with the conclusion that the poem probably originates from a Norse-influenced area of England. The main consequence of this is that, since Norse was spoken there for a relatively short time, it gives us some hope of an approximate dating. It cannot have been composed before enough time had elapsed for English linguistic influence on the Viking colonists to become considerable — say a generation or so after the first major settlements — and this would seem to rule out a date before ca. 900 at the earliest. A later limit is hard to establish, because as Page (1971) has shown, the question of how long the Norse language survived in England is a difficult one to answer; the epigraphic evidence is rather thin and often ambiguous or difficult to date. So far as it goes, it suggests that the Norse language did not survive very long in the southern Danelaw or the Five Boroughs. In East Anglia and Lincolnshire, even those objects whose decoration is strongly Scandinavian (the

Sutton brooch, the Crowle stone) or which include personal names of Scandinavian origin (the Lincoln stone) show no Norse influence on the language of their inscriptions.

In Yorkshire, Norse was undoubtedly spoken for a time, but the definitely Norse inscriptions cannot be dated (Settle, Skipton). Some monuments dating from the 10th or 11th centuries are unaffected by Norse language (Great Edstone, Castlegate York, and the undated Collingham stone), but in an area with a mixed population this was to be expected. However, two inscriptions which certainly or probably date from the reign of Edward the Confessor or thereabouts (the Aldbrough stone, the Kirkdale sundial) include Norse personal names and are written in a form of English showing strong Norse influence. These suggest that Norse speech had probably died out in most of Yorkshire by the mid 11th century, at least at the social levels that were likely to commission inscriptions (or, presumably, poems).

In Cumbria, Norse speech is vouched for until ca. 1100 by the inscriptions in Carlisle Cathedral and at Conishead, but the mixed speech of the Pennington tympanum and the English of the Bridekirk font suggest that it did not survive much longer than that, and Page (1971, 174) doubts whether this evidence represents a continuity of Scandinavian usage, suggesting that it is more probably representative of a new influx of Norse speakers from such areas as the Isle of Man.

If *Vǫlundarkviða* was composed in England, therefore, it is most likely to have been in Yorkshire or Cumbria. But iconographic evidence points towards Yorkshire, where there are at least four stones, with a common iconographic scheme, which probably depict *Vǫlundr* (Bailey 1980, 105; McGuire and Clark 1987, 11, 25, 36-7). There are also two much more doubtful cases: the suggestion that a small section of what must once have been a cross-shaft at York Minster represents *Vǫlundr* seems to me unlikely; while just over the border into Cumbria, the so-called 'bound devil' at Kirby Stephen might be an incompetent imitation of the motif (for Kirby Stephen see Bailey 1980, plate 40; the York fragment will appear in vol. 3 of the British Academy Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Sculpture).

The design common to the other four sculptures (in Leeds parish church, Leeds Museum, and at Sherburn and Bedale) depicts a man tied to a set of wings and a bird tail (and at Sherburn with a head and beak as well), surrounded by smith's tools (Leeds cross, Leeds Museum only) whose hands, stretched above his head, grasp



the hair and dress of a woman, who seems to be holding something, probably circular (Leeds Cross only). This design, which is damaged in all four cases, seems not to include the headless bodies of Níðuðr's sons, but it is otherwise similar to that found on Ardre Stone VIII in Gotland, if slightly more naturalistic (*Gotlands Bildsteine* 1941-2, I taf. 139, 140, II 22-4 and fig. 311). (Ardre, incidentally, is the only instance of the *Völundr* story on a Scandinavian picture stone, so far as I know, and it is too early to be influenced by *Völundarkviða* and probably too distant to be an immediate influence on it.) No one can deny that the *Völundr* story was known in Scandinavia by the tenth century, even if *Völundarkviða* was composed in England, since the story is vouched for by a handful of kennings in skaldic verse. For knowledge of Egill as an archer, see *hlaupsildr Egils gaupna*, Eyvindr skáldaspillir, *lausavísa* 14 (ca. 950); *hryngráp Egils vápna*, Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld, *Hákonardrápa* 8 (ca. 990); for knowledge of Níðuðr, see the giant-kennung *grjót-Níðaðr*, Þjóðolfr Hvinverski, *Haustlǫng* 9 (ca. 925); see Kock 1946-9, I 40, 81, 10. The word *völundar* also appears as a plural common noun meaning 'craftsmen' (specifically 'weavers') in *Hamðismál* 7. But the motif on the Yorkshire stones (which is notably absent from the fine tradition of Anglo-Norse carving in western Cumbria) does seem to show that there was some interest in *Völundr* in Yorkshire in the 10th and early 11th centuries, although I cannot suggest what the statement intended by these Yorkshire carvers might be. And it is in the Yorkshire of the 10th or early 11th century that I would tentatively place the poem.

## II

I would like to turn now to the question of what is distinctive in the way the poet handles the story. It is of course of great value to know as much as possible about the major ancient archetypes which underlie the poem, but to study these is not to study the poem itself; it is the role of the historical anthropologist rather than the literary historian, and to confuse the two helps neither type of study. For example, Lotte Motz (1986, 55) argues that the final 'happy ending' in which *Völundr* marries the king's daughter (as in *Þiðreks saga* 1951, I 115; 1905-11, I 132-3) is an original part of the legend, and that *Böðvildr* acquires some of the characteristics of the swan-maiden bride whom *Völundr* has lost at the beginning

of the story. Her grounds for this argument are that the swan-maidens legend is commonly found as an ancestor myth, whereas the vengeful smith does not usually have descendants. Bøðvildr's son Viðga is a legendary ancestor (probably the Gothic hero Vidigoia named by Jordanes in his *Gothic History* (1882, 65, 104; 1915, 62, 101; and see Hill 1983, 6); therefore the story of Bøðvildr must show influence from that of the swan maiden.

This argument seems to me to be dubious as applied to the archetype. No surviving version of the legend equates Bøðvildr with the swan-maiden bride, and we cannot assume a feature which is not in any version of the story merely in order to force the legend into perfect accord with the archetype. Comparative mythologists can never be experts in every one of the languages and literatures they use, and if everyone started emending stories in accordance with supposed stereotypes, then the basis on which those stereotypes are founded would itself become unreliable. And as regards *Völundarkviða* itself, such argument is valueless, for in this poem it is quite clear that the swan bride and Bøðvildr are not the same woman, that Bøðvildr becomes the mother of a son while the swan bride does not, and that the ancestor myth is in any case not what the poet is interested in.

What, then, was in the traditions received by the poet, and what has he chosen to alter? (Since the poem is characterised by an evident mistrust of the power of women, it is likely that the poet was a man.) It seems probable that he did not invent the connection between the story of the swan maidens and that of the vengeful smith, for the same connection is implicit in the versions of the German romance *Friedrich von Schwaben* which also call the hero Wieland (1904, xviii-xix; Jón Helgason 1962, 42). But there are two respects in which the story apparently depicted on the Franks Casket (of which Jón Helgason 1962, 32-3 gives convenient illustrations) agrees with *Piðreks saga* against *Völundarkviða*:

1. *Völundarkviða* inherited a version of the story in which Völundr had at least one brother (Egill) and possibly two, but chooses to get these two brothers out of the way early on in the story by sending them off in search of their swan brides. In *Piðreks saga*, Egill continues to play an important part in the story, catching the birds from which Völundr (Velent) makes the wings he will fly away with, and being forced to shoot at him as he makes his escape (1951, I 112-5; 1905-11, I 125-31). The Franks Casket also depicts a man catching birds behind the smith, and (in a version now

obscure but apparently different from *Piðreks saga*) shows Egill as an archer defending a house against attacking warriors. Whatever the detailed meaning of this scene on the Franks Casket, it seems likely that Egill usually had a larger part in the story than the poet of *Vǫlundarkviða* has allowed him, rather than that the Franks Casket and *Piðreks saga* have independently expanded his role. (Further on Egill's fame as an archer, see *Piðreks saga* 1951, I 110-11; 1905-11, I 123-4; and *Hemings þátr* 1962, cxix-cxxi.)

2. *Vǫlundarkviða* omits the maidservant who both in *Piðreks saga* and (probably) on the Franks Casket accompanies Bǫðvildr when she brings her broken ring to Vǫlundr and asks him to mend it (*Piðreks saga* 1951, I 109-10; 1905-11, I 120-1). Souers has suggested (1943, 106-9) that the maidservant may only have been added by the author of *Piðreks saga*, and that the second female figure on the Franks Casket panel may be another representation of Bǫðvildr, sent by Vǫlundr to fetch the drink which he will use in seducing her on a second visit to him. This interpretation is possible, but involves assuming the existence of a motif (Vǫlundr sending Bǫðvildr to fetch the drink) which is not found in any source, and it may therefore seem unlikely. The omission of the maidservant from *Vǫlundarkviða* may rather have been to avoid awkward questions about why she neither prevented the seduction of Bǫðvildr nor warned Níðuðr about it, but it also carries implications for Bǫðvildr's own characterisation.

We cannot know whether the author of *Vǫlundarkviða* or his source was responsible for these changes, but they remain significant for the way the story is told.

Some other aspects of the story must be attributed to the poet rather than the source, and three of these seem particularly important:

1. The suppression of the dynastic element in the story.
2. The importance given to female characters.
3. The attempt to assert exact poetic justice.

It is clear that the poet knows about Vǫlundr's son Viðga, since Vǫlundr refers to the possibility of a son when he forces Níðuðr to swear that he will not kill his 'bride' (*Vkv.* 33). In any case, *Deor*, which seems to have some textual relationship to *Vǫlundarkviða*, uses the story of Beadohild (Bǫðvildr) as an example of sorrow which was eventually transcended (presumably by the fact that her son became a great hero). This story was probably widely known

in England: *Waldere* refers to Widia as both *Niðhades mæg* and *Welandes bearn* without feeling the need for further explanation (*Waldere* II, 8-9). But our poet allows Bǫðvildr no consolation, and despite knowing about Viðga, is not in the least concerned with him, whether as ancestor, consolation or anything else. In this respect, the spirit of *Vǫlundarkviða* is quite different from that of *Deor*, and probably represents innovation by this poet.

One of the most interesting aspects of the poem is the importance given to female characters. The swan maiden's importance is brought out by a series of references to her and her sisters throughout the first half of the poem. Throughout stanzas 1-3, the emphasis is firmly on them rather than on their husbands. In 1 we see them settling on the shore as they do it, not as the men discover them. In 2 it is the women who take the initiative in the marriages, and this must have been very striking to the poem's first audience because it was unfamiliar in their own society (see Fell 1984, 58; Wikman 1959). And in 3 the swan women are possessed by an unspecified yearning, and the parting is due to an unexplained compulsion within them, something in which their husbands have no share and about which they are apparently neither consulted nor enlightened.

This is all very different from the usual form of the swan maiden archetype, in which it is the human man who initiates the marriage, often even compelling it by stealing the woman's swan-skin, as the Wielant figure does in *Friedrich von Schwaben* 4389-4641 (1904, 67-71). In that form of the story, the woman's departure is understandable, sometimes even a laudable escape (see Hatto 1961, 333-4), whereas here it seems like arbitrary caprice, or at best obedience to natural laws that remain entirely inscrutable to human beings.

There is, however, another kind of story in which a woman from the other world, often a queen or princess, does take the initiative in wooing a mortal man. She is generally called the *fée* (*Hrólfs saga kraka* calls her an *álfkona*); Marie de France's *Lanval* is a well-known example (1944, 58-74, and for its Norse form, see *Strengleikar* 1979, 212-27). A related *lai* which is closer to the *Vǫlundr* story is *Graelent*, but this includes the episode in which the hero steals the bird-skins of the women, and thus makes him take the initiative; it has even been suggested by Schofield that it may have been influenced by a *Vǫlundr* story like that in *Friedrich von Schwaben*, but Cross shows that it is not necessary to suppose this (Grimes 1928, 76-101, and a damaged Old Norse text appears

in *Strengleikar* 1979, 278-90; see also Schofield 1900, 133-46; Cross 1914-15, 621-2). Other stories of the same kind can be seen in *Hrólfs saga kraka* (1960, 31-3; *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda* 1943-4, II 25-7); *Gibbons saga* (1960, 4-8); and see also Boberg 1966, F300 and references there; further Irish parallels are given by Cross. As most examples of this story-pattern in Old Norse seem to derive from romance tradition, to which it came chiefly from Celtic sources, there may be some doubt about whether Norse speakers in tenth- or eleventh-century Northumbria would have been familiar with it; but Scandinavian links with the Celtic areas of the British Isles, especially Ireland, were so strong that such knowledge cannot be considered unlikely.

This kind of encounter sometimes resembles the one in *Völundarkviða* in that it takes place in a remote natural place, and it also involves the human hero being temporarily abandoned by the *fée* later in the story. But the *fée* usually imposes a tabu on the hero, which he fails to observe, and this is the reason for her abandonment of him, his subsequent misfortunes or both; and here *Völundarkviða* does not conform to the pattern, for the swan women place no tabu on their husbands, nor do the husbands do anything which might drive them away. The abandonment remains completely arbitrary.

Having lost the other-world wife, what should the hero do? Egill and Slagfiðr immediately depart, in different directions, to begin a search for their mates (*Vkv.* 4), and this is what the husband in the swan maiden story often does (Hatto 1961, 334, 351; Motz 1986, 53). But we never hear any more of them, and one might be tempted to guess that searching for an other-worldly woman by wide journeying in this world is the wrong way to go about it. It might be argued that such heroes as Orfeo and Yvain do regain their partners by journeying; however, these stories normally involve an aimless wandering rather than a purposeful search, and a retreat into uninhabited wilderness rather than travel among different lands in the world of men; in the latter respect, they resemble the solitude of *Völundr* in *Úlfdalir* rather than the behaviour of his brothers. Anyway, we have here a story of three brothers, and we all know (and have known ever since we had *The three little pigs* read to us as children) that it is always the youngest brother, or the last mentioned, who adopts the right course of action. Staying put in such a situation is also more sensible in terms of this relationship; the human will not be able to find his supra-human mate against her will, and as the marriage was initiated and

ended by her choice, it is only by her return, whether voluntary or compelled by magic, that it is likely to begin again. That is probably why Vǫlundr spends his time perfecting rings, whose completion seems to function as a symbol of female sexuality in this poem, as well as creating the idea of a chain magically binding the characters to each other; and there is an apparent 'rightness' about this behaviour.

To this, however, one might add one qualification. If the forging of rings is a kind of magic by which the smith can induce or even compel a woman to come to him, the story partakes of another folktale irony: such magicians need not only power, but also the wisdom to phrase their demands exactly. Just as the Wife of Usher's Well is able by means of a curse on the weather to compel the return of her dead sons, but forgets to stipulate that they must also remain with her (Child 1882-98, II 238-9, no.79), so Vǫlundr embarks on the ring-magic which will bring him a mate without, apparently, considering that the woman who comes may not be the same one that he has lost.

At all events, Vǫlundr immediately assumes, first that his swan bride will come back if he waits in this way (5/7-10), then that she has actually done so (10/5-8). And it is this confidence which puts him off his guard and allows Níðuðr and his men to capture him in his sleep. When Níðuðr accuses him of possessing gold which should belong to the king himself, Vǫlundr reveals that the wealth comes from the swan women and that there was even more of it when all three brothers and their wives were together.

So far, the swan bride appears to have brought nothing but disaster to the hero. Having initiated the relationship and then ended it for reasons which remain inscrutable, she abandons him without his having offended any tabu, denudes him of the brothers who might have defended him, and leaves him with a seemingly reasonable but empty confidence that she will return; this and the wealth abandoned with him make him an easy victim for Níðuðr's greed. One might argue that Vǫlundr breaks a tabu when he names the swan maidens to Níðuðr in explaining his right to the gold, as Lanval does when he mentions his fairy mistress in asserting that even the beauty of her handmaids is superior to that of Guinevere (*Lanval* 293-302). But there is nothing in the poem itself that implies this, and in any case it cannot explain why the swan woman has already abandoned the hero at an earlier stage. At most, it could only be taken as an indication that their relationship is now irrevocably at an end. There is of course no suggestion that the swan bride was motivated by a desire

to harm the hero, merely that her motivation is inscrutable and takes no account of him; it may also be implied that his involvement with and reliance on her and on female magic has unfitted him for the real world. At all events, having contributed so greatly to his disaster, she is 'out of the story', as the sagas say, being possibly referred to only once more, as the past possessor of rings now worn by Þoðvildr (*Vkv.* 19/1-4); and even that reference is capable of a more ironic sense: 'Now Þoðvildr wears the red rings which denote my bride.' If that interpretation is correct, it is a recognition by Völundr that his ring-magic has brought him a different bride from the one he expected, and even, with a further irony, that in awarding his ring to Þoðvildr, her parents were unwittingly handing their daughter over to the smith's magic.

The second female figure brought into prominence by the poet of *Völundarkviða* is the queen, Níðuðr's wife. It is hard to be sure whether she figured at all in the received tradition, but I am inclined to think that she is not entirely the poet's own invention. In *Friedrich von Schwaben*, the heroine's enchantress stepmother Queen Flanea is responsible for many of the lovers' problems (although the whole story of the vengeful smith is absent). The Gascon folktale cited by Jón Helgason (1962, 47-8) also includes a female villain, the Queen of snakes, though her role in this vengeful smith story is quite different from that of Níðuðr's queen, except for the possible association with wild creatures in both, for the queen in *Völundarkviða* may perhaps be the Queen of bears (see below). If, as I suspect, the British ballad *I amkin* (Child 1882-98, II 320-42, no. 93) is also a descendant of the Weland story (though not solely of *Völundarkviða* itself, since it includes major roles both for the villain's wife and for the maidservant), that would also suggest that the queen had a traditional role as opponent of the hero and participant in the wrongs done to him. But of course wicked stepmothers and the like are stereotyped folktale characters who could easily be invented independently, so the question must remain undecided. At all events, the importance and detail of character attributed to the queen in *Völundarkviða* must be taken as part of this poet's own design.

As soon as she appears, it becomes obvious that Níðuðr is not, like Atli in *Atlakviða*, the sort of tyrant who makes his brutal decisions unaided. The queen is observant, ruthless and vindictive, and it is she who advises that Völundr's sinews be cut in order to render him harmless (16-17); she points out the resemblance of his teeth to those of a snarling wild animal (however one translates

*teygiaz* 17/1), and of his eyes to those of a snake (17/5-6). It is a curious reversal for Vǫlundr to be described in terms of the animals he used to hunt, and probably when the queen is later described as *kunnig* (25/3, 30/1, 35/7) the meaning is something more than 'wise' in an ordinary sense, though that sense does underline her role as counsellor (on the prevalence of the sense 'skilled in magic', see CV 359). If *kunnig* means 'skilled in foretelling the future', it must be taken as partly ironic, since her perception that Vǫlundr is dangerous is not matched by a foreknowledge of his revenge. But it is also possible that we should take it to mean 'skilled in magic' (like *fjǫlkunnig*); if so, might she be in some sense patroness of the animals Vǫlundr hunts, particularly, perhaps, related to the curiously specific she-bear that he roasts just before he is captured (*Vkv.* 9)? Such a relationship might also be suggested when her sons are repeatedly referred to as *húnar*, 'cubs' (*Vkv.* 24, 32, 34; for *húnn* with the sense 'bear', see Hallar-Steinn, *Rekstefja* 13, and probably Víga-Glúmr, *lausavísa* 5, Kock 1946-9, I 257, 64). In that case, transforming the hunter into the representative of a captured animal might be an appropriate revenge, though this is no more than a speculation, and not demonstrable from the text. What is unavoidable, if we take *kunnig* to mean 'skilled in magic', is that female magic, in whatever form, is again harmful to the hero.

The next reference is brutally ironic. After Vǫlundr has decapitated the two sons of the queen and Níðuðr, it is to her that he sends jewels made from the eyes of the boys (25/1-4). She is, after all, the observant one, so it is appropriate that eyes should be sent to her, and it was she who compared Vǫlundr's eyes to those of a snake. She must be assumed to mean the comparison to be with the eyes of an actual snake, but in the hands of the smith it is as if they become the jewel-eyes of a serpent wrought in gold. It is even possible that we should take the gems attached to the rings in *Vkv.* 5 as a foreshadowing of this.

The queen appears again in *Vkv.* 30-31. Here, the action of walking along the length of the hall, which preceded her vindictive advice to lame Vǫlundr, is repeated before she asks Níðuðr if he is awake. But this time she is bluntly told that her advice is not wanted (or perhaps she is blamed for her past advice) in the phrase *kǫld ero mér ráð þín* (31/6). This, echoing the proverb *kǫld eru kvenna ráð*, 'women's advice is cold' (see Jón Helgason 1962, 75), is bitterly appropriate, for the vindictive counsellor is punished with the loss of her ability to have her advice listened to; and that, apart from the mocking repetition of Vǫlundr's macabre gift to her



when he tells Niðuðr the details of his revenge (*Vkv.* 35), is the last we hear of her.

The poet's third female character, Bǫðvildr, is of course important in all versions of the story, but it seems to me that her character in *Vǫlundarkviða* is highly individual. Usually, she is regarded with sympathy: this is true in *Piðreks saga* (where she has a quite different name), by implication in *Deor* (where the grievous situation is seen from her point of view), and in the distant reflections of the story in *Friedrich von Schwaben* and the Gascon folktale outlined by Jón Helgason (1962, 47-8). But in *Vǫlundarkviða* this sympathy is considerably modified. She is first introduced in two references to her wearing the ring which once belonged to the swan woman: her mother's casual reference to it as hers (17/3-4) when the queen gloats over Vǫlundr's recognition of it, and Vǫlundr's own contrasting reference to it as *brúðar minnar . . . bauga rauða*, 'the red ring(s) of my bride' (19/2-4). There could be a hint here that Vǫlundr knows already, since she is wearing the 'insignia' of his wife, that the ring magic which was intended to bring back the swan woman will bring her to him (see above). The breaking of the ring would then be symbolically appropriate: if it contains a sexual magic, any woman who wears it while defying its significance is bound to break it, and it can only be repaired by re-uniting the wearer of it to its magical meaning.

The poet clearly visualises Bǫðvildr as present when the captured Vǫlundr is condemned to mutilation, and as seeing his reaction on recognising the ring. In view of this, her next action, in coming to him with the broken ring and asking him to mend it, shows an astonishing blend of arrogance and insensitivity. She is the sort of woman who seeks to get her own way by a mixture of what she regards as feminine charm with flattering the servant by making him her partner in a little conspiracy. There is also a touch of duplicity about the way she intends to conceal the breaking of the ring from her parents; looked at in this way, she thoroughly deserves the insincere reassurances Vǫlundr offers her in return (*Vkv.* 27), and perhaps even the drink-supported seduction which follows. Indeed, if the breaking of the ring symbolised a divorce between its magical significance and the actual situation, as suggested above, she is unwittingly asking to be seduced when she demands its repair. That, however, does nothing to reconcile me to Vǫlundr's coldly single-minded attitude to her, or to his heartless laughter as he rises into the air and abandons her (29/5-6). Bǫðvildr is not only deceived and made pregnant, but also morally humili-

ated, since her grief is caused by Vǫlundr's departure as well as by fear of her father's anger (29/9-10). It would seem that she has become sexually dependent on her seducer.

At the end of the poem, Bǫðvildr is left to face her father's blunt question about whether she slept with Vǫlundr (*Vkv.* 40). Obviously, she is pregnant and cannot deny it; but there is a contrast between her splendid clothing (39/5) and the uneasy excuses with which the poem ends. It may be true that she lacked the cunning and strength to resist Vǫlundr, but her grief at his departure casts doubt on her implication that she would have resisted him if she had been able to. Once again, she looks insincere, morally as well as physically compromised.

It seems clear that the poet stresses the role of women in the story largely because his attitude to them is consistently suspicious; he portrays them as selfish, insincere and, in the queen's case, vindictive. There also seem to be traces of a fear of the magical powers of women, which are portrayed as consistently harmful in their effects; perhaps this is not surprising in a culture which regarded *seiðr* as a characteristically female art, treated it with consistent fear and loathing, and made it subject to severe legal penalties (Strömbäck 1970, 79; Halvorsen 1960). There was an artistic problem here, because Vǫlundr himself, as a flying smith of elvish origins, is unavoidably a practitioner of magic, so it was not possible to adopt a single dismissive attitude to all magic without alienating any sympathy we might feel for the poem's central figure. It therefore has to be suggested that Vǫlundr's elvish magic is in some sense natural and just, while the magic of the female characters, human or otherwise, is morally repulsive and harmful in its effects. We in our turn may find this distinction morally unattractive, but that must not blind us to its presence, or to the possibility that the poet's first audience may have sympathised with it.

But if the hostile portrayal of women in the poem springs from an attempt to portray Vǫlundr's revenge as a kind of justice, we may reasonably ask how far that attempt is successful. Some aspects of it are clear enough: thus Níðuðr is finally left 'deprived of his will' (*vilia lauss* 31/2), just as Vǫlundr was after his capture (11/4); Níðuðr is constantly deprived of sleep in brooding over the loss of his sons (31/1-4), just as Vǫlundr was kept awake, plotting revenge, after his maiming (20/1-4); and it is grimly appropriate that the tyrant whose motivation was greed for precious objects should receive the payment he deserves in such objects, made from the skulls of his sons.

It is also possible that Vǫlundr's dynastic revenge on Níðuðr is connected with the other object of which he has been deprived, his sword (*Vkv.* 18, 20). Just as the ring seems connected with female sexuality, the sword may be a virility symbol, as it seems to be in *Laxdæla saga* ch. 46 (1934, 140-2), where Kjartan's loss of his sword and later recovery of it without its sheath seems to symbolise his loss of sexual self-esteem after he is deprived of Guðrún; a similar symbolism can be seen in the British ballad *Sheath and Knife* (Child 1882-98, I 185-7, no. 16), and seems to have been inherent in the Old English language itself, where the male sex was called *wæpnedcynn*. If the theft of the sword and the physical mutilation are together seen by Vǫlundr as a symbolic castration of him by his captor (for this interpretation of physical mutilation, see Sørensen 1980, 101-6; 1983, 81-5), it may seem just for him to repay this with a negation of Níðuðr's virility and a corresponding assertion of his own.

The queen, too, is appropriately punished, with ironic gifts made from eyes for the observant woman; with loss of the influence over her husband which she has misused; and with loss of her sons because of her part in the symbolic castration of Vǫlundr, in suggesting his mutilation.

Some recent criticism has regarded Bǫðvildr with a good deal more sympathy (e.g. Motz 1986, 63), but she does much to place herself in the position of substitute 'wife', and can hardly complain about Vǫlundr's seduction of her. His desertion of her, however, is another matter. This rather gives the impression that he is punishing Bǫðvildr for the desertion he himself suffered from the swan woman, for which neither Bǫðvildr herself nor anyone else in her family has the slightest responsibility. And the idea of justice also looks shabby when applied to the murder of the two boys. It might be argued that they are attracted to the smithy for the second time by the same greed for precious objects which motivates their father; but that seems an unduly harsh view, especially as Vǫlundr himself deliberately stirs up this desire in them. Of course, their deaths are required for the completion of Vǫlundr's revenge, but it is a dubious justice which demands casual sacrifice of the innocent in this way, or which insists on the corporate responsibility of a whole family. Nor is it supported by codes of law: *Grágás* I, chs. 86, 90 permit vengeance for a number of offences, including killing, serious wounding and rape (1852, 147, 164-5; *Laws of Early Iceland* 1980, 141, 154), but only against the offender himself; the only instance of corporate responsibility arises when killing or wounding

is done by a child (*Grágás* I, ch. 91), and even then the family is only liable financially (1852, 166; *Laws of Early Iceland* 1980, 155). Similarly, codes that were current in Anglo-Norse areas, such as the secular laws of Cnut (ca. 1027-1034), imply the right of vengeance (e.g. in 56, where a murderer is to be handed over to his victim's relatives, Liebermann 1898-1916, I 348-9; Whitelock 1955, 427), but only against the offender in person. And even if insistence on joint family responsibility is common in Old Norse literature, both in verse and prose, and may often have seemed acceptable to contemporary audiences, it must surely have strained their sympathy when the poet insists that the victims are mere children (*húnar*, 24/2, 32/4, 34/5), just as it would when Guðrún murders her children in *Atlakviða*. As *húnar* can also mean 'bear-cubs' (see above), this is also a return to the imagery of Vǫlundr as a hunter in the first part of the poem (see e.g. *Vkv.* 4); but now that imagery is suffused with a coldness and cruelty which it did not have when he merely hunted for food. This is also partial and self-interested 'justice' in another way, for part of Vǫlundr's motivation for the boys' murder seems to be to replace the dynasty of Níðuðr with his own, and it is not Níðuðr who has deprived him dynastically (unless symbolically, see above), but, if anyone, the swan woman. Behaving as if Níðuðr were responsible for this looks like a kind of self-deception.

If Vǫlundr had been the divine figure he probably once was, the extreme nature of his 'justice' might have seemed acceptable in an ancient, primitive way, and indeed, as Kaaren Grimstad has pointed out, there remains about him something of the vengeful god confronting a human being who has injured him (see Grimstad 1983, 198-201). One is reminded of the exchange between Cadmus and Dionysus at the end of Euripides' *The Bacchae*:

Cadmus:       but your vengeance is too heavy.  
Dionysus: I am a god; and you insulted me.

Gods, as Dionysus explains, must take vengeance, 'that mortal men may know that the gods are greater than they' (1954, 226, 225). But Vǫlundr is no longer a wholly divine figure, and apart from taking over the probably traditional phrases which call him an elf, the poet seems to regard him as a man. When gods come to be judged by the ethical standards normally applied to human beings, it is not uncommon for Eddic poets to find them wanting (as in *Vǫluspá* and *Lokasenna*); to explain Vǫlundr's behaviour as due to his elvish origins does not, therefore, amount to a defence of him. In any case, elves were regarded with much suspicion in

Christian Anglo-Saxon England (they are among the kindred of Cain killed in the Flood in *Beowulf* 112), and most of the vocabulary associated with them concentrates on their malicious aspect (see BT under the headings *ilfig*, 'mad'; *ælfadl*, *ælfsgoða*, 'diseases caused by elves'; *ælfside*, 'nightmare'; *ælfþone*, 'enchanter's nightshade'). The only word with a contrary implication is *ælfsciene*, 'of elfin beauty', always applied to women; but even this may have included an element of mistrust, if the attitudes evident in *Völundarkviða* were at all common.

Anglo-Saxons also seem to have had some doubts about the justice of Weland's revenge. *Deor* and Alfred's *Boethius*, *Metrum 10*, both avoid discussing it, and the Franks Casket carver is by implication hostile to him in juxtaposing the bringing of Þoðvildr's ring with the gifts of the Magi to Christ — the vengeful old order set against the merciful new one. The poet of *Völundarkviða* is enough of an artist to be more even-handed, and allows us our own view, but the tide of opinion was perhaps already running against such primitive 'justice', and *Völundr's* days as a hero were numbered.

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## THE SUPERNATURAL IN NJÁLS SAGA: A NARRATOLOGICAL APPROACH

By RORY McTURK

In this article<sup>1</sup> I shall use two types of specialised language (though neither, I hope, excessively) in discussing the supernatural in *Njáls saga*: on the one hand the language of *narratology*,<sup>2</sup> and on the other that of *parapsychology*.<sup>3</sup>

As for the former, I shall adopt the narratological distinction between *story* and *narrative*; the story is *what happens* (in this case in *Njáls saga*), whereas the narrative is *the statement of what happens*. The distinction may be clarified by reference to the order in which the events of the saga are brought to the reader's or listener's attention: whenever the narrative abandons the matter currently in hand to refer to past or future events, by the devices known as *analepsis* and *prolepsis* respectively, it is departing from the order in which events take place in the story. I shall also be using the narratological distinctions between *levels of narrative* and between *levels of focalisation*. The former distinction helps to answer the question of who is telling the story at a given moment, while the latter helps to determine who (if anyone) is witnessing its events at a given moment. To deal first with levels of narrative, it may be said that events narrated on the first level, or in the first degree, are those which the anonymous narrator of the saga reports directly; whereas events narrated on the second level (or in the second degree) are those reported in passages of direct speech by characters in the saga. As for levels of focalisation, events focalised in the first degree, or on the first level, are those which the narrator reports, without reference to witnesses, as having taken place; whereas events focalised in the second degree (or on the second level) are those which are stated to have been witnessed by characters in the saga — stated, that is, *either* by the characters themselves (in passages of direct speech) *or* by the anonymous narrator. This last consideration means that levels or degrees of focalisation do not always coincide with those of narrative, though they may often do so. Finally, I shall use the term *diegetic* to refer to events or characters that form part of the diegesis of *Njáls saga*, i.e. the world or universe in which its story, as narrated on the first level, takes place; and the term *metadiegetic*<sup>4</sup> for anyone or anything that



forms part of the subject-matter of an account given in direct speech by one or another of the saga's characters, i.e. on the second level of narrative.

The language of parapsychology may be dealt with much more briefly. I shall use the terms *retrocognitive*, *telepathic*, and *precognitive* to refer to experiences in which characters in the saga receive notice, otherwise than by normal sensory communication, of events of the past, present, and future respectively. A retrocognitive dream, for example, is one that gives notice of a past event; a telepathic vision is one that gives notice of an event that takes place simultaneously with the vision itself; and a precognitive dream is one that gives notice of an event in the future.

References to *Njáls saga* in what follows are by chapter to the edition of Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 1954. Before proceeding to discuss and classify the supernatural incidents in *Njáls saga*, I should emphasise that I have *not* included among their number prophecies whose fulfilment may in my view be reasonably explained by reference to the human insight, natural wisdom, and worldly experience of those who make them; experience of the law is often involved here. Examples are Mǫrðr gígja's words in ch. 7 to his daughter Unnr about the procedure she must follow (and does follow, later in the same chapter) to get divorced from Hrútr Herjólfsson; Njáll's instructions to Gunnarr in ch. 22 about how to recover Unnr's dowry from Hrútr (cf. chs. 23-4); Njáll's relatively general prophecies about the unhappiness of Gunnarr's marriage to Hallgerðr and the unexpected cause of his own death, in chs. 33 and 55 respectively; his more specific prophecy in ch. 58 that many deaths will result from the horse-fight between the stallions belonging to Starkaðr Barkarson and Gunnarr (cf. ch. 63); and Njáll's prophecy that Gunnarr's death will be caused by his (Gunnarr's) breaking the terms made in consequence of his slaying more than once in the same family, reported by Mǫrðr Valgarðsson to Þorgeirr Starkaðarson in ch. 67 (cf. chs. 72, 75, and 77). Also in this category are jarl Hákon's prophecy at the end of ch. 88 that the protection given by Práinn Sigfússon to the trouble-maker Hrappr Ǫrgumleiðason (Víga-Hrappr) will lead to the deaths of both Práinn and Hrappr (cf. ch. 92); Njáll's prophecy in ch. 94 that Práinn's son Hǫskuldr, whom Njáll adopts as his foster-son after Práinn's death, will grow up to be a good man — a prophecy fulfilled up to the moment of Hǫskuldr's slaying by Njáll's sons and Mǫrðr in ch. 111; Njáll's forecast in ch. 111 that the slaying of Hǫskuldr will lead to his own death and that of his wife and sons,

though the career of his son-in-law, Kári Sǫlmundarson, will be attended by good luck (cf. chs. 128-30); Njáll's general statement in ch. 120 that fate must take its course, made after Skarpheðinn's aggressive behaviour towards various chieftains at the Alþingi has called in question the amount of support Njáll and his sons will receive in attempting to reach a peaceful settlement with Flosi Þórðarson, the uncle of Hǫskuldr's wife Hildigunnr, over Hǫskuldr's slaying (cf. ch. 123); and Gizurr (hvíti) Teitsson's accurate prediction, in ch. 135, of Mǫrðr's initially negative response to Kári's request (made in the same chapter) that Mǫrðr should prosecute Flosi for the slaying of Njáll's son Helgi, who (in ch. 129) had been killed by Flosi in trying to escape from the burning of Njáll and his family, led by Flosi and described in chs. 128-30. Mention may finally be made of Snorri goði Þorgrímsson's prediction in ch. 139 that the two parties involved in this prosecution will come to blows at the Alþingi (cf. ch. 145); and Eyjólfur Þólværksson's forecast in ch. 144 (fulfilled in the same chapter) that Mǫrðr will bungle the prosecution.

As will be clear from this list, predictions often occur in contexts of advice, and may be fulfilled if the advice, whether followed or not, turns out to have been well-founded. Actual words of advice, though, however well-chosen, are if anything even less worthy of consideration as partaking of the supernatural, in my view, than the prophecies just listed. Examples other than those already noted are Njáll's advice to Gunnarr, offered and taken in ch. 56, to make terms with Otkell's relatives Gizurr hvíti and Geirr goði Ásgeirsson after the killing of Otkell by Gunnarr in ch. 54; Njáll's legal advice to Gunnarr, offered in chs. 64-5 and carried into effect in ch. 66, with the result that a settlement is reached between Gunnarr and the relatives of some of those he had slain after being ambushed by the brothers-in-law Starkaðr and Egill in ch. 63; Mǫrðr's advice in ch. 67 to Starkaðr's son Þorgeirr, which Þorgeirr carries out in chs. 68-72, to trap Gunnarr into killing Þorgeirr Otkelsson, so that Gunnarr, who has already killed Otkell, will then have killed twice in the same family, and be in danger of his life if he breaks the terms of the resulting settlement, as in fact he does in refusing to accept banishment in ch. 75; Njáll's advice to his sons in ch. 91 to give Þráinn a chance to make abusive comments at their expense before they kill him, so that they will not be open to the charge of killing without cause — advice which they follow, with humiliating results, before actually killing him in ch. 92; Síðu-Hallr Þorsteinsson's advice to Flosi in ch. 146, taken by Flosi in the next

chapter, to make terms with Njáll's nephew, Þorgeirr skorargeirr Þórisson; and Síðu-Hallr's advice to Flosi in ch. 147, acted on by him in ch. 158 (the penultimate chapter of the saga), to go on a pilgrimage to Rome.

The supernatural incidents in *Njáls saga* may initially be divided into three categories, as follows: first, prophecies that come true (other than those already dealt with); the word 'prophecy' is here being used in a sense wide enough to include spells, and statements giving advance notice of the special properties of certain objects, such as Gunnarr's halberd (*atgeirr*)<sup>5</sup> and jarl Sigurðr's battle-standard (*merki*); secondly, retrocognitive, telepathic, and precognitive intimations, dreams, and visions; and thirdly, remarkable happenings for which no physical cause is apparent, and which are not covered by these first two categories.

In the first category there are two clear examples of spells: the one cast on Hrótr Herjólfsson by Queen Gunnhildr Qzurardóttir in ch. 6 to prevent his finding sexual fulfilment with the woman to whom he is betrothed, followed in the same chapter by Hrótr's marriage to his betrothed, Unnr Marðardóttir, which is indeed sexually unfulfilled, and ends soon afterwards with their divorce (in ch. 7); and the verse incantation in ch. 12 in which Svanr, Hallgerðr's maternal uncle, who is protecting Þjóstólfr, Hallgerðr's foster-father and the slayer of her first husband, Þorvaldr Ósvífsson, successfully calls forth a fog to hinder Þorvaldr's father Ósvífr and his companions in their vengeful pursuit of Þjóstólfr. Both these spells are cast, by Gunnhildr and Svanr respectively, in passages of direct speech, i.e. on the second level of narrative, and the successful outcome of the spell is in each case narrated (and, as it happens, focalised also) on the first level (ch. 6: *En fátt var með þeim Hróti um samfarar, . . .*; ch. 12: *. . . þá kom þoka mikil í móti þeim*). They thus conform to what will emerge below as the normal pattern for prophecies in *Njáls saga*.

A less clear-cut case of a spell (in the sense of a prophecy that comes true) is that of Galdra-Heðinn's sacrifices in ch. 101, the purpose of which is to bring about the death of the missionary Þangbrandr and his followers, but which succeed only in respect of Þangbrandr's horse, which disappears into the chasm that suddenly appears in its rider's path. The most impressively supernatural aspect of this incident, in my view, is Þangbrandr's miraculous escape, which belongs, and will be noted below, in my third category of 'remarkable happenings' (p. 43). It may however be noted here that the sacrifices as well as the subsequent appearance

of the chasm are narrated and focalised in the first degree, and that in this respect also the incident deviates from the normal pattern of prophecies in *Njáls saga*.

Next in this first category come the statements made by Tófi and Gunnarr in relation to Gunnarr's halberd, in chs. 30 and 72 respectively. These need to be discussed at some length, partly because the first of them is a somewhat doubtful example of supernatural events in this category, and partly because the halberd has an important unifying function in the saga's presentation of Gunnarr's career (in chs. 19-99). When it first appears in ch. 30, the halberd is in the possession of one Hallgrímr, a Viking encountered by Gunnarr on the Baltic island of Eysýsla (Ösel). Tófi, who warns Gunnarr of Hallgrímr's hostile presence, explains that the halberd has the magical property of making a loud ringing noise as a portent of death through its agency. Gunnarr takes possession of the halberd after a fight with Hallgrímr in which Hallgrímr drops the halberd and Gunnarr kills him with it. The halberd is next mentioned in chs. 49-50, where Otkell Skarfsson, his brother Hallbjörn, and his friend Skamkell each refer to it briefly after Otkell has churlishly refused Gunnarr's handsome offers of compensation for the food stolen from Otkell at the instigation of Gunnarr's wife Hallgerðr. It is next referred to in ch. 53, where Gunnarr, after being gashed by Otkell's spur as Otkell galloped past him while he was sowing, tells Skamkell, who was close by at the time, that he will see the halberd when next they meet. In ch. 54, when Gunnarr is told at Hlíðarendi that Otkell is riding down along the river Markarfljót, he takes hold of the halberd, which rings loudly, and rides off; Gunnarr's mother Rannveig tells her son Kolskeggr of this incident, which Kolskeggr prophesies will have momentous consequences. Gunnarr catches up with Otkell, and kills him as well as Skamkell with the halberd. The weapon is next mentioned in ch. 61, where Gunnarr takes it with him on his brief visit to Ásgrímr Elliða-Grímsson at Tunga; then in ch. 62, where Gunnarr, on his way home from Tunga, speaks of just having had a dream in which he used the halberd to fight some wolves; and then again in ch. 63, where the wolves of the dream turn out to have represented certain of Gunnarr's human enemies, who now attack him at Knafahólar, led by Starkaðr Barkarson and Egill Kolsson, and Gunnarr kills with the halberd both Egill and Starkaðr's son Bǫrkr. The halberd is next mentioned at the end of ch. 71, only briefly, and then, much more dramatically, at the beginning of ch. 72, where blood appears on it as

Gunnarr and Kolskeggr are riding towards Rangá. Gunnarr, in a brief passage of direct speech, cites Ólvir as having said that such occurrences portended fierce encounters: '*ok sagði svá Ólvir bóndi, at þat væri fyrir stórfundum*' (Ólvir was someone with whom Gunnarr had had dealings just before and after first acquiring the halberd, in chs. 29-31). Also in ch. 72, Gunnarr is ambushed by Otkell's son Þorgeirr and others, and Gunnarr kills Þorgeirr and his kinsman Ónundur with the halberd. In ch. 75, just before the famous scene in which Gunnarr decides to defy the three-year banishment from Iceland imposed on him by his settlement with Þorgeirr Otkelsson's relatives, it is said that Gunnarr, as he mounts his horse to leave Hlíðarendi, uses the halberd for vaulting into the saddle. In ch. 77, when Gunnarr is attacked at Hlíðarendi by Þorgeirr's relatives and their followers, he slays with the halberd Þorgrímr Austmaðr and Þorbrandr Þorleiksson, and wounds with it Þorbrandr's brother Ásbrandr, before dying his heroic death. In ch. 78 it is reported that Gunnarr's mother Rannveig would not allow the halberd to be buried with him and would only let it be touched by Gunnarr's prospective avenger. In the next chapter, 79, Gunnarr's son Høgni takes down the halberd, which then rings loudly (*Høgni tekr ofan atgeirinn, ok sǫng í honum*). Egged on by Rannveig, he avenges his father with the help of Njáll's son Skarpheðinn, killing with the halberd Hróaldr Geirsson and Þorgeirr Starkaðarson, who had boasted of their share in Gunnarr's slaying.

Thus, after its acquisition by Gunnarr, the halberd kills on five separate occasions, but only on the first and last of these (the killing of Otkell and Skamkell and that of Hróaldr and Þorgeirr) does it make the ringing noise it is supposed to make according to Tófi's prophecy (in the sense of the word explained above, p. 31). On both these occasions, moreover, the noise occurs just after the halberd has been grasped by the prospective killer — Gunnarr himself in the former case, and his son Høgni in the latter. It is perhaps not surprising that a halberd should ring when grasped by someone intent on killing with it, and this raises the question of whether it is making the noise in fulfilment of the prophecy, or simply because it has been energetically grasped. Is the ringing of the halberd on these occasions an example of the supernatural, or not? There would be less doubt on this point if the halberd had been presented as ringing of its own accord, without first being touched. The second occasion when the halberd kills (the killing of Egill and Þorkr) is, it is true, evoked in advance by Gunnarr's

dream of the wolves, in which the halberd figures; but this dream, which belongs in the second of my three main categories of supernatural incidents rather than here, does not conform to the expectations raised by Tófi's prophecy, and does not, indeed, relate specifically to the halberd, though Gunnarr, in his account of the dream, briefly mentions it. The fourth occasion when the halberd kills (Gunnarr's last stand, when he slays Þorgrímr and Þorbrandr) is not, as far as I can see, specifically portended by any supernatural event; but the third, the killing of Þorgeirr Otkelsson and Qnundr, is dramatically preceded by the appearance of blood on the halberd. This, again, is not what Tófi's prophecy had led us to expect; but when it happens Gunnarr, as already shown, quotes Qlvir as saying that such an occurrence portended fierce encounters. In narratological terms, this statement of Gunnarr's is an example of *completing internal analepsis*, analepsis being, as already indicated (p. 28), an evocation of an earlier event. It is 'completing' (rather than 'repeating') because the event evoked (Qlvir's explanation of the portent) has not in fact been mentioned earlier in the narrative — this is the first we hear of it; and it is 'internal' (rather than 'external') because this event, though it has not been mentioned until now, must be assumed to have taken place within the period of time covered by the narrative so far, rather than outside (i.e. prior to) that period (cf. Genette 1980, 48-67); it presumably happened at some stage in Gunnarr's dealings with Qlvir, described in chs. 29 and 31. The actual appearance of blood on the halberd belongs, of course, in my third category of supernatural incidents (remarkable happenings not covered by the first two categories) and will be noted in the appropriate place below. Here I would very tentatively suggest that the author of *Njáls saga* felt, as I do, that in describing the halberd's ringing noise he had left rather too much doubt in the minds of his audience as to whether this was happening by accident or as a result of Tófi's prophecy, and that he added the motif of blood appearing on the halberd in order to make it quite clear that supernatural forces were at work in connection with it.

I would argue that the appearance of blood on the halberd differs from the prophecy it occasions and from other prophecies here under consideration in being a supernatural event in its own right, irrespective of the prophecy and of whether or not it is fulfilled; it might even be argued that it is *more* supernatural than the kind of event that typically constitutes a prophecy in *Njáls saga*. In this saga a prophecy usually operates on two levels of

narrative: the metadiegetic, where the events are evoked in direct speech by one of the characters, and the diegetic, where the events prophesied take place within the diegesis, or the universe of the story proper, as the narrator tells it. If it is accepted that a prophecy must be fulfilled in order to qualify as a supernatural incident, then it may be maintained that, except in the relatively rare cases where prophecies are made in indirect speech, a prophecy in *Njáls saga* is supernatural only insofar as it operates on both the metadiegetic and the diegetic levels. Neither the prophetic statement nor the event that bears it out would normally count, on its own, as supernatural; it is only when the one is seen in relation to the other that either may be recognised as such. By contrast, the appearance of blood on Gunnarr's halberd is a purely diegetic event which does not require reference to any other level of narrative for confirmation of its supernatural character. It is narrated in the first rather than the second degree, i.e. by the narrator rather than by any of the characters, which suggests that the narrator is taking relatively full responsibility for his account of the occurrence, as also does the fact that the event is not only narrated, but also focalised, in the first degree; that is, it is presented as having actually happened (irrespective of whether or not witnesses were present), rather than as merely having been perceived to happen (by one or more of the characters); it is as though the narrator, as well as the witnesses present at this point in the story, saw it take place. Focaliser and narrator, then, are here one and the same; but it should be re-emphasised that this is not always so, and that levels or degrees of focalisation do not always coincide with those of narrative. Second-degree focalisation, or focalisation through a character, may often occur in conjunction with first-degree narrative, i.e. on the diegetic level, and when it does so, it does not make the events focalised any less diegetic. It does, however, imply a greater distance from the narrator (here viewed as a focaliser) than is implied by focalisation in the first degree, just as second-degree narrative implies a greater distance from the narrator (here viewed as a reporter of events) than is implied by first-degree narrative (cf. Bal 1977, 115-27). These points may be illustrated by contrasting the appearance of blood on the halberd with the chanting of verses by Gunnarr's ghost in his burial-mound, of which two accounts are given in ch. 78. Here the ghost's activities are diegetic, i.e. they are narrated in the first degree, but they are at the same time focalised in the second degree; each account is introduced by an expression

meaning 'it seemed to them' (*þeim þótti, þeim sýndisk*), and is presented in terms of what was witnessed by observers — a shepherd and a housemaid in the first case, and, in the second, Njáll's son Skarpheðinn and Gunnarr's son Högni. In the second account in particular the narrator seems at pains to disclaim full responsibility for the report he gives, using in addition to *þeim sýndisk* such expressions as *þeir þóttusk. . . sjá* and *þeir sá* ('they thought they saw', 'they saw'). This event, which also belongs in my third main category of supernatural incidents, will be noted below (p. 43).

The appearance of blood on the halberd and the prophecy occasioned by it are closely paralleled by the sequence of events in ch. 156 of *Njáls saga*, where the Viking Bróðir, an apostate Christian who subsequently takes part in the Battle of Clontarf, is subjected together with his followers, shortly before the battle, to supernatural harassment on three successive nights: by rain in the form of boiling blood on the first, by weapons fighting of their own accord on the second, and by ravens with iron-like beaks and talons on the third. These events, like the appearance of blood on Gunnarr's halberd, are narrated and focalised in the first degree. Bróðir consults with his sworn brother Óspakr, who explains in direct speech (much as Gunnarr explains the significance of blood on the halberd) that the blood-rain portends bloodshed, the weapons battle, and the ravens the demons that will receive Bróðir and his followers into hell. This prophecy is fulfilled in the following chapter at the Battle of Clontarf, where Bróðir and his men are all slain by the Irish and their allies, but not before Bróðir has slain the Irish king Brjánn, an event immediately preceded in the narrative by an account of how Hrafn inn rauði, another of the king's opponents, sees while swimming a river a vision of demons attempting to drag him down to hell. These events are all narrated, if not at all stages focalised, in the first degree. Thus the prophecy itself resembles the one relating to blood on the halberd not only in conforming to the normal pattern of emergence on the metadiegetic level and fulfilment on the diegetic, but also in a relatively exceptional way, insofar as it is occasioned by a diegetic supernatural occurrence focalised in the first degree.

Other examples of the supernatural in the category of prophecies are, of course, Sæunn's prophecy in ch. 124, fulfilled in ch. 129, that a pile of chickweed (*arfasáta*) behind the farm at Bergþórshváll will be used for kindling in the burning of Njáll and Bergþóra; Bergþóra's prophecy in ch. 127, just before the burning, that the



meal she is preparing will be the last she ever serves to her household; the Viking Bróðir's information, obtained by witchcraft in ch. 157 and shown to be accurate later in the chapter, that if the Scandinavians join battle with the Irish on Good Friday, the Irish king Brjánn will win the battle, but lose his life; and, in the same chapter, Ámundi hvíti's information, evidently based on what he has seen so far of the Battle of Clontarf, that everyone who carries jarl Sigurðr's battle-standard gets killed; this is then confirmed in the case of Sigurðr himself, who takes the standard and attempts to conceal it on his person, but is slain soon afterwards.

Apart from the ambiguous case of Galdra-Heðinn's sacrifices, already discussed (p. 31), Bróðir's information about the outcome of the Battle of Clontarf is as far as I can see the only supernatural prophecy in *Njáls saga* that is not made at least partly in direct speech; it is thus exceptional in being exclusively diegetic. It may however be noted that the prophecy itself, which consists in the information obtained by Bróðir by magical means, and narrated in indirect speech, is focalised (by Bróðir himself) in the second degree.

Moving on to my second category of supernatural incidents, I apply the terms *retrocognitive*, *telepathic*, and *precognitive*, as already explained (p. 29), to experiences in which people receive notice of past, present and future events respectively, without first having the information that would make it possible to infer their occurrence. These experiences most often take the form of dreams or visions, though occasionally they involve accesses of insight perhaps best described as 'intimations'.

It is sometimes hard to say for certain whether an incident is retrocognitive, telepathic, or precognitive, but as far as I can see the only clear-cut instance of retrocognition in *Njáls saga* is Hǫskuldr Dala-Kollsson's dream in which, as he relates it in ch. 23, a large bear leaves Hǫskuldr's homestead with two bear-cubs and goes to the home of Hǫskuldr's half-brother Hrútr Herjólfsson. Discussing the dream with his household, Hǫskuldr concludes that the bear is the fetch (*fylgja*) of Gunnarr of Hlíðarendi, and then realises that it was Gunnarr who had visited him in disguise with two companions and stayed at his home over the night prior to that on which he had the dream. Hǫskuldr now visits Hrútr, and discovers that Gunnarr had gone from his home to Hrútr's, still in disguise, and had found out from Hrútr how to reopen legal proceedings as a result of which Hrútr would have to repay his divorced wife's dowry; he had then left Hrútr's home during

the night of Høskuldr's dream. The effectiveness of Gunnarr's stratagem, which he had carried out on Njáll's advice, given in ch. 22, is seen in ch. 24, where Hrútr is forced to pay up.

As for telepathic incidents, an obvious example is Svanr's sudden realisation in ch. 12 that Ósvífr and his followers are on their way to attack him and Þjóstólfr in the circumstances described above (p. 31); he yawns, as it was believed people did when their enemies' intentions towards them were hovering near them in spirit form (see Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1954, 37, n.7), and states that Ósvífr's fetches (*fylgjur*) are attacking him and Þjóstólfr just as Ósvífr and his followers are entering Bjarnarfjörðr, where Svanr and Þjóstólfr are at the time. Another example, also involving fetches, occurs in ch. 69, where Þorgeirr Starkaðarson and Þorgeirr Otkelsson, on their way to attack Gunnarr at Hlíðarendi, enter a wood with their twenty-two followers, are overcome by drowsiness, and fall asleep. Njáll, however, who is spending the night at Þórólfsfell, east of Hlíðarendi, cannot sleep, because, as he explains, he can see the 'fierce-looking fetches' (*fylgjur grimmligar*) of Gunnarr's enemies, though he also notes that they are behaving without purpose (*ráðlausliga*). Soon afterwards he hears from a shepherd about the twenty-four men asleep in the wood, and realizes what is afoot; he sends a warning message to Gunnarr and seeks out the two Þorgeirrs, scaring them off with comments contrasting their carelessness with Gunnarr's vigilance and general formidableness. Njáll is not able to avert catastrophe for long, however; in chs. 71-2 the two Þorgeirrs, encouraged by Mörðr Valgarðsson, ambush Gunnarr with the results indicated above in the discussion of Gunnarr's halberd. A third instance occurs in ch. 85, where Helgi Njálsson, having been taken by Kári Sölmundarson to the court of jarl Sigurðr of Orkney after the help given by Kári to Helgi and his brother Grímr in a battle against some Vikings elsewhere in the British Isles, falls silent as time goes on, and, when the jarl asks him the reason, indicates that territories of the jarl's in Scotland have been severely threatened by hostile action on the part of the Scots — information which turns out to be accurate in this and the following chapter, and which Kári accounts for, interestingly enough, by reference to the fact that Helgi's father, Njáll, is prescient (*forspár*). A fourth example, rather less convincing than the one just given, is provided in ch. 88, where jarl Hákon, anxious to be avenged on Víga-Hrappr for desecrating a pagan sanctuary, discovers Hrappr's whereabouts as a result of spending some time alone on his knees with his hands over his eyes. He

does not catch Hrappr, however, who runs too fast for him; and when Hrappr subsequently takes refuge on board Þráinn Sigfússon's ship, which is just about to return to Iceland from Norway, the jarl searches the ship three times, but does not find Hrappr, who is hiding in a different place each time. After the second of his three searches the jarl acknowledges that his telepathic powers seem to work when he is ashore, but fail him when he is on board ship. It may be noted that, insofar as it provides an example of a telepathic incident, the saga's account of these events has no metadiegetic element; it certainly includes passages of direct speech, some of them spoken by jarl Hákon, but none of them is used to report or explain the jarl's strange methods for detecting Hrappr's whereabouts, which are narrated (and focalised) in the first degree. A fifth example, even less striking than the fourth, though different from it in functioning in the normal way on both the metadiegetic and diegetic levels, is found at the beginning of ch. 112, where Hildigunnr wakes up on the morning on which Hǫskuldr has been killed (as described in ch. 111), notices his absence, says she has had evil dreams, and orders a search to be made for him; soon afterwards she herself finds the body. It is reasonable to suppose that she had the dreams at much the same time as the killing took place.

It seems fair to include in the sub-category of telepathic incidents as here defined five at least of the six marvellous occurrences described just after the account of the Battle of Clontarf in ch. 157; there seems little doubt that all six of them are supposed to take place contemporaneously with the battle, rather than before or after it (see Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1954, 454, n. 1; 459, n. 2). The relevant part of the chapter describes how news of the battle is made known by supernatural means, in varying degrees of accuracy and detail, in different parts of the British Isles and Iceland, and in the Faroes. All six occurrences are to be regarded for present purposes as diegetic, in that they are narrated in the first degree; the fact that the first and last of them include verses spoken by characters, the content of which must therefore be seen as metadiegetic, is irrelevant here. Only the third, the appearance of blood on the priest's chasuble at Svínafell in Iceland, on Good Friday, the day of the battle, so that he has to take the garment off, is focalised as well as narrated in the first degree. Since this means that, as the saga describes it, the occurrence in question gives very little sense of news of the battle being communicated to a particular person, I have chosen not to regard it as a telepathic

incident, and to reserve it for inclusion in my third and final category of supernatural incidents, to be discussed below. The remaining five occurrences, however, which I number here according to their placing in the six-part sequence, are all focalised in the second degree; the first and fourth of them, I would further note, are, like the third, stated to have taken place on Good Friday. The first is focalised by a certain *Dorruðr*, who, looking through the window of a woman's bower in Caithness, sees some women working at a loom which has human heads as weights, human intestines as weft and warp, a sword as beater and an arrow as shuttle, and chanting the verses now known as *Darraðarljóð*, in which the women present themselves as valkyries, and sing of the deaths of a king and a jarl, and of the lasting grief of the Irish. The second occurrence, evidently of the same kind as the first (*slíkr atburðr*) is focalised by a certain *Brandr Gneistason*, who witnesses it in the Faroes; the fourth by the priest at *Pvátta* in Iceland, to whom there appears (*sýndisk*) a deep sea full of terrors by the altar of his church, so that his singing of the office is delayed; the fifth by one *Hárekr*, who, in Orkney, thinks he sees (*þóttisk sjá*) jarl *Sigurðr* and some of his followers riding behind a hill, never to be seen again; and the sixth, finally, by jarl *Gilli*, who has a dream in the Hebrides in which a man called *Herfiðr* appears to him, says he has come from Ireland, and then tells him in a *dróttkvætt* strophe of a battle in Ireland at which jarl *Sigurðr* has died, and King *Brjánn*, though victorious, has died also.

The precognitive incidents in *Njáls saga*, which form a third sub-category within the second category of supernatural incidents here under consideration, must now be glanced at. The first obvious example is *Gunnarr's* dream of the wolves, experienced and described by him in ch. 62; this dream, and its fulfilment in the following chapter, have already been discussed in connection with *Gunnarr's* halberd (p. 32). The second example of precognition occurs in ch. 81, where *Gunnarr's* brother *Kolskeggr* dreams (in Denmark) that a man radiant with light asks him in direct speech to follow him, saying that he will find him a bride, and that *Kolskeggr* will be his knight. *Kolskeggr* agrees to this in the dream, and on waking consults a wise man who in narratised (or indirect) speech interprets the dream as meaning that *Kolskeggr* will go to southern lands and become a knight of God. The dream appears to be fulfilled at the end of the chapter, where it is reported that, after being baptised in Denmark, *Kolskeggr* went by way of Russia to Constantinople, where he married and rose to a high rank in

the Varangian guard. This incident differs from the normal pattern of incidents in this category in that the dream is narrated in the first degree (i.e. by the narrator) rather than in the second (i.e. by the character who has had the dream); it is however focalised in the second degree (i.e. by the dreamer). While it is thus primarily diegetic, the passage of direct speech in which the dream-figure foretells Kolskeggr's future does provide it with a metadiegetic, or second-degree narrative, element, and the incident in fact follows the normal pattern of a supernatural prophecy in *Njáls saga*, with the difference that the prophecy's metadiegetic element here occurs as part of a dream, focalised in the second degree. Much the same may be said of the third example, Hildiglúmr Runólfsson's vision of the *gandreið*, or witch-ride, recorded in ch. 125. The only difference between this and the second example in narratological terms is that here it is not just the person encountered in the vision, but also the person consulted afterwards about its meaning, who speaks in direct rather than narratised speech. Hildiglúmr looks towards the west from his home at Reykir in Skeið on a Sunday night twelve weeks before winter and thinks he sees (*þóttisk hann sjá*) a man on a grey horse within a circle of fire. The man, who appears to be (*sýndisk*) as black as pitch, rides close by Hildiglúmr holding a blazing firebrand in his hand and reciting (in direct speech) a verse passage in *fornyrðislag* in which he describes his horse as a bringer of ill luck (*ills valdandi*), and compares Flosi's plans to a firebrand speeding through the air. He then seems to Hildiglúmr (*þá þótti honum hann*) to fling the firebrand eastwards towards the mountains, causing a vast fire to flare up. On his father's advice, Hildiglúmr reports the vision to Hjalti Skeggjason, who tells him that what he has seen is a witch-ride, which always portends disaster (here, of course, it portends the burning of Njáll, led by Flosi, which is described in the next five chapters). Hjalti's statement in direct speech and its subsequent confirmation conform to the normal pattern of a supernatural prophecy, except that the prophecy is here occasioned by a vision focalised in the second degree; in other respects the incident is exactly parallel to the previous example, as already indicated. The remaining three examples all operate in the normal way on the metadiegetic and diegetic levels. The next one, the fourth, is Njáll's statement in ch. 127, just after his wife Bergþóra has served food to their household for what she prophesies will be the last time, that he thinks he can see all parts of the room in which they are sitting, that both the gable-walls appear to have collapsed, and that there seems to be blood

on the table and the food. Here he is clearly having a precognitive intimation of the destruction and death caused by the burning, and described in chs. 129-30. The fifth example occurs in ch. 133, where, shortly after the burning, Flosi tells Ketill of Mork of a dream he has just had at Svínafell of how the Lómagnúpr cliff had opened to let out a man dressed in a goatskin, carrying an iron staff, and calling out a number of people's names. Of those named that Flosi himself specifies in his account of the dream, all except one had supported him either at the burning or in the feud leading up to it; the one exception, Eyjólfur Bølverksson, later gave him his support (chs. 138-45) in connection with the prosecution against him at the Alþingi for the slaying of Njáll's son Helgi at the burning. The man had given his name as Járngrímr and was on his way to the Alþingi, where a battle was to take place in which (so he claimed in a *dróttkvætt* strophe) a mighty warrior would emerge. Ketill interprets the dream as meaning that all those called are doomed to die; and all those specified by Flosi are in fact subsequently killed, most of them by Kári, either in the fight that breaks out at the Alþingi in ch. 145 or on various subsequent occasions. The sixth and final example occurs in ch. 134, where Yngvildr Þorkelsdóttir, asked why she is weeping just after her sons Þorkell and Þorvaldr have agreed to give Flosi their support at the Alþingi, says she has dreamt that Þorvaldr was wearing a red tunic that seemed to fit him as tightly as if he had been sewn into it, and red leggings similarly tightly bound. She was distressed to see that he was so uncomfortable, but could do nothing to help him. That this is a precognitive intimation of Þorvaldr's death may be concluded from ch. 145, where he is killed by Þorgeirr skorargeirr Þórisson in the fight at the Alþingi.

With only a few exceptions, then, the incidents in these first two categories operate on both the metadiegetic and diegetic levels, and are supernatural only insofar as they operate on both. Furthermore, while the diegetic element in each of them is usually essential to the story, the metadiegetic element is not. This implies that the author of the saga is interested in them not so much because they are supernatural as because they are useful proleptic (or in some cases analeptic) devices.

The incidents in the third category, now to be discussed, are, by contrast, almost exclusively diegetic, in that they are narrated predominantly in the first degree, and may in general be recognised as supernatural without reference to any other level or degree of narrative; what metadiegetic elements they have are in each case

subordinate to the diegetic element. Some of them, however, are focalised in the second degree, which presumably means that from the point of view of the narrator (if not the author) the incidents so focalised are less certainly supernatural than those focalised (as well as narrated) in the first. The incidents focalised in the *second* degree may be listed as follows: Gunnarr's ghost, twice witnessed in ch. 78, and discussed above (pp. 35-6); the verses heard among the flames at Bergþórshváll after the burning, in ch. 130; the marks found on Skarpheðinn's body after the burning, in ch. 132; and Hrafn inn rauði's vision of hell at the Battle of Clontarf in ch. 157, noted above (p. 36). Those focalised as well as narrated in the *first* degree may be listed as follows: the appearance of blood on Gunnarr's halberd in ch. 72, discussed above (pp. 32-6); Pangbrandr's miraculous escape from Galdra-Heðinn's sorcery in ch. 101 (referred to above, p. 31); Pangbrandr's defeat of the berserk Ótryggr by miraculous means in ch. 103; Ámundi the Blind's temporary gift of sight, enabling him to kill Lýtingr, in ch. 106; Porkell hákr's slaying of fabulous monsters on the continent, reported in ch. 119; the unburnt state of Njáll's and Bergþóra's bodies after the burning, in ch. 132, and, in the same chapter, the continuous spouting of blood from Þórhallr Ásgrímsson's ears when he hears of Njáll's death; the gigantic waves which cause Flosi to land in Orkney in ch. 153; Bróðir's three-night harassment in ch. 156, discussed above (p. 36); Bróðir's invulnerability at the Battle of Clontarf and his long delay in dying at the hands of his captors, in ch. 157, and, in the same chapter, the healing quality of King Brjánn's blood and the miraculous grafting of his head to his body; and, finally, the portent on Good Friday at Svínafell in Iceland, also in ch. 157, and discussed above (p. 39).

It will be noticed that most of the incidents in the second of these two lists take place in connection with the conversion of Iceland, the burning of Njáll, and the Battle of Clontarf, all events of greater or lesser Christian significance in *Njáls saga* (cf. Schach 1984, 120-22; Maxwell 1957-61, 35-46; Fox 1963, 301-09). The only exceptions are the blood on Gunnarr's halberd, Porkell hákr's monster-slayings, and the gigantic waves. The first of these is included in the saga for special reasons, as I have argued above (p. 34); the second may be explained away as a completing internal analepsis of the kind known as heterodiegetic, its purpose being to introduce Porkell hákr by dwelling on his antecedents (cf. Genette 1980, 50); and the third is too minor to disturb the general impression given by the list, which is that the author of *Njáls saga*

wishes to draw special attention to the incidents in question, and to the decidedly Christian contexts in which they mostly occur, by emphasising their supernatural character. The fact that they are narrated on the first level *as well as* focalised in the first degree strongly suggests that the author wishes them to be regarded as more unambiguously supernatural than any of the other incidents considered here. This argument, if accepted, may be used in support of a view for which other students of *Njáls saga* have produced other arguments: that the conversion of Iceland is thematically as well as structurally central in the story of *Njáls saga* (cf. Schach 1984, 120-22; Maxwell 1957-61, 35-46; Fox 1963, 301-09; Lönnroth 1975, 69-73).

Elsewhere, in a discussion of *Eyrbyggja saga* (McTurk 1987), I have distinguished between subjectivist and objectivist approaches to the supernatural by creative writers. Subjectivist statements, at their simplest, are characterised by second-degree focalisation in combination with either first- or second-level narrative; whereas objectivist statements are characterised by first-degree focalisation in combination with (inevitably) first-level narrative. In accounts of supernatural experiences, subjectivist statements tend to imply that supernatural phenomena exist only in the minds of those who experience them, whereas objectivist statements tend to imply that such phenomena exist independently of those who experience them. What has emerged from the present study, I believe, is that in *Njáls saga*, where the supernatural is concerned, objectivist statements are for the most part reserved for accounts of supernatural events of specifically Christian significance. I would finally emphasise that a subjectivist or objectivist statement in Old Icelandic will not necessarily survive as such in a translation, and that anyone wishing to check the points made here should of course do so by reference to the Icelandic text. If indeed the present study achieves nothing more than to direct or redirect readers of *Njáls saga* from translations to the original, it will at least have achieved something.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this paper was delivered at the Sixth International Saga Conference held at Helsingør in 1985; a brief summary of that version appears in the Workshop Papers of the Conference, *SISC*, II 775. The paper was later delivered in revised form at the Viking Society Student Conference on *Njáls saga* held at Birkbeck College, London, on March 3, 1990, and the present version follows that revised one closely. While the revisions do not include a discussion of Lindow



1986, which has appeared since this paper was first delivered and is reviewed by Andrew Wawn in *Saga-Book* 22:5 (1988), 299, I strongly recommend it for purposes of comparison and contrast with the approach adopted here. I am grateful to the editors of *Saga-Book*, particularly Desmond Slay, for a number of very helpful suggestions of which I have done my best to take account in the present, final version of the paper.

<sup>2</sup> Here I am basing myself on Genette 1980 and 1988, and also, though to a lesser extent, on Bal 1977 and 1985.

<sup>3</sup> Here I have made use of the Glossary of Terms in Ebon 1978, 509-12, and of Heywood 1978, 17.

<sup>4</sup> I am sufficiently persuaded by Genette's defence (1988, 91-5) of his earlier use (1980, 231-7) of the term *metadiegetic* to adopt it here in preference to the term *hypodiegetic*, which I have used elsewhere (*SISC*, II 775, and McTurk 1987) in discussing the supernatural in Old Icelandic literature.

<sup>5</sup> I have borrowed the term *halberd* here, *faute de mieux*, from Cleasby and Vigfusson 1957 (where it appears under *atgeirr*). Bayerschmidt and Hollander 1955 and Magnusson and Pálsson 1960 also use it in their translations of *Njáls saga*.

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*SISC* = *The Sixth International Saga Conference 28.7.-2.8. 1985. Workshop papers*. 1985.

## THE SILK-CLAD VARANGIAN: ÞORLEIFUR REPP AND *FÆREYINGA SAGA*

By ANDREW WAWN

There is little in the life and achievement of the early nineteenth-century Icelandic philologist Þorleifur Guðmundsson Repp (Wawn forthcoming, 1992; Páll Eggert Ólason 1916; Tómas Guðmundsson 1981) to bolster the morale of his late twentieth-century philological successors, save perhaps to teach them to count their blessings. By the time Repp had died a lingering bronchial death in the bitter Copenhagen winter of 1857 at the age of 63, he had come to personify the uncomfortably close connection which could then exist between the dedicated pursuit of a career in philology (as then broadly defined) and grinding personal poverty, humiliating intellectual disappointment and remorseless institutional hostility.

There were many, not least in the Great Britain where he lived for some twelve years in all, who believed that Repp was amongst the most learned men in Europe (*Certificates* 1834, 8-16), but this will have been small consolation to him in those final bleak Copenhagen years: exiled from his native Iceland, and destined never to see it again in his lifetime, and living a life of acute financial privation in Denmark, a land for which he felt little sympathy. This destitution, a frequent theme in letters (Lbs Orde MSS) to his elder daughter Anne in England, suggests that with Repp, as with another famous Danish university man of an earlier vintage, all occasions did inform against him.<sup>1</sup> During the 1850s, Repp was destitute, in spite of an expressed willingness to undertake work in places as far apart as London (31 January 1853; this and subsequent dates in this paragraph refer to letters in the Lbs Orde MSS; unless otherwise stated they are from Þorleifr to Anne Repp or Ralph Carr), Schlesvig-Holstein (12 February 1854, 7 July 1854) or even Asia (14 August 1834); destitute because, when applying for a post as translator on board the flagship of the British fleet in the Baltic, he found there were a hundred and sixty other applicants (7 July 1854); destitute because raging inflation had led people in Copenhagen to cut back on precisely the sort of language instruction then provided by Repp and his children (Hill Repp to Anne Repp, 14 October 1858); destitute because, latterly, he could not even afford a respectable suit of clothes in which to visit

potential clients (1 September 1854); destitute because of the 'twaddle, clamour and confusion' (14 December 1852) of mid nineteenth-century wartime Denmark which led to chronic delays and paralysis in filling the kinds of academic or administrative posts for which Repp would have been an obvious candidate; destitute because Repp's unquenchable Britophilia, his tendency always to talk *fra et engelsk standpunkt* (the accusation of an exasperated correspondent in the Copenhagen newspaper which Repp founded and edited; *Tiden* 120, 10 January 1849), did not guarantee him universal popularity in a city which in 1807 had been spectacularly bombarded by the English; destitute because ten years' residence in Edinburgh as librarian at the Advocates' Library had left Repp, according to unsympathetic Copenhagen rumour, with elements of a Scottish accent, thus rendering him of doubtful value as a teacher of English (31 January 1853, but see Carr's letter to Repp, 11 April 1837); and destitute, too, it must be added, because of the Icelander's Jekyll and Hyde personality. He was energetic, inquisitive, witty, engaging, and whimsical; but he was also paranoid, obsessive, vindictive, mischief-making, worm-tongued; an *ódæll maðr*, who, in the words of the great Victorian saga translators, was 'difficult to have dealings with'.

So it was that, after his death, his coffin was only shipped back to Iceland through the financial generosity of his Icelandic friends in Copenhagen, and it was not until 6 July 1989, the 195th anniversary of his birth, that an inscribed stone was raised in his honour at the Hólavallagarður in Reykjavík (reported in *Þjóðviljinn*, 19 July 1989), just a few paces from the much grander monument to a more famous Icelander, a former Copenhagen colleague and adversary of Repp's, and his former English language pupil, Jón Sigurðsson (Páll Eggert Ólason 1945-6, 51; Porleifur to Anne, Lbs Orde MSS, 20 September 1856). How appropriate, in view of all this, that Repp's name became proverbially if not proverbially associated in the Icelandic language with destitution and poverty. It was Benedikt Gröndal who appears to have coined the expression *að vera bláfátækur eins og Repp* ('to be destitute like Repp'; Gröndal 1861, 25).

Such details serve to introduce Porleifur Repp, the exile, the Britophile, the Advocates' librarian, the priest's son from Reykjadalur í Hreppum (whence the name Repp) in Árnæssýsla in the South of Iceland. They also, as will become apparent, provide a necessary backcloth to the particular theme of this paper, Porleifur Repp's association with *Færeyinga saga*. But why should Repp be

the lens through which to view *Færeyinga saga*; or, put more accurately, why should one episode from *Færeyinga saga* be the lens through which to view Repp and his relations with Britain? At one level the question is readily answered. While working in Edinburgh, perhaps around 1832,<sup>2</sup> Repp produced an unpublished English paraphrase, five quarto pages in length, of material which would now be recognised as chapter five of the saga; he then, at much the same time, produced a lengthier (twenty-seven quarto sides) and more striking English adaptation of chapters 4-7 of the saga entitled 'Sigmund Bresterson (a Tale)', again unfinished and unpublished. The existence of these versions (both in Lbs MS ÍB 90a fol.), never previously noted or discussed (it is listed in neither Lbs MS JS 106 4to, number 1174, nor in Fry 1980), amongst the mass of Repp manuscripts on deposit at Landsbókasafn Íslands in Reykjavík, prompts several further questions, however. Why was Repp in Edinburgh? Why did he attempt these two remarkable adaptations from *Færeyinga saga* in English? Most importantly, who was the mysterious Varangian identified in the title of this essay?

It can be said at the outset that few Britons in the early 1830s were clamouring impatiently for an English translation or adaptation of *Færeyinga saga*, or indeed of any other saga. This is not to suggest that by 1830 there was or had been no British tradition of saga translation. There are glimpses of an austere, earlier fragmented tradition, generated entirely by an Enlightenment hunger for as comprehensive an historical record of Britain as possible; for instance, James Johnstone's version (published in Copenhagen) of the last part of *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, with its account of the Battle of Largs (Johnstone 1782); and, concealed in a volume unpromisingly entitled *Fragments of English and Irish History* (Thorkelín 1788), the British sections from *Ragnars saga loðbrókar* and *Laxdæla saga*, Icelandic texts with painstaking English facing-page translations by Grímur Thorkelín, off-cuts, as it were, from his labours in the British Museum unearthing Danish history (notably as recorded in the poem later to be known as *Beowulf*) for the Arnamagnæan Commission. There was, too, a solitary instance of the beginnings of a British tradition of saga adaptation rather than translation; in 1812, *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu* found itself adapted for the stage of the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh, by the Iceland-explorer Sir George Mackenzie. The play, a ludicrous melodrama called *Helga*, complete with a banal verse prologue written by Sir Walter Scott, who should have known better, proved

an utter travesty; it ran for one night, and was derisively hissed off the stage (Wawn 1982). But these are isolated examples of saga translation or adaptation, and appear as nothing when set alongside the endless stream of pallid crypto-Miltonic paraphrases of Icelandic heroic poetry emanating from the armchair primitives of late eighteenth-century Britain; poems in which every battlefield is 'ensanguin'd', every spear 'anointed' with blood, and every 'jet-black raven' wades up to its beak in the gore of the slain (Omberg 1976).

Thus, when Repp undertook to produce an English version of *Færeyinga saga* material in the early 1830s, he was effectively on his own, certainly without the subsequent great Victorian tradition of saga translation or adaptation to guide him: no Samuel Laing (*Heimskringla* 1844), no George Dasent (*Brennu-Njáls saga* 1861), no Edmund Head (*Víga-Glúms saga* 1866), and certainly no William Morris and Eiríkur Magnússon (as with *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* 1869).<sup>3</sup> One way to register how far ahead of their time Repp's efforts with *Færeyinga saga* were is to consider the literary manifestations of Grettir Ásmundarson the outlaw in nineteenth-century Britain. To begin with the image offered by Sabine Baring-Gould, schoolteacher, cleric, and amateur philologist whose high-Victorian brand of bright-eyed, muscular Christianity bordered on self-parody: Baring-Gould was enchanted with Iceland in general — 'farewell heat and welcome frost' (Baring-Gould 1863, title-page) — and with the literary image of Grettir in particular. Following a visit to Iceland in the summer of 1862, nearly every chapter in his *Iceland: its Scenes and Sagas* (1863) includes his own translations of sections from *Grettis saga*, a new Icelandic edition of which had been published in Copenhagen in 1853. There are few pages of Baring-Gould's book which do not refer to the landscapes and antiquities of Grettir, real and imagined: the lost valley of Þórisdalur, Grettir's cottage at Arnarvatn, his childhood home at Bjarg, the eery cave behind Goðafoss. In Baring-Gould's Iceland, there was scarcely a river in which Grettir had not swum, scarcely a boulder which he had not tossed, scarcely a shelter to which he had not accidentally set fire. Baring-Gould's 1863 travel book with its generous freight of fragmentary translation gave way first to the William Morris/Eiríkur Magnússon complete translation of 1869; it subsequently gave way to Baring-Gould's own prose adaptation of the whole saga, *Grettir the Outlaw: a Story of Iceland* (1890), aimed at and appropriately censored for the sons of those former preparatory school pupils to whom he

had first told stories of Grettir during nature rambles on half-holidays (Baring-Gould 1890, v-vi). Quite what effect this improbable role-model had on the behaviour of boisterous Victorian schoolboys in general is not recorded,<sup>4</sup> but the mid and late Victorian sequence of events is clear and noteworthy: Danish scholarly edition of the saga, travel, travel book, translation, adaptation.

The marked difference in attitudes to Grettir earlier in the century (and nearer the time when Repp was contemplating work on *Færeyinga saga*) can be seen in the Enlightenment scepticism of another equally enthusiastic Icelandophile, Henry Holland. In 1810 the Cheshire physician and explorer journeyed overland from Reykjavík to the Snæfellsnes peninsula, passing en route 'the very singular insulated hill' known as Grettisbæli. The moment is recorded in his travel journal:

This hill is celebrated as having been in days of yore, the retreat of an Icelandic warrior, known in the songs of the country; who took refuge here from his enemies, & assisted by one friend in the valley below, contrived to maintain himself in this situation for two and a half years. Thus the story goes — *Valeat quantum valere possit* [let it pass for what it is worth] (Wawn 1987, 173-4)

The tone is cool, forensic, full of discriminating caution towards these mistily attested legends of Grettir and his friend Björn Hítðelakappi Arngeirsson. But, Holland's journal does at least mention the Grettir tradition; his colleague and fellow Iceland-explorer Sir George Mackenzie, in his published account of this same day's events (a narrative consistently dependent to the point of plagiarism on Holland's manuscript journal; Wawn 1987, 44-53) mentions the hill, and its mineralogy, but omits all reference to Grettir and the saga associations (Mackenzie 1811, 159).

Holland had left Edinburgh by the time of Repp's arrival in 1826, but Sir George Mackenzie was still very much in evidence. He had by this time added phrenology to his other scientific interests, and it seems likely from what we have already learnt of him, that anyone suggesting to Sir George the need for saga adaptations in English would have been recommended, quite literally, to have his head examined. Mackenzie, like Holland, was content with the great late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Copenhagen Arnamagnæan Commission editions, each with its edited Icelandic text and facing-page Latin translation and textual apparatus. Thus, Edinburgh in the early 1830s appeared to offer little encouragement to Repp's ambitions as an adaptor of Icelandic sagas.

Nor was this absence of a supportive tradition of saga translation and saga adaptation in Britain at this time Repp's only problem. There was also the problem of interesting 1830s Edinburgh in the Faroe Islands in general and *Færeyinga saga* in particular. Little was known of *Færeyinga saga* as such at this time; the first printed text to bear this title was C. C. Rafn's Copenhagen edition of 1832; indeed it may well have been that when Repp began his adaptation of chapters 4-7 of this saga, he thought of the narrative material as part of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, in the wake of the publication of the early volumes of *Fornmanna sögur* in Copenhagen after 1825. Nor can many people in Edinburgh have been familiar with the Faroe Islands, or even have felt the need to become familiar with them. These were, after all, Danish islands. The *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1797, V 759-61) gave vivid expression to characteristically censorious British attitudes to Denmark in the early nineteenth century: the Danes are servile, indolent, extravagant, proud, mean, insolent, mean-spirited, deceitful, and, the ultimate desolation for the British gentleman, Denmark is 'indifferently furnished with game'.

Even amongst those in early nineteenth-century Edinburgh who were keen to learn about the legendary past of the Faroe Islands, there was little enlightenment from the available publications, and thus little inspiration for *Færeyinga saga* adaptations. It was possible, for instance, to read about the Faroes in an English translation (Landt 1810) of George [Jørgen] Landt's comprehensive account of the islands, published in Copenhagen ten years earlier; but it was a very partial picture, with much on seal-catching and sea-weed, little on legend, and not a mention of *Færeyinga saga* or the events it records. One English-language alternative to Landt was the 1676 translation of Lucas Jacobson Debes's 1673 account (in Danish) of the Faroes. This offers graphic accounts of child-molesting hobgoblins in its splendid chapter '*Of Specters and Illusions of Satani in Ferøe*' (Debes 1676, 349-408), material which greatly offended Landt's relentless Enlightenment rationality; but there was hardly a mention of Þrándr and Sigmundur Brestisson and other prominent figures from the saga. A third possibility for the keen Faroe Islands enthusiast was to examine the scientific papers published by Sir George Mackenzie in the wake of his April 1812 visit to the islands. However, as with Grettisbæli in Iceland, it was to the mineralogy of the Faroes that Sir George directed his gaze; to those readers searching for Faroese legends and traditions, Mackenzie returns a blank stare (Mackenzie 1814).

Sir George's celebrated predecessor as an Iceland explorer, John Thomas Stanley of Alderley, had also written on the Faroes. Stanley, like Mackenzie and Holland a product of an Edinburgh University education, had visited the Faroes on his way to Iceland in the summer of 1789. Moreover, Stanley had enjoyed his brief visit, entering into what he took to be the fashionably sublime Gothic spirit of the place by riding across a chill Faroese landscape reading aloud to his companions from Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*; high marks for sensibility if not for sense (CRO MS DSA 7/1, Stanley to Dr. Charles Scot of Edinburgh, 18 June 1789; also West 1970-6, I 41, III 43; and Wawn 1989). As late as 1847, the (by then) octogenarian explorer was lamenting (Lbs MS 3886 4to, 456-8) how little the Faroes were known to the leisured British yacht-owning classes. Stanley felt that they should visit the islands; they would find 'amusement and gratification of curiosity'; no 'coarseness or vulgarity of manners to offend them'; visitors would be untroubled by the Faroese language; there were spectacular rockscapes to 'excite sentiments of sublimity and terror' in the romantic traveller; and, what is more, no matter how 'indifferently furnished with game' Denmark might be, the Faroes with their 'millions of wildfowl hovering round. . . in the deep and gloomy straights dividing the islands' offered excellent shooting for the sharp-eyed sportsman. Stanley was clearly an enthusiast for the Faroese present and was aware of the Faroese past, but it remained an awareness confined to extensive manuscript annotation (Lbs MS 3886 4to, 164 ff.) of his copies of the journals written by his travelling companions. In Stanley's disappointingly austere published papers (Stanley 1794) from the 1789 expedition to Iceland, there is not a word about the Faroes or their legends. Indeed, in the early years of the nineteenth century, the most likely source for developing an informed historical interest in Faroese history and legend was Þormóður Torfason's *Commentatio de rebus gestis Færeyensium* (Torfæus 1695), but the relative paucity of references to this learned Latin volume amongst later writings in English on the Faroes suggests limited accessibility and readership.

Thus, in undertaking an adaptation of *Færeyinga saga* material in Edinburgh in the early 1830s, Repp could count on no strong native awareness of either the Faroes or their history: he was adapting material from a saga that virtually no-one knew; he was doing it at a time when saga adaptation was unfamiliar; and his chosen narrative concerned the history of Danish islands which were little known in Britain save for their links with Orcadian



smugglers. Yet Repp persisted with his seemingly unpropitious enterprise; and such was his reputation in Edinburgh by 1830 that any attempt on his part to popularise *Færeyinga saga* material amongst the *literati* of Edinburgh would cause that community to sit up and take notice. In order to appreciate the nature of Repp's renown at this time, it is important to identify briefly the process by which this Icelandic philologist had found himself living and working in the Athens of the North.

It is a long way from *Árnessýsla* to Repp's homes in Queen's Street and St. Cuthbert's Glebe in the Scottish capital, but an air of inevitability stalks his progress from the one to the other. It was inevitable that the bright son of a country priest from the South of Iceland would study at the excellent Latin school at Bessastaðir around 1810. It was inevitable that a gifted Bessastaðir pupil would be tempted by the prospect of further University study in Copenhagen. It was also inevitable that Repp's linguistic abilities would attract attention in Copenhagen; his Danish versions of material from *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (published in *Dansk Minerva* 1819, 97-115, 266-81) may suggest some association with the *Norræna Fornfræðafélagið*, some of whose members were by this time hard at work on the transcription and editing of this saga which was eventually to appear in the first volumes of *Fornmanna sögur*. Repp may even by this time have also begun his association with the Arnamagnæan Commission in the Danish capital; such associations alone could have taken him to London, as they had his fellow-countryman Grímur Thorkelín thirty years earlier. A visit to Britain was made even more inevitable, however, firstly by the Icelander's insatiable enthusiasm for English literature, of which he delighted to exhibit knowledge on every occasion,<sup>5</sup> and, secondly, by his acquaintance with at least one well-connected member of the British diplomatic corps in Copenhagen, namely the ambassador Augustus Foster (Anna Agnarsdóttir 1987, 10), whose Old Etonian friend, the M.P. David Ker, was to become a source of much help to Repp (Lbs MS JS 98 fol., letters from Repp to Birgir Thorlacius in 1822). This proved an important contact for the young philologist, because Ker's wife was the sister of the Prime Minister, Lord Castlereagh. There were thus many doors waiting to open upon Repp's arrival in the British capital.

Repp duly went to London, lived in Battersea, and mixed in high society before returning to Copenhagen in 1822 to complete his studies and further enhance his philological reputation. By so doing he set up a further and fateful inevitability. In 1825, the

Advocates' Library in Edinburgh were looking for a new Assistant Keeper of Books, and, initial overtures to Rasmus Rask having proved fruitless, requests were sent to Copenhagen for a 'young Icelander educated in Copenhagen. . . eminently skilled in the Icelandic tongue' (*Report* 1829, 6-7, quoting a letter dated 14 March 1825 from David Irving to Bishop Peter Müller). The initial desire to acquire the services of a celebrated European philologist, and failing that, the subsequent eagerness to appoint a well-qualified Icelander, can best be explained against the background of important Advocates' Library acquisitions at that time.<sup>6</sup> In 1819 the library, having since 1812 purchased individual Icelandic manuscripts from Grímur Thorkelín and from Finnur Magnússon, acquired the bulk of Thorkelín's library, a wide ranging and important collection of some 1500 items (*Miscellany* 1957, 3; Cadell and Matheson 1989, 68); the following year the 100,000 item Dieterichs collection of German material was purchased. That the Advocates had sought Rask's services marks the importance they attached to these major European accessions; as does the subsequent search for a well qualified Icelander. First Müller and then Rask recommended Þorleifur Repp to the Advocates' Library. He was a Britophile, an accomplished philologist, and someone whose English literary sympathies amounted to little short of an obsession; anything from Shakespeare to Charlotte Smith, from Smollett to Sir Walter Scott, from Byron and Beattie to Broomfield and Bolingbroke (Lbs MS ÍB 89b fol., see below, note 5). After some delays, Repp was duly appointed and worked in Edinburgh for nearly ten years from 1826, not the least of his duties being the preparation of detailed descriptions of the library's Icelandic manuscripts (see Lbs MS JS 312 8vo). Repp soon achieved a reputation as one of the most fertile and inventive philological minds in the Scottish capital. He published constantly: books, pamphlets, papers for learned societies, book reviews, letters for newspapers, articles for encyclopædias. His knowledge of some dozen and a half languages put him in great demand as a translator and as a teacher, the latter work generating a loyal and appreciative following amongst his pupils.

Yet this high public profile was only the tip of the iceberg. For every piece published, for every class taught, there are large numbers of unpublished manuscripts (Lbs MSS ÍB 88-90 fol.) which reveal that Repp was a great non-finisher of projects. There are, among his extant manuscripts, numerous unfinished essays and unfulfilled schemes: a history of Norse mythology; a plan to

publish an Icelandic text and English translation of *Heimskringla* well before Samuel Laing's pioneering efforts of 1844; a scheme for reorganising Scottish universities; plans for new journals and newspapers and for a new literary museum and library in Edinburgh; an application for royal funding for an expedition to 'enquire into the nature of the Tartarian and Caucasian tongue'; pedagogic materials for his pupils (or perhaps in one or two cases for himself) in Greek, Latin, Italian, French, Hebrew, Gaelic, Finnish, Hungarian, Arabic, Danish, Icelandic, Swedish and in runes. Everywhere there are stray musings, satiric squibs, poems, sketches for plays; everywhere, too, there is evidence of an obsessive love of list-making, whether of Pictish kings, or of Boccaccio's plots, or, not least, of his own publications: there are repeated fair copies of Repp's *curriculum vitæ*, written up at different stages of his career, clear evidence, in the light of all else that we come to know of the Icelander, of an chronic self-preoccupation, constantly seized by the need to bolster his own self-esteem by the feverish listing of accumulated scholarly publications and achievements. All this and much more can be found in his surviving manuscripts; the learned philologist and the disoriented magpie are equally in evidence.

Three themes assume a particular prominence in all that Repp wrote. Each is significant in the context of Repp's responses to *Færeyinga saga*. Firstly he was a devoted follower of the new comparative philologists, Sir William Jones, Colebrook, Bopp, Adelung, the Grimms, Rask. He was intoxicated by their revelations of pattern, order, coherence, predictability behind the apparently random buzz and flux of the languages of the world; he was exhilarated by the idea that each individual language could now be placed in an identifiable overall comparative linguistic scheme. His view of his mentor Rask's work is characteristically lyrical:

Here we begin to discern in the speech of man, the same concatenation, the same universal laws, the same beauty and symmetry and proportion, which science has discovered in Music, in the motion of heavenly bodies, in the frame of an insect, as well as that of an elephant. Most of the former grammarians added a stone to Babel and rendered the confusion greater. Rask removed the rubbish and cleared the ruins and he is able to show you, not from vague dreams or unestablished theories but from uncontrovertible facts, that this nation spoke thus because their parents tho' differently yet spoke thus and their descendants tho' again in another way still spoke thus (Lbs MS ÍB 89a fol., an outline for a proposed 'Philological Course').

Repp believed that the methodologies deriving from comparative

philology had a much wider application: 'the future fate and condition of our globe', no less, could be at stake unless similar procedures were developed in the fields of political science and comparative religion. For Repp 'the natural history of language must be considered as the pole star for the History of man' (Lbs MS ÍB 89a fol., *ibid.*).

It was because he believed all such revelations to be so apocalyptically important that he viewed the example set by the University of Oxford in these areas as so utterly lamentable. All Repp saw and heard from Oxford was lofty condescension, self-absorbed complacency and an overpowering and unforgivable sense of idleness: the University, its wealth of primary sources notwithstanding, had become in Repp's words 'the miser's warehouse of all human knowledge' (paper in Lbs MS ÍB 90b fol.). Happily Repp died before the appearance of Frederick Metcalfe's 1861 travel book *The Oxonian in Iceland*, with its dispiriting suggestion (p.285) that in *Laxdæla saga* the correct pronunciation of the name Bolli must be taken to indicate that he was an ancestor of the founder of the Bodleian library. Small wonder that Repp preferred to stay in Edinburgh.

Repp's second intellectual priority was to celebrate Iceland's *fornaldar frægð*, to borrow the phrase of his future Copenhagen colleague Jónas Hallgrímsson ('Island', 1835, in *Ljóðmæli*, 1847). He recalled the proud fate of those who, defeated at Hafrsfjörðr, were to settle Iceland: they were the 'progeny of the Gods', the 'vigorous flower of the Norwegian aristocracy', with their 'intrepid' navigation, their 'far superior' laws (Repp 1832, 254, 256). Above all, in what Repp wrote about the Old Icelandic language during his Edinburgh years, there is a glowing nationalistic pride at the pervasiveness of its influence around the North Atlantic. Icelandic with its 'Gothic system of inflections and Gothic laws of construction' had encouraged other nations to abandon their own tongues and adopt linguistic forms 'Gothic in form, matter and spirit' (Repp 1832, 160). The extent of that domination could only be apparent to those 'who know the originals, — the parent tongue of the Gothic nations, — the Icelandic'. Here was one Icelandic legacy which, if Repp had anything to do with it, would not be allowed to earn Jónas's censure for having *fallin í gleymsku*. He saw one of his main roles in Edinburgh to be that of spreading knowledge of the language and the ancient literature of Iceland:

It is to be lamented, that through ignorance of the ancient Norse language, and the consequent inaccessibleness of true records, and the confinement of modern

historians to the very partial chronicles of timid monks, as their only source of information for the middle ages, history has been so thoroughly falsified, that it will now require the labour of learned and enlightened men for some centuries to come, to clear away prejudices too long established, and to reconquer for the Scandinavians that lofty place which they ought to occupy in the annals of the world. There is no remedy against this chronic disease . . . but an attentive study of the Icelandic, and a thorough perusal of ancient Northern literature, the vast extent of which is even unknown among the leading nations of modern Europe (Repp 1832, 163).

There were those ready to encourage him in this task. In the late 1780s the Scottish antiquarian John Pinkerton and Grímur Thorkelín (whilst on a visit to Scotland) had proposed a new linguistic theory which sought to challenge the notion (widely held at the time, and not just by the English) that Scottish dialect was essentially a degenerate form of Standard English.<sup>7</sup> The new idea being developed was that Scottish English derived directly from Old Norse as introduced to Scotland by the Picts, who were to be thought of as descendants of migrant Scythian tribes, known variously by the Romans as Peohtas, Peahtas, Pehtas. Some of these people had settled in the regions of the Danube, whilst others moved further north into Scandinavia. There, according to Pinkerton, the pronunciation of the P in their name underwent change under the influence of the cold climate:

This seems the most remarkable instance of the effect of climate upon language; for P and W are the most open of the labial letters; and V is the most shut. The former requires an open mouth; the later may be pronounced with the mouth almost closed, which rendered it an acceptable substitute in the cold climate of Scandinavia, where the people delighted, as they still delight, in gutturals and dentals. The climate rendered their organs rigid and contracted; and cold made them keep their mouths as much shut as possible (Pinkerton 1789, 354).

Thus the Pe(o)htas became Vik(t)s, Vikings — Scandinavian sea-pirates from the Vík in Norway. Arriving in a surely only marginally milder Scotland, the invaders apparently found their labials re-opening, and thus the tribal name underwent a reverse transformation from Vik(t)s to Picks to Picts. The theory seemed a great deal less comically bizarre at the end of the eighteenth century than it does now. It proved in fact deeply seductive to many Scots and to many Scandinavians, and Repp was amongst those who explored its cultural implications enthusiastically.<sup>8</sup> Sir Walter Scott (1835, 357-67), deeply attached as he was to the Norse antiquities of his homeland, poured scorn on it; but as a high Scottish Tory of the time, he might be expected to have done. After all, his own splendid Norse-influenced novel *The Pirate* (1822), set amidst the seventeenth-century remains of the ancient

Viking kingdom of Shetland, Orkney and Caithness, had ended with romantic but self-destructive Viking values overthrown by the forces of calm Hanoverian compromise (see Wawn forthcoming, 1990/91). Not surprisingly, to more Whiggish Scottish intellectuals, less instinctively enthused by the sight and sound of things Hanoverian, the notion of Norse derivation for Scottish dialect was both politically and intellectually appealing. If Hanoverian supremacy North of the Border had been supported strategically in the eighteenth century by turnpike roads, perhaps now it could be challenged intellectually in the early nineteenth century by comparative philology.

A third pervasive theme in Repp's writings was justice and juries. The concerns of Repp's *Historical Treatise on Trial by Jury, Wager of Law, and other co-ordinate forensic institutions formerly in use in Scandinavia and in Iceland* (1832), lavishly illustrated from Icelandic saga literature, anticipate his 1849 election address to the voters of his home region of Árnessýsla (Einkaskjöl E 182, Þjóðskjalasafn Íslands; Páll Eggert Ólason 1916, 151-2), with the inflexible legal systems of early nineteenth-century mainland Europe contrasted unfavourably with the liberal judicial processes of Britain, the latter based on the kind of Old Norse principles which ought to underpin any future reform of the Icelandic legal system, currently choking, he believed, under the weight of alien Danish imposition.

These themes, comparative philology, which led to a delight in intellectual order and system, a pride in Old Icelandic culture (especially its language and literature), and British justice, find constant expression in Repp's writings during his Edinburgh years and may be expected to cast a shadow across his work on *Færeyinga saga*. An additional theme casts its shadow, too. The more time is spent reading through the extant manuscripts of his writings, the more the impression forms that a favourite topic of Þorleifur Repp is Þorleifur Repp. His fondness for updating and rewriting his *curriculum vitæ* has already been noted, but the brooding self-preoccupation seems to have gone deeper than that. His articles in the early volumes of the *Penny Cyclopædia* in 1833 offer further evidence; his account (I, 135-6) of the Advocates' Library can be read as a thinly disguised recital of his own professional discontents there, whilst his discussion (I, 318-22) of King Alfred the Great is not only unusually fair-minded towards the Vikings, but appears to single out for praise in the Anglo-Saxon king those qualities for which Repp sought recognition in himself, notably precocious

linguistic talent, and those attitudes of which Repp approved, notably support for foreign scholars in Britain.

One obvious reason why by the early 1830s he found images of justice, intellectual order and Icelandic cultural conquest so personally appealing was that it had already become clear that these qualities were little in evidence in the Advocates' Library where he had come to work. Almost from the outset, Repp had clashed volcanically with David Irving, his superior, the Keeper of Books. The origins of what developed into an eight-year feud of Eddic proportions were trivial, as such institutional feuds invariably are, mere clashes of personality dignified into portentous questions of principle; but they are important to an understanding of what the self-preoccupied Repp was doing with *Færeyinga saga*. Repp had betrayed a trivial confidence from Irving about one of their colleagues; Irving was incandescent with rage, accusing his Assistant Keeper of 'a total want of moral perception' and 'base and degrading treachery' (NLS Adv. MS F.R.342, Irving's 'Notes on the "Memorial of Thorl. Gudm. Repp"'), and thereafter sought ways of having Repp dismissed. Repp responded by publishing (Repp 1828) and circulating a detailed defence of his whole position in the library, thereby consolidating the feud between the two librarians which was to rumble on until 1834.

Hostilities could flare up in risibly improbable ways, as with the case of the anonymous Italian verse. Repp arranged for an insulting verse from Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* to be copied out and left on Irving's desk in the library (the incident is recorded in detail in NLS MS F.R.122, pp. 51-67); Irving read it and was predictably furious. There was a massive investigation to find the culprit, and events came to a head over Christmas 1830. Repp was preparing a paper (Repp 1831) for a forthcoming meeting of the Whiggish-inclined (Shapin 1974) Scottish Society of Antiquaries on what he saw as the Norse-influenced etymology of the phrase 'hogmanay, trollalay', deriving it with artful improbability from the Old Norse *haugmenn æ, tröll á læ* (Repp took the rhyme to mean 'the good mountain spirits for ever: the wicked trolls into the sea'). The Tory-inclined Advocates' Library curators, meanwhile, were not spending the days leading up to the 1830 hogmanay celebrations in calmly pondering the etymology of the seasonal name, but rather in feverishly trying to identify the local *tröll* responsible for the Ariosto poison-pen letter. The evidence was sifted relentlessly. Who had last borrowed the Advocates' Library copy of Ariosto? — Repp; who in the library knew Italian? — Repp; whose handwriting

was it? — a handwriting expert from an Edinburgh bank was consulted, with inconclusive results. Moreover, could Repp be dismissed? Did he have security of tenure? — the previous summer committees of lawyers had reviewed the uncertain terms of his original appointment (Repp 1834, 7-8). Eventually, though Repp was not dismissed, he was sternly warned as to future conduct (Repp 1834, 9-11), and informed that, as from the summer of 1829, his appointment was for a fixed period of five years only.

Those five years passed in as poisonous an atmosphere as it is possible to imagine, with Repp constantly looking for ways to taunt Irving as retribution for the injustice and humiliation he felt he had suffered at the hands of his superior. As has been noted already, in his publications Repp prized justice, system and independence; in the Advocates' Library he had found injustice, chaos and claustration. In his writings Repp celebrated Icelandic cultural dominance; at his work he experienced humiliation and subordination.

Set out as a kind of plot summary, the conflict between Repp and Irving takes the following shape: i) A ritual verbal conflict is instigated between the two librarians, a kind of latter-day *mannjofnuðr*; ii) The legal process of the library fails to anæsthetise the ensuing conflict; iii) Both contending parties then seek the support of their friends and colleagues; iv) There is a formal last conflict in July 1834, a kind of jury trial amongst the Advocates which Repp ultimately lost by 69 votes to 68; v) The victim and his family are left, first to dream of revenge, and then to accept exile. But this plot summary of Repp's last days in the Advocates' Library is also not very far off being a summary of the sequence of events dramatised in chapters 4-7 of *Færeyinga saga* (1978, 61-9), the material from which Repp chose to make his two English adaptations during this final turbulent period at the Library. In as reflexive a character as Repp, it is by no means clear that this is wholly a coincidence. Repp's interest in *Færeyinga saga* is certainly energised by his missionary interest in Icelandic language and literature; but there is also the suspicion that it is energised by a missionary interest in himself.

Chapters 4-7 of *Færeyinga saga* narrate the events of the fateful Autumn gathering at the house of the powerful Hafgrímr of Suðurey, when two of his retainers, Eldjárn and Einarr, engage in a ritual debate, a *mannjofnuðr*, over the relative merits of Hafgrímr (who was praised by Eldjárn) and the two sons of Sigmundr of Skúfey, Brestir and Beinir (to be praised by Einarr). Tempers



flare, Eldjárn strikes at and is then fatally wounded by Einarr, who seeks refuge at the home of his kinsman Sigmundr, in the company of Sigmundr's sons Brestir and Beinir. Hafgrímr visits Skúfey during the winter, seeking self-judgement against Einarr. Brestir Sigmundsson, learned in the law, handles Einarr's case, rejects the claim for self-judgement, and the case subsequently fails at the Straumseyjar þing. Humiliated and vowing revenge, Hafgrímr and his supporters Práendr and Bjarni soon launch a surprise attack on Brestir and Beinir and their two sons. Hafgrímr and Brestir kill each other, Beinir also dies. But Beinir's son Þórir and Sigmundr Brestisson survive to pledge future vengeance, with Sigmundr telling his weeping friend, in Repp's translation, 'we will not weep cousin but remember'.

In preparing the lengthier and more important of his narrative adaptations, Repp clearly had two quite distinct aims in mind. Firstly, there were literary and linguistic priorities. Repp often lectured and wrote on Icelandic literature and mythology in Edinburgh, and he taught the language, charging four guineas for a course of twenty classes (tariffs set out in a Lbs MS ÍB 89a fol. paper); he prepared what is probably the first Icelandic grammar in English (Lbs MS ÍB 90c fol.), drawing on but significantly adapting materials already published by Rask; he prepared what seem to be other pedagogical materials for his pupils, including some scrupulously literal translations of short sections from *Qrvar-Odds saga* and *Eyrbyggja saga*, and more paraphrastic adaptations of material from *Jómsvíkinga saga* and *Gylfaginning* (papers in, respectively, Lbs MSS ÍB 90c, 89b, 88a, 90b, fol.). But it is in his work on *Færeyinga saga* that Repp's fondness for adaptation finds its fullest expression. A crucial influence on his chosen manner of adaptation was surely Sir Walter Scott.

'The author of Waverley' is often referred to in Repp's unpublished writings, from the young philologist's Copenhagen days onwards, as when he chooses to list fourteen novels of 'Sir Valter Skott' on the back page of a draft copy of an 1823 University aesthetics prize essay (Lbs MS ÍB 480 4to). It may, indeed, be regarded as an entirely appropriate symbol of the Scottish novelist's engagement with Icelandic texts and also his influence over Repp's imagination, that, on the back cover of the notebook (Lbs MS JS 312 8vo; probable date 1833-4) in which Repp prepared detailed notes of some two hundred Icelandic manuscripts and other papers in the Advocates' Library, there is a picture of the then newly erected Scott monument in Princes Street. Before his

death in 1832, Scott must almost certainly have become personally known to Repp through the novelist's (albeit increasingly infrequent) visits to the Advocates' Library after 1826; Repp had even been charged by Grímur Thorkelín, at Finnur Magnússon's instigation (letter from Thorkelín to Repp, 31 May 1827, Þjóðskjalasafn, Einkaskjöl E 182), with handing over a special presentation copy for Scott of the 1826 Arnamagnæan edition of *Laxdæla saga*, complete with its Latin translation by Repp. Scott's northern enthusiasms were well known to Repp; the novelist had eagerly collected Arnamagnæan saga editions at Abbotsford at a time when such texts were notoriously hard to obtain in Britain (Lieder 1920, 10-11; ironically the complimentary copy of Repp's *Laxdæla* edition seems not to have found its way to Abbotsford); he helped to popularise *Eyrbyggja saga* (Wolf and D'Arcy 1987; 1988, an important if at times unduly unsympathetic revaluation), having previously planned to work on *Hervarar saga*, only to be discouraged by the ubiquitous popularity of attempts to translate and paraphrase the poem which came to be known as 'The Waking of Angantyr' (Harvey-Wood 1972, II 467-8); and, in his dramatic poem *Harold the Dauntless* and the colourful Orkney and Shetland based novel *The Pirate*, Scott had cast a sceptical eye over what he saw as intoxicating but ultimately immature and potentially destructive Viking values.

In one unpublished essay Repp writes perceptively of Scott's attitude towards Norse literary antiquity:

The object of this eminent genius was, of course. . . to use them [Icelandic sagas] for his own purpose, because it was on the foundation of this knowledge the learned Gent. formed and created that whole imaginary world which his readers admire; but he would seldom think of introducing Scandinavian letters in their primitive state without those ornamental additions which his powerful imagination so readily suggested or those decorations his art alone could arrange with so much taste and discretion — being born a protector of northern arts and letters he would not play the part of a mere usher. . . those very descriptions of the celebrated genius could not fail to excite in many the wish for a more intimate acquaintance with these very originals, which partly gave rise to so eminent productions, and that they would be glad to see the peculiar expressions of thought and character in the autographs of an age which so highly recommends itself by sublime sentiments, energy of thought and expression and in some points even by refined taste and learning (Lbs MS ÍB 90c fol.).

Repp must certainly have thought that, overall, his own efforts in Copenhagen and Edinburgh to provide readers and pupils with 'a more intimate acquaintance with these very originals' were comparable with those of Scott. Repp had produced the Latin *Laxdæla saga*, the plan to prepare and publish a translation of

*Heimskringla*, and the grammar notes. It may be that the paraphrastic versions of saga scenes were directed towards his pupils in Icelandic language, perhaps as a literary diversion from their linguistic labours. Repp's ultimate intention may have been to publish such paraphrases in one of the many Edinburgh periodicals, having previously published extracts paraphrased (in Danish) from other Faroese history sections of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* in *Dansk Minerva* in Copenhagen before he first came to Britain (Repp 1819).

The five pages of the earlier adaptation give only a brief indication of Repp's narrative aims, but there is no doubting his priorities in the second version: he sought to reassure, to inform, and to engage willing imaginations. In so doing, Repp surely earns the right to be listed amongst the first literary critics of Icelandic sagas in Britain, for any act of adaptation and paraphrase itself is inevitably an act of reinterpretation and thus of literary criticism. Reassurance is achieved by mimicking the urbane and whimsical voice and Latinate diction of a standard Sir Walter Scott narrator, via wry references to malt whisky (the story is set in 960 and the narrator notes that this was long before the potions of Glenlivet had first brought cheer to the Spey valley; such distilling had in fact just been legalised in 1823) and highland dress (Eldjárn, the Hebridean, is clad in a multi-coloured kilt, which provided 'no dress at all for that part of the body for which some fathers of the church had maintained that dress was originally created'); or one might cite the laconic tone in which the narrator identifies the tensions behind the surface jollity of winter feasts, 'a whole year's taciturnity was compensated for by an evening's communicativeness . . . they would say much which had been better never said'.

Repp's second priority, that of informing, is achieved by incorporating in the main body of his narrative exactly the kind of antiquarian information which Scott had so often chosen to include, in barely assimilated form, in his own novels. There are, thus, periodic digressions on the nature of Faroese law, religious agnosticism in the islands, hall-design, navigation through the use of lodestones, and, of course, *mannjofnuðr* ('evening or equalizing of men') rituals, identified as occasions which led 'not seldom to an extemporary dissection of skulls, chests or shoulders'. Items of Icelandic vocabulary are explained; for example, in the earlier version, *mungát*, *jólaveitsla* [sic] (changed to *haustgildi* in the longer version). The third priority, engaging the reader's imagination, is achieved by vivid physical descriptions, by a fascination

with character motivation, and by colourfully staged scenes which represent for Repp what he had identified in Scott, 'ornamental additions which his powerful imagination so readily suggested'. One notices immediately the more striking physical realisation of characters such as the dim-witted Eldjárn, about whom there are no physical details in the saga. He is presented by Repp as short of stature, loud of voice, red of hair, thick of head, and with one huge white eye-ball decorated with 'an exceeding small pupilla which did not look bigger than a diamond in a modern breast pin'. Then, too, there is Þrándr, red-haired and freckled as in *Flateyjarbók*, but now with two grey eyes each of which tended to look in a different direction. In his character portraits, Repp would take an adjective from the Icelandic text and dramatise the circumstances which could have given rise to it: thus in the saga Eldjárn is said to be, amongst other things, *margorður* and *heimskur* (*Færeyinga saga* 1978, 61) and these qualities are developed by Repp in Eldjárn's speech praising Hafgrímr, a display of comic windbaggery constantly interrupted by the mocking irreverence of his audience, who laugh, cough, yawn, pick their noses, or engage in that activity to which during his 1810 Icelandic travels Sir George Mackenzie (Mackenzie 1811, 93) had found great difficulty in adjusting, 'the unrestrained evacuation of saliva'. The result is that spare, understated medieval saga narrative achieves the comfortably upholstered, three-dimensional texture of a nineteenth-century novel.

Repp shows a particular fondness for grafting on character motivation of varying degrees of invention and improbability. Thus Eldjárn's loyalty to Hafgrímr is explained by identifying him as a former slave, newly freed as a reward for having saved his master's favourite pony from death some weeks earlier. Hafgrímr's hostility towards Brestir and Beinir is multiply motivated: firstly, unlike the saga where power in the islands is divided equally between Hafgrímr and Brestir, in Repp's tale Brestir's power is given far greater historical legitimacy than Hafgrímr's; secondly, Hafgrímr is jealous at the ready access to the Norwegian court enjoyed by the brothers and scorns their pro-Norwegian sycophancy; thirdly, he resents the brothers' popularity amongst his own tenants; fourthly, he feels inferior due to the Celtic origins which Repp transfers to him from Einarr; and lastly, there is even the hint of some element of Satanic possession. In their turn, Brestir and Beinir are presented as prototypical Enlightenment free-thinkers, pagan agnostics who are sufficiently liberal to refuse tribute money

from tenants, thereby increasing their popularity, and who flourish in a community whose eroded paganism was as yet unchallenged by Christianity from elsewhere in the North Atlantic and beyond. Throughout all these scenes, moreover, Repp does not spare his readers a generous measure of gratuitous saga atmospherics and nineteenth-century Norsification: the air is thick with sub-*Hávamál* gnomic portentousness, not to mention ubiquitous cries of 'if you don't want to join Eldjarn in Asgard' and 'so help me Odin'. This latter oath is sworn during an interpolated escape-by-boat scene in which Einarr, pursued and caught by Hafgrímr and thirty strong armed rowers, changes places and clothes with his companion Hrólfr. The latter, in the pitch black of a moonless midnight, claims to be Bjarni of Svíney, employing a defiantly aggressive manner and a disguised voice subsequently judged by one of Hafgrímr's more perceptive colleagues to be 'unusually thick. . . as if his mouth was full of fishblubber'. Repp may even have been recalling another escape-by-boat scene, that in *Gísla saga Súrssonar* (Chapter 26), when inventing this episode for his story.

Along with Repp's missionary interest in popularising Icelandic literature, we have already noted Repp's missionary interest in himself. The fact that Repp has chosen a *mannjofnuðr* scene for elaboration may come into this latter category. As has been noted, Repp's life in Edinburgh had been dominated by the consequences of one *mannjofnuðr* with David Irving at the library. Repp's earlier and subsequent life in Copenhagen were cruelly influenced by another formal disputation which went drastically wrong (Páll Eggert Ólason 1916, 132-40; *Ferðarolla* 1962, 125-6). In 1820 Repp had attended the public examination of a doctoral thesis in the University in Copenhagen. Repp revelled in such occasions. He loved the theatricality, the adversarial element, the opportunity to display his formidable erudition. On this occasion, which represents probably the most often retold episode in Repp's life, the candidate's thesis was exposed by Repp from the public gallery as a mosaic of plagiarism. Six years later Repp's own thesis was attacked by an examiner, none other than Jens Müller, the still indignant brother of the still humiliated doctoral candidate of six years earlier. Jens had clearly learnt the lesson of Sigmundur Brestisson and not cried but remembered for a long time. Repp, his thesis attacked (wrongly) by the vengeful brother, antagonised all his examiners by his unfortunate congenital leer and his haughty manner, over neither of which he could exercise any control. He was not awarded his master's degree on this occasion, nor, appeals over twenty years notwithstanding, on any subsequent occasion.

But the most importantly personal of all Repp's 'ornamental additions' to his *Færeyinga saga* original is that of the silk-clad Varangian. When Hafgrímr visits Brestir and Beinir in their Skúfey stronghold, seeking self-judgement against Einarr, he receives the most perfunctory of welcomes, the attention of his hosts at that moment being wholly taken up by the presence of a glamorous Icelandic skald identified as 'Thorleif the Earl's Skald'. The figure of Thorleif and the scene he dominates is sufficiently striking to justify extended quotation, not least because if Repp's command of English spelling was not always beyond reproach, his orotund sense of the then current proprieties of English syntax and vocabulary would have delighted even Dr. Johnson:

The Person thus addressed was one, who both in his attire and whole demeanor was very different from the rest of the company. The materials of his dress were much more costly than those used by any of the other convives, even the chiefs not excepted. He wore an upper tunic of Scarlet Silk, with a white under garment of the same material richly embroidered with gold: his hair and beard were combed with particular care, and the former fell in beautiful ringlets far down on his shoulders; even in the arrangement of the curls of his beard art had in all probability assisted nature. He had a very clear and sonorous voice; an higher degree of refinement was as obvious in his speech as in every other thing about his person: he spoke with much volubility and tho' his accent was smoother and much less passionate than that of his companions, yet was he listened to with greater interest. It was the choice of expressions and happy turn of sentences and the aptly diversified tho' not vehement intonation which seemed to fetter the attention of his audience. When he opened his mouth all were hushed for everybody seemed to take delight in his conversation. This person was the Icelander Thorleif who afterwards was surnamed the *Earl's Skald*. He was just now returned from Constantinople, where he had served several years in the corps of the Værings. . . on account of his genius as a poet for he composed verses not only in the Danish tongue but also in Greek, he had been in high favor with the Emperor Alexios and the Princess Anna. Well read in the poets, orators and philosophers of Greece and having, while in Constantinople for a time attended the lectures of a Rhetor and Philosopher, he had a vast deal more of intellectual wealth than those around him. He was a Christian indeed but not of the established church of Greece: this was evident. . . from a very fanciful figure with a bird's head wrought of beaten gold, which he wore suspended about his neck in a chain of the same metall; this figure. . . plainly indicated the Gnostic. The mystical tenets of this sect were better relished by the young northern Scald than the pure doctrines of Christianity, for in this system of belief much greater latitude was allowed for imagination. It did not require a total abandonment of Thor and Odin with whose marvellous and wonderful exploits the youthful mind had been richly stored. Here too was a place for Zeus, Hermes, Ares and Aphrodite whose acquaintance he had made through Homer and Aschylos. This was also the sect of which his Constantinopolitan master was a follower, a most accommodating sect which enlarged the moral and religious views of the votives without eradicating any prejudice or sweeping away any favorite superstition or

fable. The person was now called upon to explain the mythical figures and Inscription on Brestir's golden horn.

This is the most striking interpolation in Repp's version of *Færeyinga saga* because it does seem to be the most personal to Repp. Certainly if it is a portrait of an Icelandic skald called 'Thorleif the Earl's Skald', it is not a portrait of the Icelandic skald called Porleifr Jarlsskáld (or Jarlaskáld); Repp's Varangian is unrecognisable as the foxy but resolutely unglamorous Porleifr of the *þáttr* in *Flateyjarbók* that bears his name (*Porleifs þáttr Jarlsskálds*, ÍF IX, 213-29). Repp's skald is much more recognisable as in several key respects a portrait of Repp. Even if it had not already been suggested in this essay that Repp sometimes exhibits a tendency to project himself onto the characters about whom he wrote, there is a good case to be made for believing that in his figure of the visiting Varangian, Repp has produced a rather poignant self-portrait; for believing that, like Alfred Hitchcock, Repp has managed to introduce himself fleetingly into one of his own creations. Consider the evidence. The skald shares Repp's Christian name (a happy coincidence at least). The skald is well read in Greek literature (one of Repp's earliest unfinished projects was editing Aristophanes; he also published essays on Pindar and Callimachus, translated Menander into English, and Greek epigrams into Icelandic; Repp's Hellenic credentials are unassailable).<sup>9</sup> The skald composes poems in Greek and Danish (so did Repp, and it does not matter whether 'Danish' is taken to mean Icelandic or Danish, for Repp did both). The skald's refined use of language is praised (Repp's command of written English is wholly remarkable in a non-native speaker). The skald had attended the lectures of an unnamed rhetor in Constantinople (Repp was the disciple of a famous Copenhagen rhetor, Rasmus Rask). The skald was a confidant of the Greek King and Queen (Repp was also a confidant of Danish royalty over a period of more than twenty years).<sup>10</sup> The skald entertains his hosts by retelling in his own words the story of Ragnarr loðbrók (exactly as Porleifur Repp the philologist is doing by retelling *Færeyinga saga* for his Scottish audience; Repp's own real-life activities as a saga adapter achieve a kind of additional legitimacy through the success of his fictional skald). The skald is a gnostic, allowing him to reconcile Christianity with an imaginative sympathy for the Norse Gods (Repp's Christianity is at one level extremely orthodox; he translated the Prayer Book into Danish (Repp 1849), and works by contemporary German textual scholars of the Bible into English, work commissioned and paid for by the

editors of the Biblical Cabinet tract series (for example, Repp 1832a), and everywhere there are respectful references to the deity; but this orthodoxy runs alongside Repp's antiquarian interest in pagan mythology in general and Norse mythology in particular).

There is one further parallel to be noted between Thorleif the skald and Porleifur the scholar. Repp's final verdict on his Edinburgh years was of failure and frustration, and this was already all too clear to him at the time he was working on the *Færeyinga saga* adaptations in the early 1830s. Such was the atmosphere at the Advocates' Library, such were his relations with David Irving, that, gifted in a dozen and more languages, Repp was well able to read the writing on the wall. It may well be that the Varangian Thorleif reflects Porleifur Repp's Walter Mitty wishes and dreams in the face of the looming bleak realities. Certainly the silk-clad Varangian is an undeniably cruel contrast with the image of the threadbare and impoverished Repp in the final years of his life, as outlined at the opening of this essay. As such it is a further reason for recognising the possibility that, in the figure of Thorleif the skald, Repp has produced a most revealing self-portrait.

A last thought on the glamorous Varangian. The most poignant non-parallel between the ancient skald and his nineteenth-century creator is surely that Thorleif the skald was in the Faroes *en route* from Constantinople to his home in Iceland; Porleifur Repp was never so fortunate. He left Iceland in 1814 and never returned. His *útanferð* was to be a life sentence, a permanent rite of passage. In the circumstances, Repp's self-referential extravagances with *Færeyinga saga* can be forgiven, just as Repp himself forgave and even praised those of Sir Walter Scott. We can class the Varangian skald as an 'ornamental addition which his powerful imagination so readily suggested'. Like Scott, Repp in Edinburgh had performed heroically as 'a protector of northern arts and letters' and, like Scott, he refused to 'play the part of a mere usher'

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Rosa Anne Elizabeth Saga was Porleifur Repp's elder daughter who went to live in Britain with the family of Repp's amateur philologist friend Ralph Carr at Alnwick in Northumberland, and who in 1861 married into the neighbouring Orde family. Many important Repp manuscripts remained in the Orde family until 1989 when the material was placed on deposit at Landsbókasafn Íslands. I am happy to record my thanks to Mr and Mrs Henry Orde of Brissenden in Kent for their warm hospitality during my initial examination of the Repp papers then in their custody; in this essay, these papers are referred to as Lbs Orde MSS. In Reykjavík in February 1987 I was grateful for the opportunity of discussing Repp's writings with



Kjartan Ólafsson. During many visits to the Repp MSS in Landsbókasafn, the late Grímur Helgason was an ever helpful and kindly guide. Recent work in the Library of Congress in Washington DC was sustained by the memorable Chesapeake Bay hospitality of Dr John Richowsky. An earlier version of this essay was delivered as a lecture at the Viking Society for Northern Research at University College, London, in November 1989; I am grateful to David Evans, Andrew Hamer and Anthony Faulkes for helpful comment on that occasion.

<sup>2</sup> The paper used by Repp bears the watermark 'Collins 1826', which provides only a *terminus a quo* for his work. There was sometimes a considerable time lag between the date of paper and its use, as with a letter (in Lbs MS ÍB 89c fol.) written on paper with an 1828 watermark yet discussing Repp's 1832 *Trial by Jury* book. Thus the immediate stimulus for Repp's work on *Færeyinga saga* in Edinburgh could have been the publication of C. C. Rafn, 1832. An earlier date is possible, however; Repp's discontents with the Advocates' Library had already been made public by the summer of 1828 (Repp 1828); the material for Repp's adaptation had been in print since the publication of the second volume of *Fornmanna sögur* in 1826 (pp. 91-5; Repp's nineteen-page draft review may be found in Lbs MS ÍB 89c fol.); transcription and editorial work on this latter edition had been well under way by 1819 (*Fornmanna sögur* I, 1825, 15).

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Hamer has drawn my attention to a rare pre-Victorian partial translation of *Orkneyinga saga* amongst the papers of the Heddle bequest in the Scottish Registry Office, MS GD.263/124.

<sup>4</sup> David Evans has interestingly identified E. O. G. Turville-Petre as one enthusiastic schoolboy reader of Baring-Gould's Grettir adaptation.

<sup>5</sup> See Lbs MS ÍB 89b fol., a small notebook listing alphabetically more than 150 titles of English books, none published after 1820. It is unlikely to be a list of books owned by Repp, but could relate to items borrowed from a well-stocked Copenhagen library to which he had regular access. At least one University prize essay submission (Repp 1824) and his Master's dissertation (Repp 1826) bear witness to the Icelander's eagerness to display his wide reading in English language and literature.

<sup>6</sup> Anthony Faulkes has helpfully drawn my attention to this important point.

<sup>7</sup> The debate may be followed in Pinkerton 1789, I, 340-70; also in Pinkerton 1787, passim [in Pinkerton 1789, II]; Jamieson 1808, I, 1-46; Scott 1835, 301-76; also Harvey-Wood 1972, I, 183-228. John Longmuir's 1885 revision (p.xv) of John Johnstone's abridged second edition (1846) of Jamieson 1808 gives a fascinating account of Þorkelín's crucial role as the instigator of Jamieson's remarkable dictionary, and of the Pictish linguistic theory which underpinned it and which so influenced Repp:

The Doctor [Jamieson] had not yet projected his great work, — the Dictionary; the first idea of which arose accidentally from the conversation of one of the . . . learned foreigners [who]. . . from time to time visited the country. This was the learned Grim Thor[k]jelin [*text reads* Thorbrelin], Professor of Antiquities in Copenhagen. Up to this period, Dr. Jamieson had held the common opinion, that the Scottish is not a language, and nothing more than a corrupt dialect of the English, or at least of the Anglo-Saxon. It was the learned Danish Professor that first undeceived him, though full conviction came tardily, and proved, to his satisfaction, that there are many words in our national tongue which had never passed through the channel of the Anglo-Saxon, nor been spoken in England. Before leaving . . . Thor[k]jelin requested the Doctor to note down for him all the singular words used in that part of the country [Angus and Sutherland],

no matter how vulgar he might himself consider them, and to give the received meaning of each. Jamieson laughed at the request, saying ". . . they are merely corruptions of English". Thor[k]elin, who spoke English fluently, replied with considerable warmth, "If that *fantast*, [Dr. Samuel] Johnson, had said so, I would have forgiven *him*, because of his ignorance or prejudice; but I cannot make the same excuse for you, when you speak in this contemptuous manner of the language of your country . . . I have spent four months in Angus and Sutherland, and I have met between three and four hundred words purely Gothic, that were never used in Anglo-Saxon. You will admit that I am pretty well acquainted with Gothic. I am a Goth; a native of Iceland; the inhabitants of which are an unmixed race, who speak the same language which their ancestors brought from Norway a thousand years ago. All or most of these words which I have noted down are familiar to me in my native island . . ." Jamieson, to oblige the learned stranger, forthwith purchased a two-penny paper book, and began to write down all the remarkable or uncouth words of the district.

<sup>8</sup> Scottish Whigs would have been less impressed with Repp's equally enthusiastic support for the proposition that 'not only [were] English monks the teachers of the Saga-writers but some of the sagas themselves bear internal evidence of having been composed by Englishmen' (paper titled 'The Origins of Icelandic literature' in Lbs Orde MSS).

<sup>9</sup> On Repp's Aristophanes project, see his letter from London, dated 8 August 1821, to Birgir Thorlacius (Lbs MS JS 96 fol.); for the Menander translation, see Lbs MS ÍB 90c fol.; on Callimachus, see *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 34, September 1833, 395-9; Repp's draft review of Alexander Negris's 1835 edition of Pindar is in Lbs MS ÍB 89c fol.; see also Repp 1864.

<sup>10</sup> Repp 1824 is dedicated in English to Princess Carolina Amalia; Repp 1846 is an unpublished account of the last years (in Danish custody) of Earl Bothwell, lover of Mary Queen of Scots, prepared 'by command' of the (now) Queen Carolina Amalia.

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## NOTES

### *MIKILL SKYNSEMI ER AT RIFJA VANDLIGA PAT UPP:* A RESPONSE TO KLAUS VON SEE

BY MARGARET CLUNIES ROSS

AS HÁR REMINDED GANGLERI, one needs a great deal of wisdom to go closely into Norse myth, and I am grateful to Klaus von See (KvS) for keeping me on my toes with his lively polemical book *Mythos und Theologie im Skandinavischen Hochmittelalter* (Heidelberg, 1989 for 1988). Here he takes to task adherents of what he terms 'die neuere Forschung' for an over-enthusiastic application of medieval Christian theology to Old Norse texts. He has in mind particularly writings of such scholars as Baetke, Holtmark, Lönnroth and Weber who, like myself, have sought to understand how medieval Christian Scandinavians conceptualised and explained the non-Christian part of their cultural inheritance. He thinks we have forced Old Norse texts into rigid theologically-determined theoretical straitjackets without paying sufficient attention to the special circumstances of northern Europe that created a separate cultural identity for Scandinavia based upon the traditions of the heathen Viking Age.

One of KvS's chief arguments is that medieval Scandinavian attitudes to the pre-Christian past were by and large positive and tolerant rather than negatively judgemental from one of the standard medieval Christian theological standpoints. It seems to me rather ironical, therefore, that he should be so hard on 'die neuere Forschung', as most of its members would agree with his main argument and would consider that such concepts as 'natural religion' and 'the noble heathen' supported a positive evaluation of the non-Christian element in medieval Norse culture. In terms of medieval thought, these theories, as they appear worked into Norse texts, together with the actual preservation of the substance of pre-Christian ideas in the form of reports of myths, customary procedures and rituals, constitute our evidence for the special Scandinavian 'Sonderbewußtsein' that KvS writes of. The only theoretical approach that does not in itself offer a positive view of paganism is a rigid combination of euhemerism with demonology,

for that, on its own, tends to represent pagan people as foolish and irrational dupes of the devil. However, there must be few Old Norse texts in which this theoretical cocktail is mixed neat, and I, for one, have never argued for its existence.

The fundamental question for Old Norse scholars must then be whether it is legitimate to expect Christian theology to inform Norse texts—not by any means as their *only* formative influence—and whether one can detect such influences upon specific texts, using the standard critical tools of literary and textual analysis and source study. In my book *Skáldskaparmál* (1987), I argued that such influences were indeed present and could be detected in the way in which *Snorra Edda* organised, selected and interpreted its inherited subject matter concerning Old Norse myth and poetry. It is possible that I appeared over-rigid in presenting a new view of the *Edda*, even though at several points I stressed the work's non-polemical nature, its *ad hoc* presentation of 'working definitions' of skaldic diction, and its integration of native and foreign means of classifying the language of Norse poetry. I consider that *Mythos und Theologie* misrepresents some of my arguments or confuses them with those of other scholars. Hence I take this opportunity to respond to KvS on some of the issues he raises in his book.

Much of what KvS writes about *Snorra Edda* involves his attempt to show that the *Prologue (Pr)* is not the work of Snorri Sturluson but of another writer, who advances different arguments about Norse paganism from those we find in *Gylfaginning (G)* and *Skáldskaparmál (S)*. KvS also seeks to show that *G* often agrees with *Ynglingasaga (Y)* against *Pr*. This is, of course, not a new song, even though KvS claims he sings it differently from Andreas Heusler. Underlying many of the twelve major points of discrepancy he investigates in his chapter on 'Das Zeugnis der Snorra Edda' (pp. 18–68) is an assumption that it is impossible for more than one theoretical position on paganism to be present in a single text (cf. pp. 29–30). His objective in dissociating *Pr* from the rest of the *Edda* is to declare *Pr*'s overt discussion of paganism, both as a natural religion and as explicable in terms of euhemerism, off limits to any interpretation of the rest of the *Edda*. He argues further that Weber and I, in particular, have read into the rest of the *Edda* what is only to be

found in *Pr*. I shall now take up a selection of his arguments for examination.

It is entirely healthy to adopt a sceptical attitude towards the relationship between the historically attested Icelander named Snorri Sturluson and the various extant manuscripts of the work called *Edda* in the Codex Upsaliensis and attributed to him there. The difficulty I have with KvS is that his scepticism relates only to *Pr*. Now most of us who write about *Snorra Edda* probably use the name 'Snorri Sturluson' as a kind of shorthand to refer to a shaping unity of purpose that we detect in the works attributed to the man so named. We tacitly acknowledge common intellectual interests and stylistic resources within the *Edda* and between the *Edda* and *Heimskringla* (*H*), but we allow for the possibility that Snorri may not have written every part of the text himself. In fact it is possible that Snorri may have had a group of amanuenses working at his direction. We know also that several variant versions of the *Edda* competed for status from an early date and that the texts we have contain some inconsistencies and duplications (cf. A. Faulkes, *Snorri Sturluson. Edda. Prologue and Gylfaginning*, 1982, Introduction). Nevertheless, a study of the four major manuscripts in particular (R, T, U, W) persuades one that a work of intellectual integrity lies behind them and that the original conception included *Pr*. Faulkes' work on the text of *Pr*, which KvS does not mention, strengthens that claim considerably (A. Faulkes, 'The Prologue to Snorra Edda, an attempt at reconstruction', *Gripla* iii, 1979, 204–13). There is thus no textual evidence that *Pr* is not part of the *Edda* nor that it has any less claim to Snorri's shaping genius than the other sections.

If we turn now to questions of possible discrepancy of a rhetorical, thematic or source-related kind, we find that there are some inconsistencies, but they are of a kind that one might expect, given the nature and complexity of the *Edda* text. Let us treat sources first. Contrary to what KvS asserts, there are significant connections between *Pr* and parts of *H*, as well as between *G* and *H*. For example, Faulkes has given evidence that both *Pr* and parts of *H* are indebted to a regnal list of Anglo-Saxon origin that once existed in a manuscript owned by P. H. Resen, which was copied by Árne Magnússon before it was destroyed (A. Faulkes,

'The genealogies and regnal lists in a manuscript in Resen's library', *Sjöútu ritgerðir helgaðar Jakobi Benediktssyni*, 1977, 153–76). Similarly, there are points of comparison between *Pr*'s statement that there are non-Germanic regional and place-names in England (presumably Celtic ones) and a passage in *H* (A. Faulkes, *Snorri Sturluson. Edda*, 1982, 57). KvS's remarks (p. 28) on this passage in *Pr* seem wide of the mark.

On the matter of thematic and narratological discrepancies, KvS makes unnecessarily heavy weather of some of his twelve points of difference because he treats the *Edda* as if it were all in a rational discursive mode without recognising the effect of the narrative (*G*, *S*) and discursive (*Pr*) frames which qualify the meaning of the whole text (see my article with B. K. Martin, 'Narrative structures and intertextuality in *Snorra Edda*', in John Lindow et al., eds, *Structure and meaning in Old Norse literature*, 1986, 56–72, especially 70–71). Moreover, the dramatic voices of the various characters within the text (the *Æsir*, Gylfi, *Ægir*, Bragi and the supernatural figures whose poetic utterances they report) have to be taken into account when any attempt is made to understand the whole text. There will, moreover, be an implicit narrator and narratee to consider for the *Edda* as a whole as well as for the embedded texts.

KvS treats these aspects of the text as if they did not exist and so often fails to remark the differing points of view which are hardly evidence of difference of authorship, but of particular views that are qualified by others in the text. For example, the fact that an euhemeristic explanation of the dominance of the *Æsir* from Asia is offered in *Pr* does not preclude these beings telling Gangleri-Gylfi in *G* about the gods in whom they claim to believe. The thoughts attributed to them, as I have argued, betray just that blend of animism and materialism that *Pr* ascribes to natural religions.

Another of his points of difference is his claim (against me) that *Pr* says nothing about the language of poetry as a privileged vehicle for the expression of the religious thought of those who had lost the name of God, a group that by implication included the *Æsir* from Asia. (My argument in *Skáldskaparmál* is that Snorri presents skaldic diction as the vehicle for the *Æsir*'s beliefs about the nature of the world and its creators, and indicates that



they taught this world view to early Scandinavians through Óðinn's gift of poetry. I reasoned that Snorri's arrangement, selection and interpretation of skaldic *dæmi* are a good guide to his intent here.) In mounting his argument, KvS forgets the audience of the text, the implicit narratees of *Pr*, those medieval Icelanders who knew better than we do now what early Norse poetry was about. Now it is true, as KvS states (p. 24), that *Pr*'s interest in human language relates to the development of diverse religions, to the enumeration of national or tribal groups and to the development of genealogies of their ruling houses. But how, one asks, would Snorri's audience expect these human cultural expressions to be realised, if not through the medium of poetry? It is surely perverse to argue otherwise, particularly in the face of the single reference to a literary work in *Pr*, which is to the dynastic poem *Háleygjatal*.

Another important question that KvS does not concern himself with is that of the expected rhetorical function of a prologue in relation to the rest of the work it accompanies. This matter has recently been brought to the forefront of our attention by Sverrir Tómasson's *Formálar íslenskra sagnaritara á miðöldum* (1988). Sverrir's work makes it clear that prefaces may be expected to contain an assessment of the nature and truth-value of the author's sources and authorities for the main body of the text. *Pr*, appropriately enough, does just this by explaining how those who had forgotten God adopted a set of religious beliefs based on the perceptions of their five senses and combines this theory with an historically-based, euhemeristic account of the migration of the Æsir to Scandinavia from Asia. Those who knew *Pr* would then bring a suitably qualified understanding to bear on the detailed accounts of religion and poetry that occupy the rest of the *Edda*.

It is simply not true, as KvS has written (cf. pp. 29–30), that my argument in *Skáldskaparmál* is based upon a projection of *Pr* into the rest of the *Edda* without any supporting evidence nor upon any 'textnahen Interpretation' of *G* and *S*. In fact, chapters 6–10 of my book are based exclusively upon a close reading of *S* (all chapters) and *G* (mainly chapter 10). KvS makes almost no reference to the substance of those chapters, except in his criticism (pp. 47–9) of my remarks on the presentation of giants in the *Edda*. Here he relies largely on my article on the sons of

Fornjótr (*Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 98, 1983, 47–66) rather than on the way I integrated that material into the book. KvS seems to have misunderstood what I wrote about giants. He claims (pp. 48–9) I wrote that only the material in the lists of kenning examples in *S* was valued by Snorri in his presentation of skaldic diction. In fact, using the example of expressions for giants, I showed how Snorri omitted giants from the kenning lists (presumably because kennings like ‘dweller in rock’ did not lend themselves to his favoured anthropomorphic approach nor to other standard interpretations of the names of pagan gods, unlike expressions for the deities) but devoted considerable narrative attention to them in his stories of their dealings with gods, in some cases dignifying them by metamorphosis into heavenly bodies in a manner reminiscent of the Christian-classical encyclopedic tradition (see my chapter 10). As KvS rightly indicates (pp. 49–50), Snorri dealt with other material in similar ways.

Constraints of space and my readers’ patience preclude an exhaustive listing of the points where I think KvS has misunderstood or misrepresented me. I shall mention just three of these. I find his report of my statements on the term *kenning* (pp. 50–52) particularly hard to reconcile with chapter 4 of my book and I consider his discussion of the relationship between ‘noble heathens’ and ‘natural religion’ to be based on a misconception (see his pp. 148–9). He sees ‘noble heathens’ as a few isolated individuals in the ruck of pagans who sensed the nature of the deity. Such an idea is of little use, in his view, for a general presentation of Norse paganism as a natural religion. But is the point not that these talented and self-conscious individuals articulated consciously what the mass perceived with their ‘earthly understanding’, without being able to understand or express it in metaphysical terms?

Finally, there is one section of *Mythos und Theologie* that really puzzled me. That is the analysis of the relationship between the story of Gefjon and Gylfi in *G* and in *Y* on pages 30–33. I had a strong sense of *déjà vu* here when I read, almost point for point, the argument for why Snorri might have wanted to use this narrative twice which I have published in *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 93, 1978, 149–65, as ‘The myth of Gefjon and Gylfi and its function in *Snorra Edda* and *Heimskringla*’. This

title appears in KvS's bibliography but my argument gets no mention in the relevant part of his text.

Klaus von See's book *Mythos und Theologie* is stimulating reading and will keep debate alive about the various, largely tolerant ways in which Christian Scandinavians of the Middle Ages represent paganism and non-Christian traditions generally. This is an important subject and is relevant to almost every genre of Old Norse literature. He makes some good points along the way, but I feel he argues a little unfairly in many respects, where my own work and that of some others is concerned.

## THE BLOOD-EAGLE ONCE MORE: TWO NOTES

### A. *BLÓÐÖRN*—AN OBSERVATION ON THE ORNITHOLOGICAL ASPECT

BY BJARNI EINARSSON

In my note in defence of the traditional interpretation of Sighvatr Þórðarson's verse (*Saga-Book* XXII 1, 1986, 79–82), I not only maintained that it was improbable that the verb *skera* would be used of an eagle's tearing a dead body—in the preserved literature that action is covered by the verb *slíta*—but I also pointed out that an eagle would not attack the back of a corpse. It is well known that eagles, vultures, ravens quite naturally prefer to go for the softer parts of the body or for gashes already made. Cf. Skallagrímr in *Egils saga*, ch. 27:

grár slítr undir  
ari Snarfara.

This simple fact ought in itself to be enough to preclude misinterpretation of Sighvatr's verse.

My honoured friend, Roberta Frank, has in her reply (*Saga-Book* XXII 5, 1988, 287–89) ignored this ornithological reality. She has, on the other hand, sought support in Fritzner for her contention that it may have been possible in the eleventh century to say *hræfugl skar ná*. Fritzner cites a passage in *Stjórn* (ed. C. R. Unger, 1862, 80), where the verb *skera* is used in a description of unborn panther-cubs lacerating their mother's womb with their claws. This is the part of *Stjórn* compiled for Hákon V (died 1319). As she points out, *skera...ok slíta* there translate Isidore's *lacerant*; cf. later in the same passage *þau skeraz ok skemmaz* for Isidore's single verb, *vitiantur* (*Etymologiae* XII, ii, 9). In each case it looks as though the verb *skera* is the otiose member of the doublet, introduced for reasons of style, not for reasons of natural history. But, however that may be, I would again stress the importance of ornithology: eagles and other raptors use their sharp talons to seize their prey, but they use their strong curved

beaks to tear and devour the victim or, as in present case, the carrion they descend on.

Sighvatr skáld and his contemporaries had ample opportunity to see how eagles, ravens and wolves behaved on battlefields when the slaughter was over. I venture to maintain that they would not have been able to use the verb *skera* of the activity of any of them, while the notion of *skera bak* appears doubly impossible.

These men had seen battlefields, but I do not believe they had ever seen the *blóðörn* operation. On the other hand, they had heard of it and believed in it as an ancient custom.

## B. ORNITHOLOGY AND THE INTERPRETATION OF SKALDIC VERSE

BY ROBERTA FRANK

Maðr er moldar auki; mikil er græip á hauki.  
(Man returns to dust; great is the claw  
of a hawk.)

*Norwegian rune poem*, st. 14

Someone should put together an anthology of irrelevant birdlore in modern textual criticism: Chaucer's Chanticleer identified as a Rhode Island Red; the waterfowl rebuked by St Martin reduced to 'mergansers (*Mergus merganser*) rather than loons (*Colymbus torquatus*) or grebes (*Podiceps cristatus*)'; and the corpse-carrying bird in the Old English *Wanderer* said to be 'probably the Gray Sea Eagle' (though a recent editor warns: 'An actual bird would of course remove a body piecemeal'). In the same naturalistic vein, Bjarni Einarsson, whose friendship and scholarship I cherish, claims that my reading of a skaldic quatrain is impossible because eagles and other raptors do not attack the back of a corpse: 'It is well known that eagles, vultures, ravens quite naturally prefer to go for the softer parts of the body or for gashes already made.' And I am accused of having 'ignored this ornithological reality'.

The background: I have argued (*English historical review* 99, 1984, 332-43) that a half-stanza by Sighvatr Þórðarson may allude to the eagle as carrion beast, the bird with red claws perched on

and lacerating his victim's back: 'Ívarr had Ella's back lacerated (or torn, cut, carved) by an eagle.' Bjarni Einarsson has defended the traditional interpretation of the verse as a description of a gruesome sacrificial ritual: 'Ívarr had Ella's back incised (or cut, carved) with an eagle.' In *Saga-Book* XXII 1, 1986, 79–82, he maintained that the use of the verb *skera* to refer to carrion beasts ripping into bodies is 'inconceivable' in Icelandic. In reply (*Saga-Book* XXII 5, 1988, 287–9), I cited three Old Norse sentences in which *skera* described the cutting action of claws. Bjarni's dismissal of two of these examples ('lacerate and cut', 'are lacerated and injured') on the grounds that 'in each case ... *skera* is the otiose member of the doublet' is not persuasive. I answered his specific charge (yes, claws in the real world can *skera*), but at the cost of appearing to accept his initial premise (as in the classic reprimand: 'Have you stopped beating your wife?'). The same underlying assumption—that there is or should be something realistic about skaldic poetry—motivates his latest complaint: my reading is wrong because no decent carrion bird would attack a back.

I could respond, as I did with *skera*, that even on a naturalistic level Sighvatr's eagle behaves in an excruciatingly correct way. What was a poor bird to do when the only available corpse lay face down? My interpretation said nothing about eating. The bird is just standing there, digging in his heels and thinking. The rest varies with imagination. A back is turned in flight: surely a back cut down from behind provides a taste opportunity or two. Perhaps the eagle had poor eyesight and mistook Ella for a rabbit. Shakespeare used a comparison:

Let us score their backs,  
And snatch 'em up, as we take hares, behind:  
'Tis sport to maul a runner.

*Antony and Cleopatra*, IV.vii.12.

The skald's metaphoric shorthand similarly demotes an enemy to the rank of prey.

Bjarni's 'ornithological reality' is an awkward criterion to apply to a poetic corpus in which birds speak to humans and make friends with wolves, and in which a stylized, generalized, metaphoric diction is required. Skalds of the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries allude so many times to men falling under the

eagle's talons and being trodden by a bird's bloody foot that Thomas Love Peacock declared himself fed up with their incessant 'ringing of changes' on the motif. There are analogues in medieval art: a hawk on the Sutton Hoo purse-lid sinks its talons into the back of the duck it stands over; an eagle grasping a hare's back in its claws is a popular Byzantine decoration. Sometimes the carrion bird even plunges its claws into a man's back. The Old English *Genesis A* poet reports that the raven sent forth by Noah to find dry land did not return to the ark: 'The dark-feathered one perched on a floating corpse' (line 1147). A mosaic in the nave of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo depicts Noah leaving the ship; in the upper-left corner, a raven stands on the back of a corpse, talons and beak doing what comes naturally. Medieval artists did not restrict their birds of prey to the missionary posture. Illustrators of Apocalypse manuscripts (e.g. Rev. 19.21: 'And all the fowls were filled with their flesh') license their raptors to rive before, behind, between, above and below; more than a few birds are shown feeding on corpses, their claws sunk into men's backs.

Birdlore has an honoured place in literature, and bird-lovers will inevitably bring their knowledge to bear on what they read. Sighvatr may have observed with interest or deep repulsion the perching and feeding habits of carrion birds on the battlefield. And he may have thought deeply about mortality and dissolution. But in his verse it is never the bird that gives the thought; it is the thought that produces the bird.

## REVIEWS

ISLANDS TIDIGA BOSÄTTNING. STUDIER MED UTGÅNGSPUNKT I MEROVINGERTIDA-VIKINGATIDA GÅRDSLÄMNINGAR I HERJÓLFSDALUR, VESTMANNAEYJAR. ISLAND. By MARGRÉT HERMANNS-AUÐARDÓTTIR. *Studia archaeologica Universitatis Umensis 1. Arkeologiska Institutionen, Umeå Universitet*. Umeå, 1989. xii + 184 pp. and 1 map in pocket at end.

The received view that Iceland's human history goes back only as far as the ninth century has been difficult to accept by many and several attempts have been made to use archaeological evidence as the basis for extending Iceland's history further back in time. The doctoral dissertation reviewed here is yet another ambitious attempt to establish an earlier date for the beginning of the settlement of Iceland.

Very few archaeological objects datable to before the ninth century have been discovered in Iceland and it is now generally accepted that those which do exist belonged to the settlers of the ninth century and later. The most striking examples are four Roman coins, dated to the third and early fourth centuries. The first three were found early this century in the south-east of Iceland, one as a stray find, the other two on what seems to have been a Viking Age farm site. The fourth was found in the 1960s during the excavation of a tenth-century farm site in the south-west. Several attempts have been made to find archaeological remains of the Irish hermits (*papar*) said in literary sources to have been in Iceland when the first Norse settlers arrived. Most recently the late Kristján Eldjárn ('Papey. Fornleifarannsóknir 1967-1981', *Árbók*, 1989, 37-188) carried out excavations on the island of Papey, largely for this purpose. He found nothing to support the testimony of the literary sources on this matter.

In her dissertation, Margrét Hermanns-Auðardóttir bases her theory of Merovingian-period settlement in Iceland, some two hundred years earlier than the conventionally suggested date of settlement, on the results of an excavation undertaken by her in the 1970s and early 1980s at a farm site in Herjólfsdalur on the Vestmannaeyjar off the southern coast of Iceland. More specifically, the theory is based on the results of radiocarbon dates obtained from the excavation. On the same basis she seeks to revise the dates of two volcanic ash layers found in the structures, dates which had previously been established by widespread geological work. One of these is the so-called 'landnám layer', so named because of its conventional dating to c. 900. This layer has in several locations in Iceland been found to mark a change in fauna and flora, indicating the arrival of man. The challenge to accepted opinions presented in this dissertation is significant and its value has been to force a reconsideration of the earliest settlement of Iceland and, indeed, of the shape of its history.

In her Introduction Margrét criticises the heavy reliance that archaeologists in Iceland have placed upon the literary sources, particularly insofar as the date of settlement is concerned. She suggests that researchers should be wary of relying on *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók* in establishing a date of



settlement since they are secondary sources that describe events which happened several hundred years before the time of writing. She dismisses these sources for her own investigation, choosing to rely instead upon archaeological results, more specifically the radiocarbon dates from her own site. But she seems to forget her own caveats in chapter 8, when these very same sources are used as support for the presence of the *papar* in Iceland when the Norse settlers arrived there in the ninth century. Margrét's suggestion is that the *papar* mentioned in the sources were not just a handful of hermits, but that they represent a sizeable pre-ninth-century Christian population, of which the inhabitants of Herjólfsdalur were part. She also suggests that the ease with which Christianity was adopted in *c.* 1000 must be a further indication of a substantial and well-established Christian presence in the country at the time. The inconsistent use of sources here by Margrét to further her arguments is obvious. Moreover, no evidence was obtained from the excavation in Herjólfsdalur to support these ideas. Margrét's aim seems to be to suggest a background for very early settlement in the Vestmannaeyjar. And this brings us on to the excavation itself.

The occupation at the site is dated to between the seventh and eleventh centuries on the basis of the radiocarbon dates and two objects, a bronze ringed pin and a needle-case, dated to *c.* 1000–1050. Both seem to have been found outside the buildings, allegedly in the top layers, but the exact location is not given in the report. A total of eleven features were excavated, not all of which Margrét considers to have been used contemporaneously. She groups them into two main phases of occupation. During four hundred years of occupation, major structural repairs and rebuilding might be expected. Hardly any is noted in the report.

One of the most serious flaws in the archaeological investigation of the site is the lack of overall section drawings showing the relationship of the various structures and cultural layers within them. Instead we have a confusing jumble of parts of the sections indicated on the general plan of all the structures (in a pocket at the end). These partial section drawings come from all over the site and none of them is precisely located on the general plan. They are therefore of little use in working out the stratigraphy of the site as a whole which is vital to an understanding of its occupation. Nor, in many cases, do they show what is discussed in the text (e.g. figs. 5:1 and 5:2), which may be a case of inaccuracy in cross-referencing, a common feature of this work. Additionally, large parts of section drawings, mostly excavated early on in the investigation, are incomplete (figs. 4:29, 4:54, 5:1, 5:3, 5:4, 5:5, 5:7, 5:11, 5:12, 5:13, 5:14, 5:18, 5:19) leaving significant gaps in our understanding of the structures.

Margrét's early dating of the first occupation at the site rests entirely on the radiocarbon dates. There are nine dates of charcoal remains, most of which come from cooking-pits. Seven of these were analysed as birch and used by Margrét to date the site. One of them (U-2532) is not located properly within the excavation. Of the remaining six dates, two (U-2660 and U-2661) are definitely earlier than the traditional settlement date. All but one (U-4402) of the samples dated were obtained from buildings that had been exposed by the

partial excavation of the site in 1924 (Matthías Þórðarson, 'Herjólfsdalur', *Árbók*, 1925–26). The implications and discoveries of this earlier investigation are barely referred to in the whole discussion of the present excavation. It may be because of this previous excavation that large parts of the stratigraphy from the structures where the samples were taken were not recorded. The quality of these samples therefore cannot be entirely trusted. U-4402, the only sample which comes from an undisturbed structure, gives a result which falls well within the generally accepted dates for the period of settlement. The structure in question (i.e. structure VIII) is classified in the report with the older phase at the site (table 4:3 and p. 44), whereas the cooking-pit from which the sample comes is said to belong to the last phase of the site (p. 46). From the evidence presented there is no reason to believe that three or four hundred years elapsed between the use of the house and the cooking-pit as Margrét seems to suggest.

Radiocarbon dates which predate the traditional settlement date have been arrived at at other archaeological sites in Iceland (e.g. in Reykjavík and at Hrafnseyri in Vestfirðir) and these are repeatedly referred to by Margrét to support her case. Many of these dates were processed by Ingrid U. Olsson of Uppsala, who has suggested that what she terms as 'island effect' may have rendered the dates of the samples too early (I. U. Olsson, 'Radiometric dating', in B. E. Berglund (ed.), *Handbook of holocene palaeoecology and palaeohydrology*, 1986). In theory, this might produce abnormally early radiocarbon datings for Iceland as a whole. Olsson is doing further work on this at present and her results are awaited with interest.

A dating method frequently used by archaeologists in Iceland is the so-called tephrochronology, dating with volcanic ash-layers, and the most crucial of these for the dating of the earliest settlement has been the *landnám* layer. In her study, 'Pollen analytical studies of human influence on vegetation in relation to the Landnám tephra layer in southwest Iceland', the geologist Margrét Hallsdóttir (*Lundqua thesis*, 18, Lund, 1987) publishes five radiocarbon dates: two from below the *landnám* layer, one from the layer itself and two from above the layer (Margrét Hallsdóttir, 1987, fig. 19). The results conform well to the conventional date of c. 900 for the layer, with the lowest sample stratigraphically giving the earliest date and the topmost the latest. Margrét Hermanns-Auðardóttir manages in the first instance not even to mention these dates, at the same time as she criticises the non-use of the radiocarbon method when dating the *landnám* layer (pp. 56–61). Later (p. 67) she quotes Margrét Hallsdóttir's earliest date, of a sample taken below the layer, as the one by which the layer should be dated. The other dates she lists at a still later stage in a footnote without any discussion (p. 148). This treatment of Margrét Hallsdóttir's work is disingenuous and unscholarly. Other geologists have established radiocarbon datings from below and in the *landnám* layer (Margrét Hallsdóttir, 1987, 24–5), all of which support Margrét Hallsdóttir's dating of it, but these are not even mentioned by Margrét Hermanns-Auðardóttir. Here again accessible information is dishonestly represented to further a predetermined argument.

Typologically the structures found accord just as well with the Viking Age as with an earlier period. Structure VIII housed both cattle and people, a common phenomenon in Norway in the earlier Iron Age and thought by Margrét to support her earlier date of the site, but now also found in Papey and dated there to the Viking Age (Kristján Eldjárn, 'Papey', *Árbók*, 1989, 142). The two datable objects found in the excavation were from the tenth or eleventh century.

In chapter 5 the structural remains are examined in detail and an attempt is made at reconstruction. Specialists in many fields have contributed to the work in order to throw light on various aspects of life in Herjólfssdalur at the time of the earliest settlement. The layout and reproduction of the book is generally good, but as noted, accuracy of the proofreading leaves much to be desired. There are too many faulty references in the text to the figures, making the already difficult use of fragmentary section drawings even more arduous. (Some of these were apparently corrected by the author later, but the relevant errata sheet was not enclosed with the present reviewer's copy). A list of figures at the beginning of the book would also have been welcome. Two maps (figs. 1:3 and 6:2) and some section drawings (see figs. 4:43, 4:44, 5:54) are duplicated. There are several references in the text to works absent in the bibliography.

Margrét has put much hard work into this report. But her principal thesis does not bear scrutiny. The evidence produced is not reliable enough to demonstrate that Iceland was settled two hundred years earlier than most scholars have previously assumed to be the case.

GUDRÚN SVEINBJARNARDÓTTIR

GODORÐ OG GODORÐSMENN. By LÚÐVÍK INGVARSSON. *Bókin er gefin út á kostnað höfundar*. Egilsstaðir, 1986–1987. Vol. I: 305 pp.; vol. II: 421 pp.; vol. III: 740 pp.

The words *goðorð*, *goðorðsmaðr*, and *goði* (plural *goðar*) are likely to play a major role in any study of Icelandic society during the period of the mediaeval Commonwealth, for though they are terms difficult to translate into English ('chieftain', 'heathen priest' and 'priest-chieftain' are all somewhat unsatisfactory renditions of *goði*) there is little doubt that for much if not all of the period 930–1264 the men who controlled *goðorð* were in many respects the leaders of Iceland. But whilst a considerable amount has been written about the *goðar* and their office of *goðorð* since Vilhjálmur Finsen and Konrad von Maurer studied mediaeval Icelandic institutions over a century ago, there have been very few book-length works devoted exclusively to them. (Hermann-Josef Seggewiß's *Goði und Hofdingi: Die literarische Darstellung und Funktion von Gode und Häuptling in den Isländersagas*, 1978, can be mentioned, but its focus is on the *goði* as a literary motif.) The initial impulse of anyone aware of the problems and complexities which still cloud our understanding of the *goðar* and the *goðorð* must be to welcome the major new study published by Lúðvík Ingvarsson.

The first and shortest of the three volumes of which the work consists is the one most likely to be read from cover to cover. It is itself divided into two distinct sections, the first of which treats the origins of the *goðorð*, the nature of the office, and the rights and duties of those who held it. (Lúðvík prefers to call these people *goðorðsmenn* but freely employs the word *goðar* as well). The matters treated here were long ago examined in detail by such scholars as Finsen, Maurer, Friedrich Boden, and Ólafur Lárusson, and the approach of many writers on the subject would be to refer repeatedly to the frequently conflicting conclusions reached by these men (and by some more recent scholars). But though aware of the secondary literature relating to the *goðar*, and occasionally referring directly to it, Lúðvík normally eschews debate with other scholars, aiming to produce a clear work accessible to anyone with an interest in the subject (I, 7–8). Most endnotes to this section refer to *Grágás*, and a large majority of the remainder refer to the *Íslendingasögur*, *Sturlunga saga*, the *byskupa sögur* and the documents in the compilation *Diplomatarium Islandicum* (1857–). Here, as throughout the work, Lúðvík displays a knowledge of the primary texts which is both close and comprehensive, and when issues have been much debated there is an obvious case for ‘getting back to basics’. But lucid though his account is, one must observe that there is little new in it. The longest of the eleven sub-sections into which the section is divided is an unexceptional review of the duties and responsibilities of the *goðar* at *þing* meetings and outside them. The lengthy sub-section on the origins of the *goðorð* in Iceland reviews familiar theories about the importance of presiding at sacrifices, having a large *landnám*, being of noble birth, being related to Björn buna, or being of East Norse origin, before proposing a more novel theory that the founding fathers paid attention to geographical factors and that *goðar* were distributed over Iceland with a view to minimising the difficulties each farmer had in travelling to consult one. The ultimate conclusion is that no one factor satisfactorily explains the phenomenon. The sub-section on the income of the *goðar* stresses the importance of *goði* control over church property whilst not presenting it as the major factor explaining the Sturlung Age; ‘brokerage’, discussed by Jesse Byock in his *Feud in the Icelandic saga* (1982) is scarcely considered. There are few occasions when Lúðvík’s knowledge of the primary literature can be faulted: a possible instance may be when he states ‘Skýrt dæmi um, að goðorð hafi verið selt, hefi ég ekki fundið’ (I, 94) and proceeds to examine relevant passages from *Droplaugarsona saga* and *Bandamanna saga*, but not an equally clear case from *Þorsteins saga hvíta* (*Íslensk fornrit*, XI, 1950, 4–5).

The second major section (*kafl*) of *Goðorð og goðorðsmenn* takes up the final hundred pages of volume I. It is itself sub-divided into two parts, the first of which is an assessment of mediaeval sources of information about the *goðar* and their families. The focus here is not on complete literary works but on genealogies and lists of prominent Icelanders, particularly some to be found in *Grágás* (‘Staðfesting á samningi um rétt Íslendinga í Noregi’), ‘Skrá um nöfn nokkurra presta kynborinna íslenskra’, *Landnámabók*, *Kristni saga* and *Sturlunga saga*. Careful assessment of these sources in the light of other evidence, notably that of the *Íslendingasögur*, leads Lúðvík to conclude that

several of the sources are somewhat untrustworthy guides to the identities of the *goðar* at particular times in history. Many readers will no doubt agree on the matter of untrustworthiness but have grave misgivings about a procedure which allows the employment of evidence from *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* or *Eyrbyggja saga* to cast doubt on the historical reliability of any source (see I, 235). The second part of the section is very much a prelude to the remaining two volumes, which devote much attention to genealogy and chronology. Thus there is a discussion of the rules regarding impediments to lawful marriage which applied at various times during the Commonwealth period. (Lúðvík clearly believes that these were observed quite strictly.) Naming practices are considered and extensive use is made later of the conclusion, reached from an examination of the families of *goðorðsmenn*, that children were never named after people still alive (I, 275). Techniques for calculating the length of time between generations in mediaeval families are explored and there are attempts to answer the questions 'How young did the daughters of *goðorðsmenn* and *stórbændur* marry?' and 'For how long were women capable of bearing children?' Almost inevitably there is recourse to later evidence, notably the Icelandic censuses of 1703 and 1801.

The third major section of the work is by far the longest, extending to more than a thousand pages in volumes II and III. Lúðvík attempts to trace chronologically through the Commonwealth period the holders of all the thirty-nine *goðorð* which he considers to have existed from 930 (or 965 in the case of three *goðorð* in the Northern Quarter). Starting with the Eastern Quarter and working in a generally clockwise direction around Iceland he considers in turn the *goðorð* associated with each of the thirteen local assemblies. Though evidence from the *Íslendingasögur* and the *Sturlunga* compilation is not always accepted without reservation, Lúðvík's approach rests squarely on the proposition that these are sources which the modern historian can trust. The notes very rarely mention the secondary literature and Hrafnkell Freysgoði, for example, is considered without reference to his remarkable career in the scholarship of the last sixty years (II, 44–9). The treatment of most individual *goðorðsmenn* is brief, though some accounts become narratives extending over several pages. Despite Lúðvík's very detailed and painstaking research, the reader cannot fail to notice that much obscurity surrounds several *goðorð* (and at least one of the *þing* in the Northern Quarter); and a suspicion might well arise from the evidence presented that the pattern of thirty-nine *goðorð* in thirteen *þing* in four quarters was never as well realised in practice as Lúðvík, following mediaeval sources, is inclined to insist. He does acknowledge on several occasions that the primary sources mention *goðar* who cannot be fitted into the pattern and he frequently suggests, sometimes with little or no positive evidence, that these men may have obtained the *goði* title through presiding at sacrifices and did not in fact control *goðorð*. (Halldórr Ólafsson pá, clearly designated a *goðorðsmaðr* in *Laxdæla saga*, *Íslensk fornrit*, V, 1934, 210, seems to be overlooked, though the possibility that his father had a *goðorð* is briefly dismissed in I, 250). The third section does not have a formal conclusion, but there is a useful 122-page 'Nafnaskrá'.

*Goðorð og goðorðsmenn* was published at its author's expense, and Lúðvík wryly comments (I, 10) on the justice of this fate for someone who insists on bringing such an uncommercial work to public attention. Offset printed from the author's typescript the three volumes are handsomely produced and proofreading errors seem comparatively rare. What Lúðvík presents to us is the product of an impressive knowledge of the mediaeval literature relating to Iceland, combined with a very great deal of careful and generally accurate study of his sources; but it is also a work largely untouched by six or seven decades of scholarly research into the nature of the sagas as works of history and literature. The final rather ambivalent verdict of the researcher studying the *goðar* today may be to rank it with some of the monumental achievements of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Old Norse scholarship.

JOHN KENNEDY

VAFPRÚDNISMÁL. Edited by TIM WILLIAM MACHAN. *Durham medieval texts*, 6. Durham, 1988. 106 pp.

In the 1984 Sir Israel Gollancz Memorial Lecture (*Proceedings of the British Academy*, 70, 1984, 231–73) E. G. Stanley reviewed what he termed some 'Unideal principles of editing Old English verse', amongst them the idea of presenting texts specifically for beginners in which orthography is regularised, unusual grammatical forms 'corrected' and so on. He felt that the usefulness of this kind of text was particularly limited because a student armed with some prior knowledge of the language, as would be usual in approaching verse for the first time, should not find the problems discussed in a good scholarly edition beyond comprehension and, indeed, by working diligently with such an edition would quite quickly attain a high level of expertise. In short he argued, very reasonably I think, that presenting a beginner with a standard scholarly edition of a poetic text will cause more good than harm and that spoon-feeding ought to be unnecessary. But while I was concerned that Tim William Machan's edition of *Vafprúðnismál* is explicitly intended 'for beginning students' and 'to introduce students to Eddic poetry', the editor has given much thought to the problems involved in producing an edition for his particular readership. This is inevitably most noticeable in his discussion and choice of orthography, where, in direct opposition to previous texts prepared for beginners, he argues that the retention of a great deal of the orthography of the Codex Regius will be of particular benefit because it prepares the student for the inconsistencies of medieval spelling and, it may also be said, of modern practices of regularisation. Thus only certain stressed vowel graphs are standardised, and features such as 'unusual' unstressed vowels and interchange between *c*, *k* and *q*, and *þ*, *ð* and *d*, are allowed to stand. To my mind, this is a particularly sensible way of presenting Eddic orthography and it is one of several aspects of the edition that may render it as welcome to scholars as it is valuable for students. Thus the explanatory notes are full and the glossary a useful complete *index verborum*. The introduction is concise and well-ordered, with

an admirable tendency to allow readers to make up their own minds and an extensive array of bibliographical references. It is, of course, customary to welcome any Old Norse text that is made accessible and edited in English, and I do, but the bibliography, and particularly that part of it given over to editions of Eddic texts, serves to emphasise that English-speaking students must quickly become familiar with German and the modern Scandinavian languages if they are to pursue their studies, just as they must, and will, quickly make the transition from beginner to more advanced student. This edition well demonstrates that there is no need to create an artificial barrier between these stages.

DAVID PARSONS

ANDREAS HEUSLER AN WILHELM RANISCH. BRIEFE AUS DEN JAHREN 1890-1940. Edited by KLAUS DÜWEL and HEINRICH BECK, with contributions by Oskar Bandle and Hans Neumann. *Beiträge zur nordischen Philologie*, 18. Helbing & Lichtenhahn Verlag AG. Basel and Frankfurt am Main, 1990. ix + 739 pp. and 2 photographs.

For those who know Heusler from his scholarly works and from his letters to the Danish ethnologist William Thalbitzer, this new collection of letters to his fellow *Altgermanist* Wilhelm Ranisch provides the opportunity to view the grand old man of Old Norse and other early Germanic literature from yet another angle. As Hans Neumann remarks in his preface, the letters to Thalbitzer reveal Heusler the man (both he and Thalbitzer were for example enthusiastic amateur musicians), while questions of literary history play an important part in the correspondence with Ranisch. The interest of such matters to the scholarly world was the criterion according to which the editors of the present volume chose the letters now presented for the first time. In agreement with the heirs of Ranisch, passages of a more personal nature dealing with private and family affairs have been omitted.

Nevertheless the remaining exchange between Heusler and Ranisch is anything but dry. Those familiar with Heusler's work will recognise his lively tone and, despite the fact that Heusler destroyed nearly all the letters he received from Ranisch (along with those from his other friends), his responses to the latter allow a clear picture of his correspondent to emerge. Although Heusler was by all accounts the more successful of the two, both in his own lifetime and in the eyes of posterity (Ranisch was a competent schoolmaster in Osnabrück all his professional life, but never wrote a *Habilitationsschrift* and thus never became a professor; his scholarly production amounted to 70 books and articles as opposed to Heusler's 465), he surprisingly regards Ranisch as the riper scholar and the more knowledgeable. He appeals to Ranisch's scholarly judgment in countless instances but also assumes the rôle of the other man's academic mentor, urging him to finish projects long since embarked upon but later consigned to a desk drawer (for example an edition of the Faroese Sigurd-ballads) and exhorting him not to give free rein to his desire for all-inclusiveness and excessive thoroughness, evidently Ranisch's

besetting sin and downfall.

Heusler saw himself as a dilettante and felt himself to be a misfit as professor in Berlin (where he spent 30 years), particularly as member of the *Akademie der Wissenschaften*, as this involved organizational matters for which he had no penchant whatsoever. Both in Berlin and later at the university in his home city of Basel he interprets the sparse participation in his courses as a signal that he is a failure as a teacher, this despite his own high standards as regards both content and form—style in general is of paramount importance to him and that of the Old Icelandic sagas is his ideal. It may be comforting to many to read that he suffered from stage-fright at the beginning of each new term. He felt most in his element when working at his desk at home in the holidays.

In addition to the genesis of many an article or book (notes to each letter refer to the bibliographies of the two men at the beginning of the book), the letters (especially those after 1914) also reveal Heusler's (and Ranisch's) political opinions, and in this case one of Heusler's dictums applies only too well to himself: *Aber es ist wohl die Regel, daß bedeutende Gelehrte als Menschen ihre Haken haben* (p. 360). The earliest hint of this comes in his remarks about Jewish colleagues and students: while he recognizes the scholarly talents and merits of some (Leon Polak, Joachimsen), he makes a connection between the religious origin of some others and whatever in their work does not please him (Richard M. Meyer, George Brandes). Yet he finds it harsh and unfair when Jewish scholars whom he thinks highly of (Hecht) lose their positions in the Nazi era. His preferred solution would be a quota system for Jews in those professions in which they are 'over-represented' in comparison with their proportion of the population at large (pp. 561–2).

In spite of Heusler's antisemitism and later enthusiasm for Hitler's foreign policy, he deplores the loss of *Weltbrüderlichkeit* after 1914 (p. 429), although he himself shares the prevailing German animosity towards the French, the English, the Americans and the League of Nations. In particular he regrets the abrogated contacts between Germany and Scandinavia. For himself as a German-speaking Swiss, the isolation of Germany represents being cut off from his own cultural *Hintergrund* (Heusler left Berlin for Basel in 1919). In scholarly matters he is however as clear-sighted as ever and has no sympathy for those whose desires to praise the ancient Germanic peoples (especially of the North) lead them to unfounded conclusions (Neckel, see p. 563). Heusler remains a positivist, reluctant to speculate, which is why he for example characterizes the field of Germanic religion as the *Jagdgrund der mageren Quellen und der fetten Hypothesen* (p. 325). He is also no purist in literary and other cultural matters: thus he is willing to consider the possibility that the North was influenced by Mediterranean civilization (p. 231) and finds it fruitless to distinguish between foreign and native elements in German culture (p. 415). The former gave impulses to the latter and here Heusler points to German music, which would be nothing without Italian influences (p. 413).



Heusler's descriptions of other scholars whom he knew in Germany or met during his visits to Copenhagen and Iceland cause many a name known to us only through the printed page to come alive—Julius Hoffory (his professor in Berlin), Sophus Bugge, Axel Olrik, Finnur Jónsson, B. M. Ólsen, Valtýr Guðmundsson, Kaalund, Gering, Genzmer, Niedner, Neckel—the list is long. The reader gains a sense of generational differences (including those of a scholarly nature, as seen through Heusler's eyes) and learns of the various connections between one man and the other, down to those of the most recent past, like the late Hans Kuhn. The editors have provided the volume with an index of the people mentioned with their dates, chief works and the letters in which they are mentioned.

The letters also make the present-day reader aware of a generational difference between himself/herself and Heusler, namely in the attitude towards women in academic life and scholarship. Women students were the exception in Heusler's lectures and when there were many of them (relatively speaking) he found it disturbing and considered them unable to comprehend or appreciate what he set before them (p. 296). It was not until he met Helga Reuschel (1938, two years before his death) that he wrote Ranisch that they perhaps would have to revise their ideas about 'das Weib' (pp. 631, 637–8). This new generation of young women had a genuine interest in scholarship and was far more critical of men.

Heusler's orthography has been left as it was, with the exception of obvious misspellings. The words, phrases and sentences in Icelandic, Danish and Middle High German with which he liked to sprinkle his letters have been translated in the notes, as have certain Swiss German words or expressions and Heusler's own neologisms. In addition to the preface by Hans Neumann, who knew Heusler personally, two articles about Heusler by Heinrich Beck ('Andreas Heusler und die Erforschung des germanischen Altertums') and Oskar Bandle ('Andreas Heusler und die Universität Basel') and one by Klaus Düwel about Wilhelm Ranisch provide a good overview of the life and work of the two men and orientation for the letters which follow. A photograph of a painting by Heusler's nephew Heinrich La Roche shows the writer of the letters typing on his Remington and smoking a *Stump* (short cigar).

BEATRICE LA FARGE

MOQTULS SAGA. Edited by MARIANNE KALINKE. With an edition of LE LAI DU CORT MANTEL by PHILIP E. BENNETT. *Editiones Arnarnagnæanæ, series B, vol. 30.* C. A. Reitzels Forlag. Copenhagen, 1987. clii + 108 pp.

This book is an edition, with English translation, of *Mottuls saga*, translated into Norse from the French *Le lai du cort mantel* (printed here alongside the Norse text), apparently on the behest of King Hákon Hákonarson, in the first half of the 13th century.

Professor Kalinke suggests that the tale may originate from a Byzantine rather than, as previously thought, a Welsh version, although the possibility is

not explored in detail. She shows, however, that regardless of the mantle tale's origins, all medieval European versions of it are related to the extant French *lai*, whether directly, or via a translation. Professor Kalinke gives accounts of these versions, some of which are analogous only to the extent that they include a chastity test, and goes on to include examples of 18th and 19th century German mantle tales. The two later Icelandic versions of the mantle tale, contained in *Skikkju rimur* and *Samsons saga fagra*, in turn provided material for interpolation into the 18th and 19th century redactions of *Mottuls saga*. Professor Kalinke suggests, by way of a study of the transmission of names, that *Mottuls saga* was the first of the translations commissioned by King Hákon. She also suggests the *lai* from which *Mottuls saga* was translated was originally part of the collection from which the *Strengleikar* were translated, but became separated from the rest of the collection. The literary aspects of the saga and its source are dealt with fairly briefly, and sometimes the arguments are noncommittal. However, this edition is chiefly concerned with the manuscripts. The author makes an exhaustive study of the relationship between the Norse manuscripts and the French, also between the saga and the French prose redaction, concluding that the Norse is so close a reading of its exemplar that it has value equivalent to that of the French readings in determining the relative originality of the French variants. The primary and secondary manuscripts are dated as closely as possible, and extensive notes provided regarding the palaeography, orthography and state of preservation of each manuscript. Three versions of the Norse saga are printed alongside the French, which makes comparison of the texts easy; a commentary to the texts additionally points out differences between the Norse and French. This edition contains several useful lists (of previous editions and translations, of manuscripts and transcripts, of versions of the mantle tale in European literature), although the bibliography could be more complete. I feel that the only significant lack is a translation of Philip E. Bennett's edition of the French *lai*, especially since translations are provided for all three Norse versions simultaneously.

JANE DALE

ISLÄNDERSAGAS UND IHRE ÜBERSETZUNGEN. EIN BEITRAG ZU DEN THEMEN TRANSLATION UND REZEPTION VON SAGALITERATUR IM DEUTSCHSPRACHIGEN RAUM VON DEN ANFÄNGEN IM 19. JAHRHUNDERT BIS ZUR GEGENWART. By MARIA WINKLER. *Wiener Arbeiten zur germanischen Altertumskunde und Philologie, Band 32*. Peter Lang. Bern, Frankfurt am Main, New York and Paris, 1989. 225 pp.

This ambitious work attempts a survey of the translation and reception of saga literature in the German-speaking world from its 19th-century beginnings to the present day in the space of less than 180 pages. The 32nd volume of the series *Wiener Arbeiten zur germanischen Altertumskunde und Philologie*, it is a slightly revised version of a dissertation written in 1986. Five more or less independent chapters deal with such diverse areas as 'the

scholarly investigation of Old Icelandic literature as a pre-condition for the rise of translation', 'how translations prepare the way for reception', and 'the theoretical basis of translation evaluation', concluding with a chapter on 'the direct and indirect consequences of the intensive involvement with saga literature' (suggested English translations for chapter headings are mine). Attempting to span such broad territory means that the author either must employ extensive generalization in giving an overview or else deal in summary fashion with some areas while giving a detailed treatment to areas of prime concern. Maria Winkler has definitely chosen the latter course.

Her book focuses on three main areas: firstly, on the growing scholarly attention given to northern literature during the Romantic period which forms the background for subsequent translations. Using extensive quotes from contemporary writers Winkler presents an extremely interesting and comprehensive discussion. After taking a brief look at translation theory her second detailed section deals with individual translators' approaches. This single sub-chapter, which is over 50 pages in length or almost one-third of the entire text, presents the translators and their approaches in roughly chronological order. Finally, Winkler examines specific problems involved in translation of the Sagas of Icelanders and skaldic verse. Here the various translators are again allowed to speak for themselves, often at length, with copious examples of their work included for comparison.

In all of the areas in which she attempts a detailed discussion Winkler succeeds admirably well in providing intriguing material and in raising interesting points for the audience, so that the book never becomes a dry register of undirected and unilluminating quotations. There is also a refreshing lack of unnecessarily convoluted 'scholarese'—her own remarks and conclusions are well made and clearly stated. It is only fair to add, however, that there are some disappointing lacunae. This is especially true of her discussion of reception: the sections on sagas in the target culture and on the consequences of their use for propaganda purposes are very summary (comprising a total of about ten pages). Questions raised as to how one should evaluate reception are left mostly unanswered. There are quotes from reviews but no figures for print runs, or even estimates of sales, which I for one would have found useful in forming a more solid basis for considering reception, as the book does purport to do.

In conclusion, Maria Winkler's book has plenty to interest students of Icelandic literature and of translation, presented in an engaging and readable manner.

KENEVA KUNZ

THE SAGA OF THE VOLSUNGS. THE NORSE EPIC OF SIGURD THE DRAGON SLAYER. Translated by JESSE L. BYOCK. *University of California Press*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford, 1990. x + 145 pp.

The difficulties and problems associated with producing any translation, but more especially those connected with the translation of a lengthy mediaeval

text, can fairly be described as legion and are probably understood and truly appreciated only by those who have themselves attempted the practice of that noble art. Should, for instance, archaisms in the target language be avoided at all costs, unless the original phrase in question would itself have struck a mediaeval audience or reader as belonging to the speech of an earlier generation (if this can at any rate be clearly established)? Or should something of a mediaeval flavour be allowed to surface from time to time (or all the time) in order to show the reader that he has in very truth entered a world centuries removed from his own? What limits should be set to free translation intended to avoid antiquated language or to create smoothness of style? Does such a technique make for 'true' accuracy, or does it, in fact, quite unjustifiably blur the real meaning, and should therefore be eschewed—however awkward and lame a literal translation of a perfectly natural sounding phrase in the original language would prove to be? Free translation may also be thought of as a technique aimed at providing some clarification for the reader of an otherwise obscure phrase or passage. But should a translation pursue such an aim? Should this and other techniques be adopted which shed light on what is obscure in the original text? Should not the obscure remain obscure, or should, in short, a translation be 'explanatory'? Professor Byock certainly seems to think that, in some respects at least, it should.

The technique which makes this especially evident is the substitution of names in the translation for the pronouns that represent them in the text, a technique that Professor Byock has employed more or less throughout, e.g. 'Then Odin guided Sigi out of the land' (p. 35): *Odinn fylgir honum nu af landi brott* (2/14; NB: the double numbers refer respectively to the page and line(s) of Magnus Olsen's diplomatic edition of *Ny kgl. Saml. 1824 b 4to in Völsunga saga ok Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, 1906–08, on which the translation is based); 'Siggeir had Signy's wish carried out' (p. 41): '*Nu lét hann sva giora, sem hun baud*' (11/2); 'It would be a wise course if Sigurd killed Regin' (p. 66): '*Pat veri snællræde, ef hann dræpe hann* (47/1–2); 'They went out to greet Gudrun and her women' (p. 76): '*Per gengu uth i mothe þeim* (62/1); 'In the past Bikki had given the king much bad counsel' (p. 107): '*Maurg ill rad hafde hann honum adur kent* (106/25–6); 'So ended the lives of Hamdir and Sorli' (p. 109): '*ok vard þeim þat ad allðrلاغhi* (110/5–6).

A second and associated explanatory technique adopted is the not so infrequent inclusion in the translation for the sake of clarity of a word or phrase that has no strict equivalent in the original, e.g. '... and put in the mound, one on each side of the stone, because he thought it...' (p. 46): '*... ok setia i hauginn sinum meginn hvarn þeirra, fyrir því at honum þotti...* (18/17–19); 'and the boy was brought before Alf's father, King Hjalprek' (p. 55): '*ok er sveinninn færdr Hjalpreki konungi* (31/10–11); 'After Fafnir died Regin came to Sigurd' (p. 65): '*Eptir þetta kom Reginn til Sigurdar* (45/1); 'The news of the fighting came to Gudrun' (p. 100): '*Ok nu koma fyrir Gudrunu tíðendinn* (97/6); 'Do not let such a wrong go unpunished' (p. 107): '*ok lat slikt eigi uhegnt* (106/24–5); 'Vile was the vengeance for your brothers when you killed your sons by Atli' (p. 107): '*ok illar voru þinar brædrahefnir,*

*er þu drapt sonu þina* (107/20–22).

Interestingly enough, there are occasional instances of the opposite phenomenon, no doubt in the interests of smoothness of style or of conciseness, i.e. the omission in the translation of a word or the contraction of a phrase in the original text, e.g. ‘... that he has never carried a better sword...’ (p. 38): *at allðri þar hann þetra sverd* i hende (7/6–7); ‘so that one edge pointed upward and the other downward’ (p. 46): *sva at annarr iadar* hellunnar *horfdi upp, enn annar nidr* (18/13–15)—the word *hella* occurs earlier in the sentence; ‘when he saw the boy’s piercing eyes’ (p. 55): *er hann sa þau inn haussu augu*, er hann bar i haufde (31/12–13); ‘Loki saw Andvari’s gold’ (p. 58): *Loki ser gull þat*, er *Andvare* átte (35/13); ‘... went to Sigurd, and said to him...’ (p. 78): ... *ok geck fyrir Sigurd ok kvadde hann ok mællte* (64/31–65/1).

As to archaisms, the style of the translation is not heavily archaistic, but there is often a somewhat ‘old world’ atmosphere about it, produced in part by renderings such as: ‘and set the wood afire’ (p. 47); ‘for this namefastening’ (p. 47); ‘King Sigmund now let sound his horn’ (p. 53); ‘the earth quaked mightily’ (p. 63); ‘That morning they sat in their bower’ (p. 83); ‘You are spiteful in your speech’ (p. 84); ‘The counsels of Bikki will sting her’ (p. 92); ‘Sigurd, the bane of Fafnir’ (p. 93). Such turns of phrase are not necessarily unpleasing, but whether they are entirely justifiable in view of the saga-writer’s undoubted and very largely successful efforts to transform the poetic language of his sources into a plain prose narrative in contemporary style is perhaps open to question.

The translation certainly does, in general terms, read well, yet amidst a preponderance of appropriate, indeed often felicitous, renderings, there do occur from time to time expressions that are rather less happy, e.g. ‘and then reached her tongue into his mouth’ (p. 41): *ok rettir sidan tunguna i munn honum* (11/29); ‘“I am not without suspicion”, he said, “that...”’ (p. 43): ‘*Eigi er mer grunlaust, sagði hann, ‘at...’*’ (14/25–6); ‘and struck the otter to death’ (p. 58): *ok laust otrinn til bana* (34/18–19); ‘and tried many directions of conversation with her’ (p. 86): *ok leitar margha vegha malsenda vid hana* (74/20); ‘And various thoughts shifted in his mind’ (p. 89): *ok lek ymest i hug* (78/15–16); ‘if I lie with any word’ (p. 99): *ef ek lyg nakvat ord* (95/14).

It is also possible to query some few of Professor Byock’s interpretations of the text. Is, for instance, *enn mesta eittrorm* (14/30–15/1) really ‘the most poisonous of snakes’ (p. 44)? Is *uni in uni nu vid þat* (29/11–12) first person singular, i.e. ‘I am content with this’ (p. 54), or in the context is it better thought of as an imperative? Can the somewhat obscure *marghfalldr* in *Hans skiollðr var marghfalldr* (55/13–14) be thought of as ‘ornamented’ (p. 72)—or is this a rendering of Bugge’s reading *svá markaðr*? Are Sigurd’s weapons ‘brown in color’ (p. 72), or do they gleam (*brun at lit*, 55/23)? *Eda hversu kom hun her?* (58/27–8) is not strictly ‘when did she [i.e. Brynhild] get here?’ (p. 74). The more precise ‘how’ is probably defensible since Sigurd has only recently left Brynhild behind on Hindarfjall. When Sigurd retorts *Nu er veith þeim, er oss likar* (59/22), does he imply that the seat next to Brynhild is, so to speak, in his gift: ‘it [i.e. the seat] is granted to whoever pleases me’

(p. 74), or, as the context might seem to indicate, that he is happy that he is himself occupying the place of honour? In Brynhild's words spoken to Gudrun *Niote þer sva Sigurdar, sem þer hafit mik eigi svikit* (71/31), can she really be saying in the context: 'Enjoy Sigurd as if you had not betrayed me' (p. 84)? *Kvid eigi þvi* (76/7-8) is hard to recognize in 'Hold your judgment' (p. 87). Is the thrall, Hjalli, 'trouble' (p. 102) for as long as he lives, or is he 'good-for-nothing' (*daligr*, 99/13)? Is Hogni's attitude when he finds himself in deadly peril 'customary for the strong' (p. 102), or 'customary for the few' (*sem ferum er tit*, 99/20)? Would Gunnar 'sooner' (p. 102) see Hogni's bloody heart before revealing where the gold is hidden, or must he 'first' (*fyrr*, 100/3) see his brother's heart—as the whole thrust of the scene probably suggests? But such are all relatively minor points and most are capable of more than one interpretation: *de gustibus non est disputandum*.

There remains the question of sentence patterning. Professor Byock—presumably to make for greater naturalness in the English style—sometimes links short sentences of the original into a single sentence in the translation, and contrariwise breaks up a long sentence into shorter units. A comparison of the structure of the following passage in the translation with that of the original can serve to illustrate briefly both points: 'And he felt the pork again and found that Sigmund's sword was stuck in it. [A] He knew it by the hilt, for it was dark in the cairn. [B] He told Sigmund and [C] they were both overjoyed.' (p. 46): *Ok enn þreifar hann um fleskit ok finnr, at þar var stungit i sverdi Sigmundar, [A] ok kendi at hiolltunum, er myrkt var i hauginum, [B] ok segir Sigmundi. [C] Þeir fagna þvi badir.* (18/28-31).

The notes on the translation and the glossary are helpful, though the former could have been fuller. The introduction deals fairly briefly with representations of the story in Norse art, with myth, with the social background, with legend and with the historical sources of the legend (this in rather more detail), and also, very cursorily, with Richard Wagner and his 'Ring of the Nibelung'. It is a pity that Professor Byock did not see fit to include a literary evaluation of the saga, both in comparison with saga-writing in general, and in terms of the saga's own internal structure.

Negative criticism is rarely difficult, and the present reviewer is only too aware that it can validly be directed against his own translation of *Volsunga saga* which appeared a quarter of a century ago. Professor Byock is to be thanked for producing an eminently readable English version of the saga which will undoubtedly be well received by the educated general reader and which should do much to stimulate interest in the field. Might he be prevailed upon to make, in the not too distant future, the Old Norse text more readily available to the specialist?

†R. G. FINCH

VIKINGS IN RUSSIA. YNGVAR'S SAGA AND EYMUND'S SAGA. Translated and introduced by HERMANN PÁLSSON and PAUL EDWARDS. *Edinburgh University Press*. Edinburgh, 1989. vi + 102 pp.

VIKINGS IN RUSSIA. YNGVAR'S SAGA AND EYMUND'S SAGA. Translated and introduced by HERMANN PÁLSSON and PAUL EDWARDS. *Edinburgh University Press*. Edinburgh, 1989. vi + 102 pp.

This attractive and pocket-sized volume presents for the first time in English two short sagas dealing with Scandinavian adventurers in eleventh-century Russia. *Yngvars saga* (YS) is extant in a number of manuscripts from as early as the fifteenth century and was edited by Emil Olson, 1912 (Olson). It tells of a Swede named Yngvar Eymundarson, the great-nephew of King Olaf Eiriksson, who leaves Sweden when Olaf refuses to grant him the title of king; in Russia he experiences a series of strange adventures while exploring a large river to its source, and he dies of a sudden illness in 1041. His son Svein later makes the same journey and marries Queen Silkisif, who had befriended his father. The strangeness of the adventures in this saga (e.g. dragons, giants, bird-men) gives it the air of a *fornaldarsaga*. *Eymundar þáttur* (ES) is extant only in *Flateyjarbók* (ed. C. R. Unger and G. Vigfússon, 1860–68, vol. II, 118–134; referred to here as *Flat*) and tells of the Norwegian Eymund Hringsson who becomes alienated from his foster-brother, King Olaf Haraldsson, and travels to Russia where he provides military aid to two sons of King Valdimar, Jarisleif and Vartilaf in turn, as they contend with each other and with their brother Burislaf for their father's lands. With its emphasis on military stratagems and achievements, this tale might be said to resemble a king's saga.

*Yngvars saga* concludes with a statement claiming that the work was based on a book composed by 'Oddur munkur hinn frodi' (Olson, 48/14–15), who himself gathered his information from oral informants. Earlier scholars (e.g. Olson, Finnur Jónsson) rejected the early date of composition implicit here—Odd Snorrason, the author of a Latin life of Olaf Tryggvason, worked in the monastery of Pingeyrar at the end of the twelfth century—but in 1981 Dietrich Hofmann published an article in the Turville-Petre Festschrift, *Speculum norroenum*, 'Die Yngvars saga víðförla und Oddr munkr inn fróði', arguing that Odd did indeed write a Latin book about Yngvar and that this was translated into Icelandic around 1200. The initial reception to Hofmann's theory (extended in an article in the Ludwig Holm-Olsen Festschrift of 1984) has been brief and cool—see the reviews of *Speculum norroenum* by David and Ian McDougall (*Saga-Book*, XXI, 1–2, p. 107) and by Rudolf Simek (*Sprachkunst*, 13, 1982, 342–3)—but the matter deserves to be weighed fully. It is a pity that the present volume misses this opportunity in its lengthy (43-page) Introduction, not least because Hofmann's articles are in German. But instead of a presentation of the issue as controversial, and a summary of Hofmann's ingenious arguments for and the traditional arguments against Odd's authorship and an early dating of the Icelandic, we get an unascribed expression of Hofmann's views as though they were simple fact, not requiring demonstration. The unwary reader (a category which will include most readers) will have no notion that this is a fascinatingly thorny issue. And at the same time that it fails to present Hofmann's case, the Introduction goes beyond Hofmann in several respects, giving the lost Latin

work a name (\*Vita Yngvari), describing it as the story of a Christian missionary, and dating it prior to Odd's \*Vita Olavi, i.e. around 1180 (Why? No reason is given, and it was an integral part of Hofmann's argument to date Odd's *Yngvars saga* after his *Óláfs saga*; see pp. 217 and 221 of the 1981 article.).

The description in the Introduction of Yngvar as a Christian missionary (pp. 2, 3, 19) contradicts the experience of most readers as well as other statements within the Introduction itself: the summary of the saga on p. 11 gives no hint of missionary activity; the saga is referred to as a 'quest romance' (16) and Yngvar as a 'visionary explorer' (30). Similarly, the placing of Silkisif within the category of the 'threatening seductress' along with figures ranging from the fairy woman in the ballad of Thomas Rhymer to Keats's 'La belle dame sans merci' (pp. 18–21) will raise some eyebrows—there is little that is threatening about Silkisif, the poly-lingual pagan queen who is receptive to Christianity and offers herself and her kingdom to Yngvar.

Since it is the duty of the reviewer to give caution when necessary, several other things must be pointed out concerning the Introduction. On p. 2 a passage from near the end of the translation is quoted; the Icelandic begins:

Enn þessa sögu hofum uer heyrð ok ritat epter forsaugn þeirar bækr, at Oddur munkur hinn frodi hafði giora latit at forsaugn frodra manna....(Olson, 48/13–16)

The translation reads:

We have heard this story told, but in writing it down we have followed a book composed by the learned monk Odd, which he based on the authority of well-informed people....

On the basis of this translation the conclusion is reached 'that in the author's time ('author' here means the translator into Icelandic), early in the thirteenth century, there were still oral stories about Yngvar and his expedition circulating in Icelandic' (p. 2). But the translation is dubious, and therefore the hypothesis about thirteenth-century oral tales must also be dubious. As Sverrir Tómasson (*Formálar íslenskra sagnaritara*, 1988, 158) says, this passage probably reflects the medieval practice of reading aloud to the scribes in a scriptorium, and thus the first part should read:

We listened to and wrote down this saga from a reading of the book....

It should also be pointed out that some words are missing from the latter part of the paragraph quoted on p. 2; compare p.68 where the full text appears:

Isleif told him that he had heard *this story from a certain trader who claimed to have heard* it at the royal court of Sweden. (the italicized words are missing on p. 2; cf. Olson, 49/7–10)

The defective translation seems curiously to have been regarded as an authoritative text by the translators, for they tell us on p. 28 that this Isleif, one of Odd's three informants, 'had at least been to Sweden proper'.

On pp. 9–10 the Introduction proposes a relationship between the two sagas based on Queen Ingigerd's love affair with Eymund Akason in *YS*, which reappears in *ES* in the form of a love affair between Ingigerd and Earl Rognvald, who is assumed to be a figure conflated with Eymund Akason. Even if it were plausible that a dependency of one saga on another could be



proven with such an argument, this thesis would have to be rejected simply because both of the supporting 'facts' are erroneous. As heart-warming as the translators' fondness for family love may be, the truth is that Ingigerd has no love relationship with Eymund Akason (who is her first cousin) in *YS*, nor has she a love relationship with Rognvald Ulfsson (her first cousin once removed) in *ES*. The misinterpreted passages will be discussed below; it is sufficient here to warn the reader to distrust the relationships (between the sagas, between Ingigerd and her cousins) proposed on pp. 9–10, as well as further references to them (as on the top of p. 17). No definite relationship between the two sagas has yet been demonstrated, although they both speak of the military aid that a Scandinavian named Eymund gives to Jarisleif in Russia, and they share the common error of calling one of Jarisleif's brothers 'Burislaf'.

The translations themselves are smooth and accurate, reminding us once more of the inestimable service Hermann Pálsson and his various collaborators have done in making the sagas available to the English-speaking world (and beyond, since many non-native speakers of English have read these translations). The popularity of these translations makes it appropriate to comment on their style, which may strike some readers (especially Old Norse scholars) as too natural, too smooth, too free of the stylistic and structural and semantic peculiarities, the 'strangeness', of the original. To be sure, the strong use of hypotaxis in the sagas, if followed literally, would be tedious in modern English; on the other hand it might be effective to keep enough of it to suggest the flavour of Old Norse prose rather than that of the nineteenth-century English novel.

A typical example is the following passage from *Yngvars saga*:

Pann uetur var Ynguar þar j godu yferlæti. þuiat drottning sat huern dag a tâli uid hann ok hennar spekingar, ok sagdi huort þeira audru morg tidindi. Jafnan sagdi Ynguar henni af almætti guds, ok fiell henni uel j skap su trua (Olson, 16/6–10).

This is translated:

Yngvar spent a very enjoyable winter there, for every day the queen and her wise men would sit talking with him, exchanging all kinds of information. Yngvar would tell her about God's omnipotence, a faith very much to her liking (p. 53).

Not only is the independent clause 'ok sagdi huort þeira audru morg tidindi' presented as a participial phrase ('exchanging all kinds of information'), as is frequently desirable in translation, but in addition the independent clause 'ok fiell henni uel j skap su trua'—a statement of some importance in the saga—is reduced to the state of an apposition ('a faith very much to her liking'). A bit later in the same paragraph the Icelandic:

Enn hann kuezt fyst uilia rannsaka leingd arinnar ok þiggja þann kost sidan (16/14–15)

becomes:

But he told her that, although he would accept her offer later on, he wanted first to explore the long river (p. 53)

The parallelism between *rannsaka leingd arinnar* and *þiggja þann kost* is lost with the creation of the subordinate clause 'although he would accept her offer later on'.

This second instance illustrates at the same time another characteristic of these translations: the free re-arranging of the order of clauses in order to achieve a sequence that seems more logical or natural in English. Sometimes of course this is necessary, as when Eymund says:

uer hofum litlar uistir ok hæfir oss þat ægi ok mun ek rada til budaruardar ok fara til herbuda þeirra (*Flat*, 128/22–23),

which is translated:

'We're short of provisions,' said Eymund, 'which is rather inconvenient, so I'll go to their camp and see what I can manage in the way of catering' (p. 82).

On the other hand, this passage in *Eymundar þáttur*:

Hyggj hann nu at huar bezst mun at at sækia ok var nu j brottu oll fegurdin su er synd uar (*Flat*, 125/14–15),

is translated:

Now that all the splendour on display had vanished, he considered what would be the best place to attack (p. 78).

The order in the translation may be more natural, but it would have been possible to keep the slight strangeness of the original and translate:

He now considered where it would be best to attack; the beautiful things which had been displayed were all gone

A sentence from *Yngvars saga*:

Þa kemur Eiríkur kongur þar at þeim aullum ouorum ok drap þa alla atta hofpingiana, er at motgangi hofdu uerit uid kong, ok einnueg Aka (Olson, 3/2–5),

is re-arranged to read:

King Eirik came and took all of them by surprise, killing Aki and his eight fellow-plotters who had rebelled against royal authority (p. 45),

thus missing the effect of saving the mention of Aki's death until the end of the sentence. A smaller but ideologically loaded instance of unnecessarily changed word-order is the rendering of *micinn fiolda kuenna ok kallmanna* (Olson, 15/3–4) as 'crowds of men and women' (p. 52).

The translation of *kong* as 'royal authority' pointed to above illustrates the way in which these translations occasionally use a more florid style than that of the originals. Thus *mikil tidende* (*Flat*, 119/9) becomes 'things of the gravest significance' (p.70), *ok liet jall sier þo þikia betra, ef hann lieti eigi naudmâg sinn sitia jafnhatt sier j Suipiod* (Olson, 2/6–7) becomes 'but the earl made it known that it would please him if King Eirik's self-appointed son-in-law were to have his royal privileges in Sweden withdrawn' (p. 44), and *Sidan drogu þeir þau* (i.e. ships) *aptur a âna* (Olson, 16/20–21) becomes 'after portage' (p. 53). Antithesis and parallelism are introduced where the original showed no such elegance: 'once the lesser thing has been granted, the greater will be demanded' (p. 86) for *heimt man bratt hiu mæira ef þetta er til latit* (*Flat*, 132/7–8), and 'As he added to his territories, so his subjects grew in number' (p. 47) for *ok æxlar riki sitt; þuiat hann giordizt fiolmennur* (Olson, 5/24–5).

A fourth way in which the style of the originals is lost in these translations is the suppression of the shift, within a sentence, from indirect to direct discourse, so characteristic of saga style. Thus:

[Eymundr] kuezst ok hyggia at þeir hafui honum meira fe j hendr unnit en malinn atti at vera. ok kollum ver þetta yduart missyne. ok ægi munu þer nu þurfa uors gengis edr liðsinnis (*Flat*, 126/7–9).

becomes:

He added that he thought they had put more money into his hands than all the pay they were due.

'We think you're making a big mistake,' said Eymund, 'and won't be needing our support and service any longer' (p. 79).

Similarly a passage from *Yngvars saga*:

Ynguar spurdi, ef hann uissi, huadan á su fielli; en Julfur kuezst þat uita med sannleik, at hon fiell ur uppsprettu þeiri. 'er uær kaullum Lindibelti...' (Olson, 18/2–5).

becomes:

Yngvar asked Jolf if he knew the source of the river, and Jolf said he knew for a fact that it flowed from a spring: 'We call it Lindibelti,' he said... (p.54).

Other examples occur on pp. 57 (Olson, 25/5–8), 58 (*idem.*, 25/20–26/2), 61 (*idem.*, 34/7–8), 83 (*Flat*, 129/28), and 86 (*idem.*, 131/34–7), and in fact there seems to be a policy of total suppression of this delightfully strange bit of Old Norse style.

These quibbles about a style which the translators have deliberately chosen reveal that there is nothing easier than to dispute translation on matters of taste. When we turn to the question of accuracy, on the other hand, it is extremely hard to quibble, and we can only be grateful for the many cases in which difficult and obscure passages are clarified in straightforward English. Nonetheless, there are several places in these translations where one can speak of possible errors, not of course in the understanding of the language but in interpretation. The passage from the 'epilogue' to *YS* has been mentioned above. Another passage from that saga:

En drekar atu hræ kongs ok dætra hans, enn sumer menn ætla, at þau se at drekum ordin (Olson, 24/1–3).

has been translated:

Dragons ate the bodies of the king and his daughters, and it was into dragons that some people believe they were transformed (p. 57).

Dietrich Hofmann (1981, 214) is probably correct in pointing to this as an instance of the author referring to alternate versions of a story; it should thus be translated:

Dragons ate the bodies of the king and his daughters. Some say, however, that the king and his daughters turned into dragons.

On p. 61 it makes no sense to translate *Heidingiar buazt þegar til bardaga* (Olson, 32/15–16) as 'Once the heathen had begun to fight,' when within a few lines it becomes clear that the fight only began later, after the casting of lots; the translation should be 'The heathen prepared for battle'.

The discussion of an alternate genealogy for Yngvar on p. 67 is translated according to the text in the popular edition by Guðni Jónsson in *Fornaldar sögur Norðurlanda*, II, 1950, 458, rather than Emil Olson's edition, p. 47.

For reasons unexplained, Guðni prints *Eymundr* for Olson's *Onundr* in two places, neither one supported by the variant readings given in Olson. Actually, both versions are unsatisfactory, since Eymund/Onund Olafsson is probably one and the same person—compare the names of Olaf's children as given in *Den store saga om Olav den hellige*, ed. Oscar Albert Johnsen and Jón Helgason, 1941, 191/4, and in *Flateyjarbók*, ed. cit. II, 109/19; in Snorri's *Óláfs saga helga*, however, 'Emundr' is the name of one son of Olaf and 'Onundr' is the name assumed by another son, originally 'Jákob', when he becomes king (chs. 88, 94). Olson would have done well to follow the variant reading to 47/17 and eliminate the name Eymundr altogether (except possibly for the passage from Adam of Bremen, which could be left as an error inherited by the saga author—but even here the name 'Aunundr' appears as a variant; see the passages cited in Hofmann, 1981, 205–06). In the present translation the mind-boggling passage on p. 67 could be straightened out by substituting 'Onund' Olafsson for 'Eymund' Olafsson in every instance. The issue being raised at this point in *YS* is whether the person earlier presented as Yngvar's friend Onund, son of King Olaf Eiriksson, was in fact Yngvar's father. The author of *YS* both rejects that hypothesis and explains how it came about, namely because a passage in *Gesta Saxorum* (read: Adam of Bremen) tells how 'Emundus' (read: 'Onundus') had a son, also named Onundus, who had a career resembling Yngvar's.

Finally, there are the two passages mentioned above referring to Ingigerd's love life. On pp. 45–6 of the translation of *Yngvars saga* we read:

King Olaf had a daughter called Ingigerd, in every way a most accomplished young woman, and she and her cousin Eymund were very much in love.

The passage which this translates is:

Olafur kongr atti dottur er Ingigerdr hiet. Þau Eymundr unnuzt micit fyrir frændsemi saker, þuiat hun uar uel at sier um alla hluti (Olson, 3/19–21).

The correct meaning of the key phrase is 'they were fond of each other, as cousins ought to be,' and indeed there is nothing in the saga to suggest any other kind of relationship. The other case of an imaginary love affair between Ingigerd and a cousin occurs in the translation of this pregnant passage at the very end of *Eymundar þáttur*:

ok þa er hinn hælagi Olafr Haraldsson uar j Gardariki þa uar hann með Rognualldi Ulfssyni ok uar þeirra vinatta hin mesta. þuiat allir gofgir menn uirdu Olaf konung mikils meðan hann uar þar en þo öngir mæira en þau Rognualldr jarll ok Ingigerdr drotning þuiat huort þeirra unne ödru með leyndri ast (*Flat*, 134/9–13).

The *huort þeirra* in the last clause is ambiguous; the present translation chooses this option:

When King Olaf Haraldsson the Saint was in Russia, he stayed with Rognvald Ulfsson and there was a deep friendship between them, for King Olaf was held in high respect by all men of honour while he was in Russia, though by no one more than Earl Rognvald and Queen Ingigerd, between whom there was a secret love affair (p. 89).

Although the Introduction, as pointed out above, treats this translation as a fact, it is surely wrong. The 'secret love affair' was between Ingigerd and King Olaf, not between Ingigerd and Rognvald. In an important article by

Friedrich Braun, 'Das historische Russland im nordischen Schrifttum des X.-XIV. Jahrhunderts,' *Festschrift Eugen Mogk zum 70. Geburtstag 19. juli 1924*, 1924, 150-96, there is a review of the various treatments of the relationship between Olaf and Ingigerd (pp. 182-5), citing among others Theodricus monachus, who tells that shortly after Olaf's death Ingigerd was not willing to allow Olaf's son Magnus to return to Norway unless the emissaries promised to make him king, 'for she had loved St. Olaf very much' (*valde enim dilexerat beatum Olavum*; cf. *Monumenta historica Norvegiæ*, ed. Gustav Storm, 1880, 45). Between Ingigerd and Rognvald Ulfsson, on the other hand, there is no tradition of a love story, as is natural given their relationship: Rognvald's father was the brother of Sigríð the Haughty, Ingigerd's paternal grandmother (see e.g. Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, 1951-53, II, 438).

The translations are followed by a 'List of proper names' (pp. 90-93), 'A glossary of sagas and other Icelandic texts' (pp. 94-100), and a bibliography which should include Braun's study and Hofmann's essay of 1984. It may not be clear to readers that the second work listed on p. 102 is also by *Dietrich* (not Diotrich) Hofmann. The author of *Historiska runinskrifter* is Elias Wessén. Other misprints occur on pages 3, 5, 17, 38, 39, 43 (read 'Ohthere'), 46, 63, 71 (read 'incite' for 'invite'), 96 and 100 (read 'McGrew' for 'McCrew').

ROBERT COOK

CONCISE ICELANDIC-ENGLISH DICTIONARY. ÍSLENSK-ENSK ORÐABÓK. By SVERRIR HÓLMARSSON, CHRISTOPHER SANDERS and JOHN TUCKER. *Íðunn*. Reykjavík, 1989. 536 pp.

The absence of a satisfactory dictionary of modern Icelandic for English speakers has long been felt, the editors (SST) observe with justice in their Foreword to this concise attempt to fill the gap (the notion of concision appears only in the English title). When I began studying the modern language in the mid-fifties, the only existing lexicon was the *Íslenzk-ensk orðabók* of G. T. Zoëga (Z), originally published in 1904 (not to be confounded with Zoëga's *Old Icelandic dictionary*, adequate to its purposes), whose coverage is so deficient that I abandoned it in despair and resorted to Sigfús Blöndal's vast tome—which, in those days, often meant repairing to a Danish-English dictionary to look up Blöndal's gloss. Since then, I have mainly relied on the excellent *Isländsk-svensk ordbok* (SJ) of Sven B. F. Jansson (4th edition, 1979; earlier editions are credited to Gunnar Leijström and Jón Magnússon as well), astonishingly comprehensive for its modest size, together with Árni Böðvarsson's *Íslenzk orðabók* (1963, enlarged 1983), often referred to as *Orðabók Menningarsjóðs* (OM). This admirable work is the fullest published record of the language but, being unilingual, is obviously usable only by foreigners with a good prior knowledge and is not ideal even for them. At last, in 1970, a second *Íslenzk-ensk orðabók* appeared, from the hand of Arngrímur Sigurðsson (AS). This work had a cool reception (it is not

even mentioned in SST) and evokes mixed feelings: its 900 pages naturally contain much matter, but it has a somewhat eccentric and amateurish air, the English contains numerous misspellings, the glosses are often strange (*rassambaga*, which means 'corrupt, ungrammatical language', is glossed 'skid-talk') and it is designed entirely for Icelanders: genders and inflections are not given, and the table of irregular verbs is of *English* verbs.

The actual word-list in SST fills 455 pages of large print and is preceded by 54 pages of prefatory matter, including a 17-page Icelandic grammar. SJ, in characteristic contrast, covers the grammar in seven pages and also has room for three pages on pronunciation and six on word-formation, both ignored in SST, though at the very least it would be helpful to have some indication of words where final or intervocalic *ll* is *not* pronounced [dl]. It was, I think, a mistake not to include a table of 'irregular' verbs (six pages in SJ); instead, their parts are scattered through the dictionary as headwords cross-referenced to the infinitive, so that (for example) *fjúka*, *fýkur*, *fauk*, *fuku*, *fyki* and *fokið* all have separate entries. This is most wasteful of space and there are some omissions (e.g. all but one of the parts of *rjóða* and *rjúfa*).

Perhaps the weakest aspect of the dictionary is the attempt of its largely North American and Icelandic compilers to supply British usages alongside American ones. Sometimes this is merely ponderous, as when *nágrannaland* is glossed 'neighbouring country' twice over, with a difference of one letter, but there are also numerous oversights and errors, as one might expect of writers who believe that the British habitually say 'stays' for *lífstykki*, 'dust collection' for *sorphreinsun* and 'thick as a pig' for *nauheimskur*. Many distinctively American spellings are left without notice, e.g. behavior (*breytni*), diarrhea (*drulla*, *niðurgangur*), meter (*metri*) and offense (s.v. *þykja*), and the compilers are also clearly unaware that many of their glosses too are non-British: barber shop, shoe repairman, cookie, bathroom (for *salerni*), dormitory (for *garður*; better under *stúdentagarður*), train station, co-hab (*sambýliskona*), mailman, air post. I doubt if many in Britain know 'escrow' (*biðvarsla*), nor will 'windbreaker' for *úlpa* do there ('windcheater' would serve, but 'anorak' is better—AS gives 'capote!'). *Leysa frá skjóðunni* is rendered 'bare one's chest, let the cat out of the bag', where the first gloss will be unintelligible in Britain and the second is wrong (the meaning is 'speak one's mind'). Conversely, I wonder how many Americans will understand 'carry coals to Newcastle' (*bera í bakkafullan lækinn*).

Some neologisms possibly too recent for earlier dictionaries will be found in SST. Here are two words for 'Aids', *alnæmi* and *eyðni*; computing gives us *nálaprentari*, 'matrix printer', *gagnagrunnur*, 'data base', and *hugvinaður*, 'software', and philosophy *hluthyggja*, 'realism', while it is presumably to our modern relaxed ways that we owe the inclusion of *runka*; none of these is in the 1983 edition of OM. Commercial vocabulary is present in strength, e.g. *staðgreiðsluafsláttur*, 'cash discount', *viðskiptamannabók*, 'customers' account ledger', and there are fifteen compounds of *markaður* as against none in SJ and Z and two (and those only in quotations) in OM. But the philologists and litterateurs who read the *Saga-Book* may feel less well catered for, as there are many omissions and the glosses are quite often vague or ambiguous:

*munnhöggvast* is 'bandy words' rather than simply 'quarrel', *bossi* is only one kind of bottom, *flenna* 'tart'—is this a comestible or a strumpet? 'Pauper (paid for by the local government)' does not quite capture *niðursetningur*; Z is no better here and AS omits it, but the Swedish 'inhysning' in SJ conveys the idea. *Ætt* and *fjölskylda* are both simply 'family' as if they were synonyms, and likewise *börða* and *éta* are both merely 'eat'; *stúlka*, *stelpa* and *telpa* are all 'girl', though *stelpa* is rather 'lass' and *telpa* is 'little girl'. These are properly differentiated in SJ, which, like Z, also lists several poetic or otherwise specialised words for 'girl': *drós*, *snót*, *sprund* and *yngismær*; all these are absent from SST. The entry *kleppur* 'bedlam' is puzzling; the principal sense of this word is 'lump, clod' (Z), though it is true that *as a proper name* the word denotes the mental hospital in Reykjavík and that *in the eighteenth century* a famous London madhouse was called Bethlehem, or Bedlam for short (hence the sole modern sense 'noisy confusion'). As for omissions, it is disturbing that the Icelandic version of the Foreword, which is only just over one page in length, contains several words not in the Dictionary: *gagnorður* and (*loka*)*drög* are missing, *ráðuneyti* is there only in the sense of government ministry, while in the Foreword it means 'help, advice', and the participle *siutt* is not cross-referenced to *styðja*.

Of course, every dictionary that has ever been compiled affords openings for criticisms of this kind. But there do seem to be rather a lot of points that catch the eye as one turns the pages of SST; in particular, it does not emerge very well from a comparison with SJ, even though that is physically somewhat smaller. It has been nicely enough produced (I have spotted only four misprints) and, as the competition is so weak, it is bound to find plenty of purchasers, though I doubt if I shall be making much use of it myself. Not but what I have learnt something from it: I never realised before that the Icelandic for 'she's such a sweet little thing' is *hún er óttalegt rassgat*.

D. A. H. EVANS

SVENSKT RUNORDSREGISTER. By LENA PETERSON. *Runrön. Runologiska bidrag utgivna av Institutionen för nordiska språk vid Uppsala universitet, 2. Institutionen för nordiska språk, Uppsala universitet. Uppsala, 1989. vi + 79 pp.*

This book is a comprehensive index, with a short foreword, of the runic inscriptions found in Sweden dating from c.800 to c.1100. Some unpublished inscriptions are included, as well as those published in the series *Sveriges runinskrifter* and elsewhere. Proper names are not included. The words are indexed in normalised form and each different form of the indexed word is then listed with examples. Under each indexed word is given a list of occurrences of it in runic inscriptions; this list consists of abbreviated references indicating the work in which the inscription is published, and the section of the runic inscription—where applicable—in which it appears. Indication is given if the interpretation of a particular word is uncertain, or if the inscription itself has been lost or destroyed and is thus recorded by way of

a secondary source. This index is convenient to use, when one has become accustomed to the system of abbreviations, and may prove particularly useful to those less familiar with the runic material.

JANE DALE

THE BIRSAY BAY PROJECT, VOLUME 1. COASTAL SITES BESIDE THE BROUGH ROAD, BIRSAY, ORKNEY. EXCAVATIONS 1976-1982. By CHRISTOPHER D. MORRIS, with contributions by Colleen E. Batey, Norman Emery, D. James Rackham and others. *University of Durham, Department of Archaeology. Monograph series number 1.* Durham, 1989, xxvi + 308 pp. and 5 microfiches.

This substantial volume is intended as the first of three by Christopher Morris on a major project of archaeological survey and excavation in Orkney carried out by Durham University between 1974 and 1982. The historical importance of the study area stems from the association of Birsay with the Earls and Bishops in the medieval period. Excavations in the area were begun in the 19th century, the best known site probably being the Brough of Birsay. It was excavations undertaken in 1973-4 to clarify the publication of the finds from previous excavations at the site which led to the present project. The area dealt with in this first volume lies between the two areas to be described in subsequent volumes, the Brough of Birsay and Birsay Village. Least was known about it archaeologically before excavations began. The report consists of detailed descriptions of a very thorough archaeological survey, combined with area excavations, resistivity surveys and environmental investigations. A number of specialists in various fields have contributed to the project, making it truly multidisciplinary. The report is not likely to be read from cover to cover, except by the most meticulous student of the area, and the data stored on the microfiche at the back will have to be forgone by those who, like the present reviewer, read it at home. The result is that we unfortunately have limited access to most of the section drawings. In view of the number of different sites examined, a more frequent reference to relevant maps, which are many and excellent, showing their location at relevant places in the discussion would have been welcome. Similarly, reference to the appropriate illustration drawings in the discussion section of the finds would have been appreciated. On page 212 the missing reference to the museum number of a ringed pin found at Hrísar in Iceland is Þjms. 7347 (cf. Kristján Eldjárn, *Kuml og haugfé úr heiðnum sið á Íslandi*, 1956, 113-14). The spelling of *Bergþórshvoll* has got rather out of hand on page 215. The overall impression gained from the investigation owes much to the remarkable density of archaeological sites in the area and the eroded state of many of them; many of the features have half disappeared into the sea. The information gathered is therefore fragmented and not easily correlated from site to site. Chronologically the sites range from the late Neolithic to the Viking period. Of most interest to *Saga-Book* readers will no doubt be the increased information on the scope of Late Pictish and Viking settlements in



the area, putting sites like that at Buckquoy into wider perspective. But it is the additional information of the early Prehistoric period that has proved to be the most unexpected and served to stress a former importance of the area not hitherto given much attention. As the author, however, rightly points out, the detail obtained from this relatively small area should not be allowed to disturb the balance of the archaeological picture of Orkney as a whole. This is a first-rate archaeological project, where the rescue element plays a prominent role within a research context. The author should be congratulated on obtaining such a high standard of publication for his work.

GUÐRÚN SVEINBJARNARDÓTTIR



## SOME CONTEXTS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF OLD NORSE ORDERING LISTS

BY ELIZABETH JACKSON

A feature of the poems in the *Edda* which sometimes causes problems for readers is their frequent recourse to lists of all kinds.<sup>1</sup> Critics and commentators in the past have tended to see the lists as interruptions, not always appropriate and often of doubtful literary value. Indeed, some have gone so far as to dismiss certain lists entirely, regarding them as clumsy interpolations (see, for instance, Gering 1927–31, I 119; Nordal 1978, 25). However, a comparison of lists from a range of traditional literatures, including Old Norse and Old English, reveals correspondences between them and sheds light on the similarities between different pre-literary cultures (irrespective of whether there has been direct cross-fertilization or influence). It suggests that the eddic lists are part of a literary tradition which regarded lists and listing techniques as natural to poetic art, that they fit patterns well-established in wisdom texts, and that they have a legitimate and important place in the poems in which they occur. From this point of view, both the literary value of the lists themselves and the integrity of the texts in the Codex Regius may be defended. Furthermore, attention to listing techniques and characteristic patterns can help both in the interpretation of individual texts and in adjudicating between different attempts to restore or amend them. As part of a broader study of lists in the *Edda*, this article will focus on one particular type of list, the ordering list, first establishing a framework for discussion by identifying the common features of ordering lists and then suggesting a classification of them based on examples from a range of traditional literatures.

One of man's earliest intellectual activities was to make lists of natural and social phenomena, lists which often reflected observed patterns and drew analogies between man and nature. Such lists would pass on essential information about the world, but their primary purpose seems to have been to satisfy the drive to impose order, and through order some kind of control, on the bewildering multiplicity of experience. This drive was fundamental to the early philosophy which wisdom literature sought to express, and it found in the list a natural means of ordering both perceived phenomena and traditional lore. E. R. Curtius, in his excursus on numeri-

cal apophthegms, says 'numbering, counting, enumerating are means of intellectual orientation' (1953, 510), and G. von Rad adds that 'the counting and listing of things, of types of behaviour, of virtues, etc., is an elementary need of man in his search for order' (1972, 35).

Sometimes the enumeration pointed out by Curtius takes the form merely of lists of names or of nouns, as in the ancient Greek *onomastica*, which A. H. Gardiner notes were the earliest Greek word-lists (1947, 5). Gardiner edited three ancient Egyptian texts of this type, the earliest of which is preserved in a Middle Kingdom papyrus (c.2040–1650 BC), and he characterizes them as 'very crude attempts to cope with the endless variety of the world' (1947, 1). Similar texts are believed to have existed in ancient Israel, although no actual example is known (von Rad 1972, 123). Historical, geographical and mythological lore appear in the Old Norse *þulur*, which show some similarities to the *onomastica* of ancient Egypt and Greece. Not least of these similarities is the fact that they are among the oldest extant lists in the language. Stefán Einarsson writes of them:

One of the oldest of these [types of poetry] is the *þula*, a list of gods, elves, dwarfs, heroes, tribes, etc. This mnemonic device underlies much of the didactic poetry and appears as extraneous material in some of the others (cf. the list of dwarfs in *Völuspá*). The Old English *Widsiþ* contains the earliest *þulur* on record. (1957, 38)

However, the name lists in *Widsiþ* and *Völuspá* seem to be informative lore lists, rather than ordering ones as the ancient texts were. The use of the *þula* as a vehicle for the storage and transmission of information reached its peak in the Icelandic twelfth-century renaissance where it became, as Einarsson says, 'a veritable lexicon of poetic vocabulary' (1957, 38).

Other ordering lists go beyond simple names and catalogue the characteristic features of phenomena; related to this type are the animal descriptions in the final chapters of the Book of Job and the following passage from the beginning of Ecclesiastes:

The sun rises and the sun goes down; back it returns to its place and rises there again.

The wind blows south, the wind blows north, round and round it goes and returns full circle.

All streams run into the sea, yet the sea never overflows; back to the place from which the streams ran they return to run again. (1: 5–7)

Lists like this represent the beginning of a scientific approach to the world and their purpose is to record observed patterns and relationships

in the natural world. Their method, fundamental to all ordering activity, is generalization, marked in this translation by the term *all* in the third item concerning streams.

The same generalizing method is found in lists from early Irish literature. In the ninth-century Irish dialogue *Tecosca Cormaic*, for example, the generalization is frequently achieved by the use of the terms *cach* 'every' and *cách* 'everyone', as here:

Gáeth cech fossaid,  
ffrén cech fíal.

Every steadfast person is wise,  
every generous person is righteous.  
(Meyer 1909, 20-1)

It may also result from an initial generalizing statement, such as the one which begins Cormac's answer to the question *cin etargén mná?* 'how do you distinguish women?':

'Ní hansa,' ol Cormac.  
'Nosnetargén 7 nfsnetargléim.

'Not hard to tell,' said Cormac.  
'I distinguish them, but I make no difference among them.

Serba sírgnáise,  
mórda tathigthe,  
drútha follaiithe,  
báetha comairle,  
santache tormaig.'

They are crabbed as constant companions,  
haughty when visited,  
lewd when neglected,  
silly counsellors,  
greedy of increase.'  
(Meyer 1909, 28-9)

In Old English ordering lists the generalization is more often expressed simply by the use of a noun as representative of all its kind, for instance *scip* or *scyld*. This is illustrated by the following examples, the first of which is a list recording observations of the natural world from the Old English poem *Maxims I*:

winter sceal geweorpan, weder eft cuman,  
sumor swegle hat, sund unstillle. (Maxims I 76-7)

Here, the inevitable, natural cycle of the seasons can be compared to the cycle of the sun, the winds and the waters in the passage from Ecclesiastes. However, the wisdom tradition's major preoccupation was with man and society, and the ordering list was employed for social observations as well as for observations of nature. The following list immediately precedes the 'seasons' list in *Maxims I*:

Forst sceal freosan, fyr wudu meltan,  
eorpe growan, is brycgian. (Maxims I 71-2)

It links natural phenomena with characteristic features of special signi-

ficance to man. The freezing quality of frost is a threat to survival, but this threat is counterbalanced by the fact that fire consumes wood and therefore keeps men warm. The significant fact about the earth for mankind is that it grows, producing food for men and animals,<sup>2</sup> and the important characteristic of ice is that it forms bridges, enabling people to cross bodies of water that might otherwise form barriers to them. Confirmation of the importance of the bridging function of ice is found in another ordering list, in *Hávamál* 81: *ís [scal leyfa] er yfir kǫmr*. The ordering principle of the *Maxims I* list lies partly in the actual order of the items, as when the warmth of fire follows the cold of frost, but mainly in the pairing within each item. The link is made emphatic by the use of the auxiliary verb *sceal*, given for the first pair but implied for those that follow, which asserts a natural law, the recognition of an unchanging relationship. Such a use of *sceal* is common in Old English wisdom poems and its significance will be considered further below. Later in *Maxims I* the move from observations of the natural world to observations of society is completed in a list of statements recording observations of necessary relationships in the world of man:

Scyld sceal ceman,    sceaft reafere,  
 sceal bryde beag,    bec leornere,  
 husl halgum men,    hæpnum synne. (*Maxims I* 129–31)

The lists considered so far have been mainly concerned with recording observations and defining relationships. The next step in the ordering process is to analyse and compare the observations recorded, so comparison is a second fundamental tool of the wisdom poet. The following simple list not only records observed facts, but also distinguishes an order of importance among them:

The chief necessities of human life  
 are water, fire, iron, and salt,  
 flour, honey, and milk,  
 the juice of the grape, oil, and clothing. (*Ecclesiasticus* 39: 26)

The ordering principle is apparent in the use of the Greek ἀρχή 'beginning', translated here as 'chief', and to some extent in the sequence of the items, water and fire being more necessary than, for instance, the juice of the grape. Having established by observation a class of phenomena, the sage now compares the members of the class and seeks to distinguish those which are most important, or those which come first. A development of this type of list appears in early Irish literature in the first series of maxims in the *Senbriathra Fithail*. As in the Irish verses quoted

above, the subject here is human behaviour rather than the necessities of life, but the ordering principle is similar. It employs the term *tossach* 'the beginning', corresponding to the Greek ἀρχή in the extract from Ecclesiasticus:

Tossach augrai athchosan.	The beginning of strife is quarreling.
Tossach eithig airlicud.	The beginning of refusal is lending.
Tossach écnaig airbire.	The beginning of slander is reproaching.

(Smith 1928, 4–5)

The ranking principle demonstrated in these lists is also evident in a list from the ancient Egyptian *Instruction of Ankhsheshonq* (c.323–308 BC), a late example of a genre which had a long history in Egypt. This list has moved on from observation and implies values and moral judgement:

The wealth of a town is a lord who does justice.
The wealth of a temple is the priest.
The wealth of a field is the time when it is worked.
The wealth of a treasury is in (being in) a single hand.
The wealth of a property is a wise woman.
The wealth of a wise man is his speech. (Lichtheim 1973, III 166)

It demonstrates both generalization from observations of the world and of society, and comparison between different phenomena to find points of similarity or difference between them. Both are important steps in the attempt to discern and record order in the universe. The sage draws on observation and experience (either his own, or that of others passed on to him) to record a general characteristic of all towns, temples, fields and so on; at the same time he notes a particular feature of each class of phenomena which constitutes, in his view, its particular wealth. That each class has an identifiable source of its particular wealth is a point of similarity between them. However, the main point of comparison is not between the items themselves but between the features belonging to each item, of which only the most significant, expressed here by the phrase *the wealth of*, is given. Thus the sage distinguishes among the many possible attributes of a town, recording only his conclusion that a lord who does justice constitutes its particular wealth. Although his primary ordering techniques are generalization and comparison, he also employs a secondary technique with which he attempts to define important characteristics of phenomena. Such definitions, normally marked by a form of the verb *to be*, either stated or implied, together with comparative or superlative adjectival forms, distinguish a sub-set of ordering lists which can be called defining or definitive lists. Examples of this sub-set are also to be found in the Irish lists:

milsem codalta freislige,  
milsem cormæ cédeoch,  
milsem ceól ceól i ndoirche.

the sweetest part of sleep is cohabitation,  
the sweetest part of ale is the first draught,  
music is sweetest in the dark.

(Meyer 1909, 48–9)

ferr a fleiscad a fóenblegon,  
ferr a sroigled a subugud,

better to whip them than to humour them,  
better to scourge them than to gladden  
them,

ferr a túargain a táltugud.

better to beat them than to coddle them.

(Meyer 1909, 34–5)

Maxims like this are directly comparable to ordering maxims from Hebrew wisdom texts, such as these examples from Ecclesiastes:

Better to visit the house of mourning than the house of feasting. (7: 2)  
Grief is better than laughter. (7: 3)

An Old English example of such a maxim is *Ræd biþ nyttost, | yfel unnyttost* (*Maxims I* 118b–119a), and two Old Norse examples occur in *Hávamál: Betra er lifðom oc sællifðom* (or, as emended by editors such as Evans (1986), *Betra er lifðum en sé ólifðum*) (70/1–2) and *Sonr er betri, þótt sé síð of alinn | eptir genginn guma* (72/1–3).

Definitive ordering lists seek to define necessary relationships or to establish what is best, most important or most characteristic of its kind. A second, smaller, category of ordering lists is made up of those which illustrate a general observation about the world. Such lists still employ generalization and comparison as their primary ordering techniques, but their secondary technique is illustrative rather than definitive. An example is the list from Ecclesiastes which begins:

For everything its season, and for every activity under heaven its time:  
a time to be born and a time to die;  
a time to plant and a time to uproot;  
a time to kill and time to heal;  
a time to pull down and a time to build up. (Ecclesiastes 3: 1–3)

Here the generalization, marked in this translation by the terms *everything* and *every*, is found in an initial statement drawn from observation and experience. The author appends to this general statement a long list of examples which illustrate the point he is making and emphasize the validity of his generalization. As well as identifying the similarity of a wide range of phenomena, in that each has its own particular season or appropriate time, the sage marks strong contrasts between them by listing them in antithetical pairs. However, no definitions or judgements of value are made and there is no ranking of items; they all have equal



status. These two ordering methods, the definitive and the illustrative, form the basis for categorizing the Old Norse ordering lists discussed below.

Many features of the lists considered so far are mnemonic and demonstrate the oral origins of the ordering list. Among these features are the development of the list item into an independent maxim, as in the Egyptian 'wealth' list, and the pairing of items within a list using a repeated conjunction, as in the 'time' list from Ecclesiastes. Other mnemonic features include the use of extensive repetition, parallel grammatical structures, verbal balancing, and, with regard to content rather than grammar, the use of parallelism and antithetical parallelism.

As noted above, comparison enables the wisdom poet to distinguish a ranking order among the phenomena he records, but it also has a broader function. Some maxims and lists of maxims in Near Eastern wisdom literature compare observations of nature and observations of human behaviour, a comparison which enables the sage to comment effectively on the latter. Recognizing analogies between natural and social phenomena rather than just cataloguing them represents a gain in knowledge of the world, and such comparisons are common to the wisdom literature of many cultures. An example from the wisdom of Israel is:

Like clouds and wind that bring no rain  
is the man who boasts of gifts he never gives. (Proverbs 25: 14)

Kenneth Jackson quotes an early Welsh verse which seems to be of the same kind, although the link between the natural and human observations is not as clearly defined as it is in the example from Proverbs:

Rain outside, it wets the fern,  
white is the shingle of the sea, foamy is the shore;  
understanding is a fair candle for man. (1935, 128)

In this example the comparison is implied by juxtaposition, but sometimes it is made more explicit. The Old Irish lyric known as *The Lament of the Old Woman of Beare* compares the ageing of the old woman to the ageing of a tree:

Ad-cfu form brot brodrad n-afs; ro gab mo chfall mo thogafs; lfath a finn ásas trim thoinn;	I see on my cloak the stains of age; my reason has begun to deceive me; grey is the hair which grows through my skin;
is samlaid crotball senchroinn.	the decay of an ancient tree is like this. (Murphy 1962, 81)

There is a short list in the Old English *Solomon and Saturn* which draws

its comparisons by juxtaposition and which surely belongs to such a stage of wisdom development:

Saturnus cwæð:

‘Nieht bið wedera ðiestrost, ned bið wyrda heardost,  
sorg bið swarost byrðen, slæp bið deaðe gelicost.’

(*Solomon and Saturn* 312–13)

Here, alongside the comparison implicit within each item, is a comparison between the items. The observations from nature that night is the darkest weather and sleep most like death serve to verify and accentuate the social observations that need is the hardest fate and sorrow the heaviest burden. Like the ‘wealth’ list discussed above, this list employs both definition (marked here by the verb form *bið*) and the ranking principle of organization (expressed here by the superlative degree).

Like the ancient Near Eastern, Old Irish and Old English lists, the ordering lists in the *Edda* can be divided into categories according to their major purpose. Some seek to order experience by defining natural laws or, in an extension of this process, prescribing social ones; they normally employ the repetition of formulas containing *er* or *scal*. Among these are some which attempt to evaluate experience and to rank the observations they record; they employ a form of the verb *to be*, usually *er*, along with comparative or superlative adjectival forms. Other lists use the illustrative technique and are of two kinds, one in which the listing is cumulative, and the other in which the listing is distributive. The first type is marked by the use of parallel grammatical structures within each item, and the second by the use of a grammatical marker such as *sumr*.

### *Eddic Definitive and Prescriptive Lists*

The largest category of both Old Norse and Old English ordering lists comprises lists which seek to order experience by defining natural laws or prescribing social ones. The distinguishing feature of these lists is their frequent use of *er/bið* or *scal/sceal* maxims, and there has been considerable critical discussion, at least as far as the Old English poems are concerned, of the meaning and significance of these verb forms. P. L. Henry, for instance, analyses the use of *sceal* and *bið* in Old English gnomic poems and concludes:

gnomic *sceal* typically expresses the notions of customary action or state, inherent quality and characteristic property, passing over on the one hand to ideal or hortatory action, (state), expressing on the other that sense of certainty which current dialectal varieties of the future (with *will*) bring out and which is also a feature of that future in Shakespearian English. (1966, 103)

Henry believes that the meaning of *bið* is closely related to that of *sceal* (1966, 96; 104) and, in an earlier remark, he expands on his concept of a 'sense of certainty', making it clear that he recognizes a certain constraint or necessity implied by some uses of *sceal*. Referring to the lines from *Maxims I*, *Meotud sceal in wuldre, mon sceal on corþan | geong ealdian* (7–8a), he says:

*sceal* here expresses the states proper to God and man and the fact of senescence as predictable, certain, because natural and characteristic. (1966, 95)

This agrees with the view, mentioned above, of *sceal* as expressing a natural law or an unchanging relationship. Henry (1966, 99) goes on to quote an instance where *sceal* clearly has the sense of 'must': *Earm biþ se þe sceal ana lifgan* (*Maxims I* 172). Henry's argument implies that Old English *sceal* may denote constraint, either of necessity or of obligation, and in such cases can be translated as 'must' or 'should' or 'ought to'. Examples of constraint by necessity come from the world of nature, where all things obey their Creator and where proper behaviour and natural law are one. For instance: *Ea of dune sceal | flodgræg feran . . . Wudu sceal on foldan | blædum blowan* (*Maxims II* 30b–31a and 33b–34a). Examples of *sceal* expressing constraint by obligation come from the world of men who, having free will, do not always behave as they should and therefore open up a gap between what Howe has termed 'the ideal and the actual' (1985, 162). In these cases *sceal* expresses, not what is the proper state of things, as it does when it is used of natural phenomena, but what should be the proper state of things with regard to human behaviour. Such a use of *sceal* may have the force of a moral imperative: *Wif sceal wiþ wer wære gehealdan* (*Maxims I* 100); it may express what is desirable in society: *Til sceal on eðle | domes wyrcean* (*Maxims II* 20b–21a); or it may simply give advice: *Wel mon sceal wine healdan on wega gehwylcum* (*Maxims I* 144). The concern with what should be also applies to those things which are made by man, not God. For example: *Scip sceal genægled, scyld gebunden, | leoht linden bord* (*Maxims I* 93–4b) and *Gim sceal on hringe | standan steap and geap* (*Maxims II* 22b–23a). It is proper that a ship should be nailed and a shield bound, and desirable that the gem on a ring should be large and bright, although it may not in fact always be so. In their discussion of *Maxims II* Stanley B. Greenfield and Richard Evert (1975) pick up Henry's interpretation of *sceal* as 'customary action or state' and translate it consistently with the single Modern English phrase '(is) typically'.

In Old Norse wisdom poems *scal* can sometimes have the sense of 'must', as *sceal* does in Old English. For example, *blóðuct er hiarta, þeim er biðia scal | sér í mál hvert matar* (*Hávamál* 37/4–6) is directly comparable with the Old English example given by Henry (*Earm biþ se þe sceal ana lifgan*, *Maxims I* 172), and it complies with part of the semantic field of Old Norse *scolo* as defined by Neckel/Kuhn: 'In vielen anderen Fällen bezeichnet *sc[olo]* das vom schicksal verhängte, das geschehen muß' (1983, II 177). At other times, *scal* may express Henry's 'customary action or state', and in these cases Greenfield and Evert's translation 'is typically' could fit well. An example is this item from a list in *Hávamál*: *Við eld scal ql drecca* (83/1), usually rendered as 'one should drink ale by the fire' (for example, Faulkes 1987, under *skulu*), but which could have the sense 'ale is typically drunk by the fire'. Like Old English *sceal*, Old Norse *scal* can also be used to express what is appropriate, but it tends to refer to what is advisable rather than, as in Old English, to what is proper. Although Old English *sceal* is sometimes used to give advice (as in *Maxims I* 144), such use is rare. Most often *sceal* expresses what is proper and what should be the case in human affairs. Old Norse *scal*, on the other hand, is most often used to give good advice in practical affairs and carries no strong moral force, as in the following example:

Vápnom sínom    scala maðr velli á  
                           feti ganga framarr;  
 þvíat óvíst er at vita    nær verðr á vegom úti  
                           geirs um þorð guma.                    (*Hávamál* 38)

Even where the verb seems to have moral overtones, as in *Hávamál* 30 or 44, the context reveals that the primary concern is still with practical considerations. Furthermore, Old Norse *scal* can be used to give advice which is morally questionable, at least from a Christian standpoint—as, for instance, in *Hávamál* 42 and 45, which encourage deceit and falsehood. This does not occur in Old English wisdom poems, although such advice is common in the wisdom traditions of other cultures. The Hebrew word for wisdom, *hokmāh*, could mean 'cunning' and could be equated with craftiness of a type which modern readers might find reprehensible (see Scott 1971, 6). The approval accorded the cunning of Odysseus in Homer's poems is also relevant here. Perhaps the advice given in *Hávamál* 42 and 45 is further evidence of a pre-Christian origin for the poem; the Anglo-Saxon clerics presumably edited such verses out of the traditional material which they incorporated into their poems.

Several definitive and prescriptive ordering lists occur in the first section of *Hávamál*, the Gnomonic Poem. This section seems to end at

strophe 79, although where it actually ends is obscure (Evans 1986, 12–13). It is clearly a wisdom text and many of its strophes are concerned with ordering and with the giving of advice, although not many of them are in list form. One which is, strophe 57, draws an analogy between a natural phenomenon and human behaviour in much the same way as the verse from *Solomon and Saturn* quoted above:

Brandr af brandi    brenn, unz brunninn er,  
                     funi qveykiz af funa;  
 maðr af manni    verðr at máli kuðr,  
                     enn til dælskr af dul.                    (*Hávamál* 57)

This strophe makes a comparison by juxtaposition between the observed behaviour of fire and that of men. Both this example and the one from *Solomon and Saturn* demonstrate the verbal balancing apparent in ordering lists from the ancient Near East and, in the case of the verse from *Solomon and Saturn*, the development of a list item into a maxim that can stand by itself. Both of these features go back to the mnemonic techniques of the oral poet. In both examples, the list form is ideally suited to the poets' purposes for it makes the point with the utmost economy and enables the speaker to comment on human affairs by placing them in the order of the natural world. Such juxtaposing of natural phenomena and the behaviour of man in society is a prominent feature of the ordering lists found in both Old Norse and Old English wisdom poems.

Another list occurs later in the Gnostic Poem:

Eldr er beztr    með ýta sonom  
                     oc sólar sýn,  
 heilyndi sitt,    ef maðr hafa náir,  
                     án við lqst at lifa.                    (*Hávamál* 68)

Like some of the ranking lists considered earlier, this one employs the superlative as a means of establishing what is most important for mankind, and in this it is comparable with the 'chief necessities' list from Ecclesiasticus. It forms part of a series of strophes, tenuously linked in subject, and, although there is no other list of superlatives, the idea of what is best, or better, for man is continued in the maxims quoted earlier from strophes 70 and 72.

The first item which the poet declares to be best for men is fire, and few, bearing in mind a northern winter, would dispute that. The importance of fire for men was also evident in the 'chief necessities' list from Ecclesiasticus and in the lists from the Old English *Maxims I*. The fact that water precedes fire in the biblical list no doubt reflects the differences in climate and topography between Palestine and northern Europe.

The second item, as Evans has noted (1986, 105), is ambiguous, and could denote either man's ability to see the sun or the appearance of it. Either meaning would make good sense. In the first case the reference to sight, the most important of a man's physical senses, would be linked with the concern with good health in item three and the wish to live without a physical disability (Evans 1986, 105) in item four. The only objection to this would be that the fire in item one would be isolated as the only item not referring to a human body. The careful structural balance of the strophe makes it likely that it would also be balanced in content, and therefore the second interpretation of *sólar sýn* seems preferable. The second item would then give prominence to the sun, source of warmth and light, which may be obscured by clouds, but which heralds the return of summer after the dark days of winter, and the sight of which is of great importance to men. Its link with fire is evident. Both fire and the sun are features of the external world, but the two items in the second half of the list relate to the internal world of the individual. There has been some difference of opinion about the meaning of the final item. Bellows (1923, 42) translates the line as 'and a life not stained with sin'; Clarke (1923, 61) suggests 'a respectable life'; and Cleasby/Vigfusson proposes 'sine culpâ vivere' (1957, *án* IV). Such interpretations suggest a moral tone unusual in *Hávamál*, where the main concern is with success in practical affairs rather than with moral virtue. However, Evans shows that *lqstr* can have the meaning 'physical defect' (1986, 105) and this fits well with both the immediate context and the overall tone of the poem.

The two halves of the list are balanced in structure, each half comprising two items separated by a phrase which expands the first of the pair, a balance reflected, as suggested above, in the contrast between the macrocosm, which is the concern of the first two items, and the microcosm, which is the concern of the last two. A link between the two halves is provided by *sýn*, in the second item of the first half of the list, and *heilyndi*, the first item in the second half, both sight and health being important aspects of man's physical being. The list is further unified, not only by its ranking organizing principle, but also by the grammatical dependence of items two, three and four on item one. It is a good example of the care with which *Hávamál*'s lists were constructed and it demonstrates the linking and balancing common to many Old Norse and Old English lists.

After the Gnostic Poem, the next clear section in *Hávamál* is the story of Óðinn and *Billings mæx*, which Evans (1986, 8) would start at strophe 95 or perhaps earlier. Between this and the Gnostic Poem is a group of

strophes, some of which are written in *málahátt*, rather than the regular metre of *Hávamál*, *ljóðahátt*. These strophes incorporate a series of ordering lists which are prescriptive rather than defining and are concerned with giving advice in practical affairs, especially with regard to those things in nature or society which are not to be trusted. There is no connection in content or argument between the strophes in this group except a general association of ideas, in that all of them, from strophe 80 to strophe 94, are concerned to some degree with the relationship between men and women. In fact, this section of the poem forms a link between the Gnostic Poem and the story of *Billings mæ*r, being similar to the former in mood and providing an introduction to the latter in theme. It is the very appropriateness of the strophes chosen to make this transition which makes it hard to determine where the Gnostic Poem ends and the story of *Billings mæ*r begins.

The first strophe in the group is strophe 80, which Evans describes as 'obscure and metrically very irregular' (1986, 113). Its general sense seems to be that one fares best if one keeps silent while making enquiries of the holy runes. There is no obvious connection between this strophe and those which follow it, unless perhaps they are intended to illustrate the kind of wisdom dispensed by the runes. The first three of these strophes contain lists which use the *scal* formula. Each is a discrete unit, but they are linked with each other, not only by the use of the formula, but also by the fact that all three are written in *málahátt*, unlike the strophes immediately preceding and following them. The first list occupies the whole of strophe 81 and comprises a simple sequence of six items:

At qveldi scal dag leyfa, kono, er brend er,  
 mæki, er reyndr er, mey, er gefin er,  
 ís, er yfir kømr, ql, er druccit er. (Hávamál 81)

The items are related by the idea that something should be praised only when it has been proven or fully tested. This idea is not stated explicitly but is implied in the form of the first item, *At qveldi scal dag leyfa*, which suggests that to praise the day before it is ended would be premature. This interpretation becomes clear as the list proceeds and each item is seen to be praiseworthy only when its life or usefulness is finished and it is incapable of proving unworthy. Thus a wife should be praised only when she is dead, burned on her pyre; a maiden only when she is married; ice only when it has been crossed; and ale only when it has been drunk. The third item in the list is the only exception: a weapon may be praised once it has been tested (not lost or destroyed) and so presumably it can be used

again. There is no ranking involved in this list, but there is an attempt to establish, by generalizing from experience, a law to guide human behaviour.

The praise list has another function besides establishing the basic principle that nothing is to be praised until it is no longer capable of proving unworthy. Like the wisdom lists discussed earlier, it makes its point by juxtaposing items from the natural and human worlds, including among its examples not only natural phenomena but also man-made artifacts. Thus it comments on human behaviour by comparing it with the uncertainties of daily life. In this it is directly comparable with the list of *sceal* maxims in the Old English *Maxims II*. The major difference between the two lists is that this one is concerned with giving worldly advice, whereas the list in *Maxims II* is an exhortation to proper behaviour. The two lists exemplify both the similarities in approach and the differences in intent between wisdom poems in the two languages. The approach could derive from a common tradition, but the differences in intent may be due to the greater influence of Christianity on the Old English texts.

The *Hávamál* praise list establishes the fundamental untrustworthiness of maid and wife by placing them alongside the day and the ice (from the world of nature) and the weapon and the ale (from the world of man-made artifacts). The items chosen are carefully balanced and the strophe illustrates the economy evident in other *Hávamál* lists, the verb *scal leyfa* being stated for the first item only and implied for the other five. And, as in other *Hávamál* lists, the poet varies the unifying parallel grammatical structure by departing from the standard *er . . . er* form and substituting *er yfir kǫmr* for the penultimate item. The list exemplifies the use of both the generalization and the comparison characteristic of ordering lists, as well as many of the mnemonic features identified earlier. However, in keeping with the terseness of the poet's style, linking conjunctions are left out and actual repetition of key words is avoided, an omission which means that the items cannot stand alone as independent maxims.

In the praise list just discussed the sense of *scal* as 'should' seems clear, but in the strophes which follow the exact significance of *scal* is doubtful. The next strophe in the series contains another list in the *scal* format, but this one is complex, being divided into two carefully balanced sub-lists:

Í vindi <i>scal</i> við höggva,	veðri á síó róa,
myrcrí við man spialla:	mǫrg ero dags augo;
á scíp <i>scal</i> scriðar orca,	enn á sciqlð til hlffar,
mæki hoggs,	enn mey til kossa.

(*Hávamál* 82)



Here *scal* could be expressing what is appropriate or advisable and it carries no moral overtones. The concern with what is advisable provides the organizing principle for the list, which also draws comparisons by juxtaposition between a man's working activities, his possessions and his wooing of a girl. The sub-list in the first half of the strophe considers under what weather conditions certain actions should be performed and implies that, just as there is a proper time for a man to hew wood or row out to sea, there is a proper time for him to woo a girl. A tag in explanation of the third item separates the first sub-list from the one which balances it in the second half of the strophe. The new sub-list draws another comparison which again involves the wooing of a girl. This time, however, the objects of comparison are man-made artifacts (a ship, a shield and a sword) and the focus is on their proper function. The implication here is that, just as a man can expect speed from a ship, protection from a shield and blows from a sword, he can expect kisses from a girl. This is the appropriate behaviour for them all. On the other hand, it is also possible to interpret this strophe, following Greenfield and Evert's model for *Maxims II*, as an expression of what is typical. In this case, the focus would be not on appropriate behaviour but on typical behaviour, and the sense, for instance, of the last two items would be that one typically receives blows from a sword and kisses from a girl.

This strophe illustrates the use of sub-lists within a main list and the balancing of sub-lists in two halves of a main list, both of which are features of many other Old English and Old Norse lists. Further, like the praise list in strophe 81, the list in strophe 82 is a good example of the economy allowed for by the list form and taken full advantage of by the eddic poets. The auxiliary verb *scal* is expressed for only the first item in each sub-list and is implied for the other items. Similarly, the preposition *f* is supplied only once for the three items in the first sub-list, and *á* only twice for the four items in the second. Again like the praise list, this wooing list is concerned with giving practical advice in worldly affairs.

The same is true of the list which follows in strophe 83, another simple *scal* list with a careful parallel structure:

Við eld scal ǫl drecca,    enn á fsi scríða,  
 magran mar kaupá,    enn mæki saurgan,  
 heima hest feita,    enn hund á búi.

(*Hávamál* 83)

Strophe 82 was the first of the Old English and Old Norse lists considered so far to exhibit the pairing of items using a conjunction, which was noted earlier as a common list feature. This feature is even more apparent here, where the six items are linked in pairs by the repetition of the conjunction

*enn* at the beginning of each second half-line. The economy of the eddic poets is apparent in that all the items share the single use of the auxiliary verb, the third and fourth items share the infinitive *kaupa* and the fifth and sixth items share the infinitive *feita*. As in the case of the wooing list, good sense can be made of this strophe by giving the sense 'is typically' to *scal*, and seeing the list as a simple comment on the way things are in the poet's world. On the other hand, if *scal* does have the force of 'should', then the list-maker is giving good advice which is comparable to that given in the first half of the previous strophe, but which does not make so vivid a point. It begins in a homely fashion with the assertion that one should drink ale by the fire and continues in the same vein with advice on how to make the best bargain when buying a horse or a sword. The advice to fatten a horse at home continues the thought contained in the advice to buy a lean mare, and the fattening of the hound is linked to it by the contrast implied between *heima* and *á búí* (see Evans's note, 1986, 115). This list is carefully structured but not as tightly organized as the others; the form is that of a list, but the organizing principle is difficult to discern. Furthermore, this list does not make any comparisons within society or between society and the natural world as so many other ordering lists do.

Strophe 84, alone among the strophes in this series, does not contain a list, but it does continue the interrupted train of thought concerning the fickleness of women and introduce a new list occupying strophes 85 to 89. However, this list uses a different technique and will be discussed in the next section. The lists which have been considered in this section, like many of the lists in *Hávamál*, are carefully constructed units in themselves, and they are appropriately placed in the poem. It is possible that they, along with other strophes in the Gnostic Poem, belong to a body of traditional wisdom material, oral in origin, that was inherited and worked over by early Old Norse poets in much the same way as it has been suggested that early Greek material was reworked by Homer (see Simpson 1983, 125–35). The perceived anomalies, such as the changes in metre, may be the result of the method of composition and do not necessarily indicate interpolation.

These lists from *Hávamál* are the only lists in the *Edda* which fall into the category of definitive or prescriptive lists; nor have I yet identified any others in Old Norse literature outside the *Edda*. However, a list strikingly similar to the lists discussed above from *Maxims I* occurs in an Old Norse formula for declaring a truce which is found in several prose sources, including both *Grettis saga* and *Heiðarvíga saga*. Part of the

formula pronounces the doom of outlawry on any person who breaks the truce which has been declared; the list, which is written in alliterative prose, itemizes the places from which a truce-breaker shall be outlawed. The items are intended to be inclusive and to illustrate the concept 'everywhere'. In this version from *Grettis saga* the list, which begins *sem víðast varga reka* and ends *karlar korni sá*, is framed by brief introductory and concluding declarations of outlawry which themselves contain lists:

Sé sá griðníðingr, er griðin rýfr eða tryggðum spillir, rækr ok rekinn frá guði ok góðum mönnum, ór himinríki ok frá öllum helgum mönnum, ok hvergi hæfr manna í milli ok svá frá öllum út flæmðr sem víðast varga reka eða kristnir menn kirkjur sækja, heiðnir menn hof blóta, eldr brennr, jörð grær, mælt barn móður kallar ok móðir mög fæðir, aldir elda kynda, skip skríðr, skildir blíka, sól skínn, snæ leggr, Finnir skríðr, fura vex, valr flýgr várlangan dag, ok standi honum beinn byrr undir báða vængi, himinn hverfr, heimr er byggðr, ok vindr veitir vatn til sjávar, karlar korni sá; hann skal firrask kirkjur ok kristna menn, heiðna hólða, hús ok hella, heim hvern, nema helvíti.

(*Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* 1936, 232–3)

The version from *Heiðarvíga saga* is a little less elaborate and shows some significant variations:

Þá skal hann svá víða vargrækr ok rekinn, sem menn víðast varga reka, kristnir menn kirkjur sækja, heiðnir menn hof blóta, eldar upp brenna, jörð grær, mögr móður kallar, skip skríðr, skildir blika, sólskin snæ lægir, Fiðr skríðr, fura vex, valr flýgr várlangan dag, standi honum beinn byrr undir báða vængi, himinn hverfr, heimr er byggðr, vindr vex, veitir vatn til sjóvar, ok karlar korni sá. Hann skal firrask kirkjur ok kristna menn, guðs hús ok guma, heim hvern nema helvíti.

(*Borgfirðinga sögur* 1938, 313)

The variations, such as the running together of two items (*sól skínn, snæ leggr*, *Grettis saga*; *sólskin snæ lægir*, *Heiðarvíga saga*; and *vindr veitir vatn til sjávar*, *Grettis saga*; *vindr vex, veitir vatn til sjóvar*, *Heiðarvíga saga*) are the sort of changes that would be expected of an orally transmitted text, and their occurrence here strongly suggests that this list originated as an oral formula, or at least had an existence as an oral as well as a written text. This possibility is reinforced by the list's use of mnemonic techniques such as alliteration and antithesis.

As it is recorded in the sagas, the truce-formula list has a very specific purpose and a clearly performative function. Nevertheless, a very similar approach lies behind both this list and the ones quoted earlier from *Maxims I*. Both show the same concern with the characteristic actions of things (*skip skríðr, skildir blíka*, *Grettis saga*; *Forst sceal freosan . . . is brycgian*, *Maxims I*) and of people (*kristnir menn kirkjur sækja, heiðnir menn hof blóta*, *Grettis saga*; *husl [sceal] halgum men, hæþnum synne*,

*Maxims I*). Further, there is a simple list of the natural cycle in the *Heiðarvíga saga* version of the Icelandic list (*himinn hverfr, heimr er byggðr, vindr vex, veitir vatn til sjóvar*) which is comparable to lines 76–7 of *Maxims I* (*winter sceal geweorpan, weder eft cuman, | sumor swegle hat, sund unstill*) and even more to Ecclesiastes 1: 5–7. These similarities suggest that the Icelandic list may have originated as an ordering list and later been incorporated into the truce-formula. An ordering list, itemizing a diversity of characteristic activities, would lend itself well to being adapted for the purpose of illustrating the concept ‘everywhere’.

Another interesting feature of the lists from the truce-breaker formula and *Maxims I* is that they contain two items showing close verbal similarity. The correspondence between the phrases *fyr [sceal] wudu meltan, | eorþe growan* (*Maxims I* 71b–72a) and *eldr brennr, jorð grær* (*Grettis saga* 232; *eldar upp brenna, jorð grær, Heiðarvíga saga*) seems too close to be entirely coincidental. However, the very different contexts of the two lists as we have them argue against direct borrowing from one to the other, and it may be possible to see here a common origin in Germanic oral traditional lists. The Anglo-Saxon poet would have incorporated traditional maxims into his poem on the order of the world, and the Icelandic saga writers would have employed a traditional formula which itself made use of a traditional ordering list. Both list-makers would be employing the techniques and ideas of common, or at least very closely related, oral wisdom traditions.

Writing of Old English list poems, Nicholas Howe has remarked ‘it is difficult to know whether the individual statements of *Maxims I & II* and, to a lesser extent, of *Precepts* were collected or composed by their poets’ (1985, 135). The occurrence of the items *eldr brennr, jorð grær* in the Old Icelandic truce-breaker formula and of the phrase *jord grær* in a verse in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* (1933, 142, verse 17, line 5) supports the contention that the *Maxims I* poet, at least, was incorporating traditional material into his poem. Further, if *Maxims I* is a transitional text with roots in oral traditional lists, it was probably composed early rather than late in the Old English period and is unlikely to be a school exercise in versification as has been suggested (see *ASPR* VI, lxvii).

### *Eddic Lists which Illustrate by Accumulating Examples*

An alternative way of ordering experience is to list examples which illustrate an observation about the world or about human behaviour. Such lists, building a series of parallel examples leading up to (or depending from) a stated conclusion, are similar to the German *Priamel*. First

defined in relation to German literature of the later Middle Ages, the *Priamel* appears to have literary antecedents in earlier Old Norse and Old English writings. Gering identifies *Hávamál* 85–9 (numbered by him 84–8) as a *Priamel* (1927–31, I 119), and Jan de Vries concurs, arguing against the view that the presence of this form is evidence of a late date or of foreign influence on the poem, and suggesting that it could easily have developed independently within the Nordic tradition (1964, 50). This opinion has gained recent support from Evans (1986, 23). The *Priamel* was defined by Karl Euling as ‘eine Reihe paralleler Einzelheiten in bestimmten Formen mit künstlerischer Absicht zu einer inneren Einheit zu verbinden sucht’ (1905, 15) and he describes its basic form as a list of three phenomena plus a conclusion. The term *Priamel* is a useful one and it has been adopted by Stephen Barney in his discussion of Chaucer’s lists (1982, 195 and note). He cites (1982, 198) *The Wife of Bath’s Prologue*, 655–8, identifying it as Chaucer’s only *Priamel*:

Whoso that buyldeth his hous al of salwes,  
 And priketh his blynde hors over the falwes,  
 And suffreth his wyf to go seken halwes,  
 Is worthy to been hanged on the galwes!

(Robinson 1957, 82)

Like the German *Priamel*, this consists of three parallel examples followed by a conclusion. The Old English and Old Norse verses, on the other hand, though clearly similar in form, often list four examples, three being parallel and the fourth often being slightly expanded. An Old English example occurs in *Solomon and Saturn* and is concerned with the foolishness of the man who goes into deep water with no means of survival:

Salomon cwað:

‘Dol bið se ðe gæð on deop wæter,  
 se ðe sund nafað ne gesegled scip  
 ne fugles flyht, ne he mid fotum ne mæg  
 grund geræcan.’

(*Solomon and Saturn* 225–8a)

This verse opens with a common proverbial formula related to what Scott (1971, 121), writing on Old Testament wisdom, calls the exclamatory beatitude (‘happy is he who . . .’) and to the beatitudes of the New Testament (Matthew 5: 3–11) which would have been familiar to the Anglo-Saxon poet. An example occurs, for instance, in *The Seafarer*, *Eadig bið se þe eapmod leofað; cymeð him seo ar of heofonum* (108). *The Seafarer* (106) and *Maxims I* (35) also employ a *dol bið* gnome but not to introduce a list. As well as four-item lists, the Old Norse corpus

contains some much longer lists of this type. In some cases the conclusions precede, rather than follow, the listed examples, and are contrastive or implicit rather than directly stated. For these reasons it seems inaccurate to use the term *Priamel* when referring to them, and they are called here cumulative-illustrative lists.

Several lists which illustrate a conclusion or a piece of advice with an accumulation of examples are found in the Gnostic Poem section of *Hávamál*. The following example incorporates a defining, ranking maxim as its expanded fourth item, but the list itself is illustrative:

Haltr ríðr hrossi, hiorð recr handarvanr,  
                   dauftr veigr oc dugir;  
 blindr er betri, enn brendr sé:  
                   nýtr mangi nás. (*Hávamál* 71)

The purpose of this list is to illustrate the speaker's conclusion that to be alive is better than to be dead, even if one is handicapped; a corpse is useless, but a use can be found for a live man who is lame or handless or deaf, and even to be blind is better than to have been cremated. Of the four examples listed, the first three are grammatically similar but the fourth has a different, expanded structure. This arrangement is found in other Old English and Old Norse lists of this type (for instance *Solomon and Saturn* 225–8a; *Hávamál* 76; 77), which rely on parallelism, or near parallelism, to give unity to the list, and on variation, not only to provide interest, but also to lead into the conclusion and give it emphasis. The conclusion of this list makes its point through the contrast between the uselessness of the corpse and the usefulness of the handicapped individuals in the listed examples. Like that in the *Priamel* from *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* quoted above, the series of examples in this list is open-ended rather than exhaustive. The principle of organization behind the items, besides their link to the concluding phrase, is that all concern physical handicaps. The list fits its context well, as it is linked with strophe 70 by the common idea that it is better to be alive, however unfortunate, than to be dead. This whole section of the poem is concerned with questions of fortune and what is valuable in life. The conclusion of the speaker is that friends, sons, good health and such are best and that wealth is ultimately valueless.

Strophes 76 and 77 also contain brief, open-ended lists followed by contrasting conclusions:

Deyr fé, deyia frændr,  
                   deyr síalfr it sama;  
 enn orðztírr deyr aldregi,  
                   hveim er sér góðan getr.

Deyr fé, deyia frændr,  
 deyr síalfr it sama;  
 ec veit einn, at aldri deyr:  
 dómr um dauðan hvern. (Hávamál 76–7)

These strophes are more like the typical *Priamel* in that they list three rather than four items. However, the fact that the lists in both strophes are the same and that the conclusions, despite being differently phrased, express the same idea, suggests that these are two variations of a traditional verse. There is a striking similarity between the first three items in this list and a list in the Old English poem *The Wanderer*:

Her bið feoh læne, her bið freond læne,  
 her bið mon læne, her bið mæg læne,  
 eal þis eorþan gesteal idel weorþeð! (108–10)

Evans (1986, 112) points out that the alliterating pair *fé* and *frændr* probably goes back to early Germanic verse, but that the Anglo-Saxon poet's use of *her* demonstrates Christian influence, and that there is therefore little likelihood of any further connection between the two poems. It does seem improbable that there was any direct connection between them. However, the sentiment expressed in the two lists is so similar that, even though their conclusions are different, the possibility of a common origin in the Germanic wisdom tradition can at least be considered. Perhaps, as was suggested in the case of *Maxims I* and the Old Icelandic truce formula, both poets were drawing on a similar body of traditional material and adapting it to suit their particular needs, the Old Norse poet supplying two variations of a contrasting conclusion expressing a sentiment appropriate to the context of his poem, and the Anglo-Saxon poet, a Christian, providing a distinctively Christian phrasing and conclusion.

As noted above, *Hávamál* 84 introduces a new list:

Meyiar orðom scyli mangi trúa,  
 né því er qveðr kona;  
 þvfat á hverfanda hvéli vóro þeim hiqрто scqpuð,  
 brigð í brióst um lagit. (Hávamál 84)

Strophes 81–3, like the new list which is to follow, are written in *málahátt*, but strophe 84 is in *Ijóðahátt*. The change in metre and the dropping of the list form in strophe 84 mark a clear separation between the *scal* lists which precede it and the new list which begins in strophe 85. The subject of strophe 84, the untrustworthiness of women, looks back to the topic of strophe 81 as well as forward to that of the new list, which concerns other things which are not to be trusted. Strophe 84 is clearly

a linking strophe, chosen for this particular position in the group. The new list begins in strophe 85 and proceeds clearly to strophe 87. Here, however, another break in metrical form occurs, strophe 88 being written in *ljóðahátt*, though *málahátt* is resumed just for strophe 89. This has caused some commentators and translators to regard strophe 88 as interpolated or misplaced. Gering, for instance, regards it as a yet later insertion in an already interpolated passage (1927–31, I 119). However, as Evans points out (1986, 4), strophe 88 is clearly linked grammatically with the preceding list, and Neckel/Kuhn acknowledges this by the punctuation it uses. Assuming that the integrity of the Codex Regius text can be defended, it is possible to extend the list to the end of strophe 89 and regard the whole passage from 85 to 89 as a unit, despite the change in metre. Here is the complete list as it appears in Neckel/Kuhn:

- 85 Brestanda boga, brennanda loga,  
 gfnanda úlfi, galandi kráco,  
 rýtanda svíni, rótlausom víði,  
 vaxanda vági, vellanda katli,
- 86 fliúganda fleini, fallandi báro,  
 ísi einnættom, ormi hringlegnom,  
 brúðar beðmálom eða brotno sverði,  
 biarnar leiki eða barni konungs,
- 87 síucom kálfi, síálfráða þraeli,  
 vqlo vilmæli, val nýfeldom,
- 88 acrí ársánom trúi engi maðr,  
 né til snemma syni;  
 veðr ræðr acrí, enn vit syni,  
 hætt er þeira hvárt.
- 89 Bróðurbana sínom, þótt á brauto mœti,  
 húsi hálfbrunno, hesti alsciótom—  
 þá er iór ónýtr, ef einn fótr brotnar—,  
 verðit maðr svá trygg, at þesso trúi qllo.

The list starts with a long series of examples which takes up strophes 85 and 86 and two lines of the presumably incomplete strophe 87. Strophe 88 begins with the final item in this section of the list, *acri ársánom*, and then gives the governing phrase which provides the principle of organization for the whole list, *trúi engi maðr*, an echo of *scyli mangi trúa* in the introductory strophe. Then follows one additional item, *né til snemma syni*. This item is isolated by its grammatical form, by the change from *málahátt* to *ljóðahátt*, and by its position after the governing phrase of the list. All these factors serve to give it a particular emphasis. This is the



main point that the speaker is making. He then pauses to add a comment in the familiar form of a comparison between nature and man on the item he has stressed most, namely that one should not trust too early in a son. He uses the last of the items in the main section of the list, the early-sown field, to make the point that, as the harvest is dependent on the weather, so the son's worth is dependent on his wisdom; and both weather and wisdom are unreliable. After making this comment he adds another strophe (89) which continues the list of untrustworthy things in a more loosely structured form, adding three further items to the ones in the earlier part of the list. A repetition of the overall principle, *verðit maðr svá tryggr, at þesso trúi ǫllo*, concludes both strophe and list.

The first part of this list is remarkable for its series of participles with dative endings, which provide the additional linking of rhyme, or near rhyme, for nine of the first ten items. The exception *rótlausom viði*, the sixth item, provides a variation as close to the middle of the section as possible. The next section of the list begins in the third half-line of strophe 86 with three items, *ísi einnættom, ormi hringlegnom, | brúðar beðmálom*, linked by their rhyming dative endings; then a pattern of endings is woven to the end of this section of the list, with variations on *-om* and *-i*. Further variations are added through the use of the genitive, rather than an adjectival form, for several items (for example, *brúðar beðmálom*), and of the conjunction *eða*. The fact that this section of the list, like the first section, contains ten items may suggest that it is complete, despite the truncated form of strophe 87. Balance in the number of items does seem to be a feature of some ordering lists, especially in *Hávamál* (see, for instance, the discussion above of strophe 81).

The pattern which has been established in the second half of this section of the list is carried over into strophe 88 with the twenty-first item *acri ársánom*, thus providing a link between strophe 88 and the preceding three strophes. The pattern is broken by the form of the twenty-second item, *né til snemma syni*, and the change in grammatical form adds to the effect of the isolation already noted, giving special emphasis to this, the main point of the whole list. The pattern of dative endings that has been established is resumed in the first half-line of strophe 89 and continued in the last two items, *húsi hálfbrunno, hesti alsciótom*, and a new variation is introduced when two of these final items (the first and the third) are extended by the addition of qualifying or explanatory phrases.

Like the lists already discussed, this one compares inherently untrustworthy items from the world of nature and from the world of man-made artifacts with the behaviour of certain classes of human being. It

makes its point about the unreliability of the latter by listing them alongside the former. In this it is very similar to the list in strophe 81. It is true that, at first sight, strophe 88 seems to interrupt the regular pattern of the list, but its initial phrase matches that pattern perfectly and the lines which follow make a special emphatic point. This seems to be a particularly good example of the care taken to add variety and emphasis to a list; a care which has gone unrecognized by commentators unsympathetic towards lists and listing techniques.

Strophe 90, the last in the present series, is an example of a list in which the items follow, rather than precede, the conclusion. The new list refers back to strophe 84, considering again the fickleness of women and the untrustworthiness of their love. It is linked in thought with the preceding list in that it considers another class of human being whose behaviour is unreliable, *fríðr qvenna*, *þeira er flátt hyggja*, drawing a direct comparison between loving such women and a series of difficult, if not impossible, undertakings taken straight from the everyday experience of both poet and audience:

Svá er fríðr qvenna, þeira er flátt hyggja,  
sem aki ió óbryddom á fsi hálom,  
teitom, tvévetrom, oc sé tamr illa,  
eða í byr óðom beiti stiórnlauso,  
eða scyli haltr henda hrein í þáfialli. (*Hávamál* 90)

The comparison is clearly signalled by the phrase *svá er . . . sem*; in addition, the three items are joined by the repeated conjunction *eða*, making this one of the best organized, as well as one of the most vivid, of the lists in *Hávamál*. It is interrupted by a descriptive sub-list, also containing three items, *teitom*, *tvévetrom*, *oc sé tamr illa*, which are linked both by alliteration and by the conjunction *oc*. The same train of thought is continued up to strophe 95, although no more lists are used, and then, in strophes 96 to 102, the speaker goes on to illustrate what he knows about the love of men and women by telling the tale of *Billings mæ*r.

#### *Eddic Lists which Illustrate by Distributing Examples*

Closely related to the cumulative-illustrative list is what Barney, in his article on Chaucer's use of lists, has termed the 'distributive list'; such a list 'signals with grammatical markers the parceling out of a principle' (1982, 202). He identifies one of these markers, as used by Chaucer, as a repeated *some*. Lists like this, using Old English *sum*, are quite common in Old English literature. They occur in both poetry and prose, and in some works which can be regarded as wisdom literature (such as *The*

*Gifts of Men* and *The Wanderer*), as well as in others (such as *Elene*, *Christ* and Ælfric's homilies) which have a clear Christian, literary background and whose written sources can sometimes be directly identified. The distributive list is widespread in other early literatures, and B. C. Williams (1914, 54–6) notes the figure in Sanskrit and Greek as well as in the Bible. J. E. Cross (1958–9), gives a comprehensive survey of earlier scholars' comments on the *sum* figure, which he believes to be clearly Christian/Latin in origin, and discusses a number of other parallels in a variety of medieval sources, including *Beowulf*. With reference to its occurrence in *The Wanderer*, Cross mentions both the *Aeneid* and Seneca as possible sources, but points out that the poet of *The Wanderer* cannot be proved to have had contact with classical literature, and that a Christian origin for his use of both the *sum* figure and the fates of men theme, which is closely associated with it, is more likely. In a later article Cross's interest is in the gifts of men theme rather than the distributive *sum* figure, but he nevertheless demonstrates (1962, 66–7) that Ælfric, who uses the figure in his sermon *In Natale Unius Confessoris*, derived it from Gregory's *Homilia IX in Evangelia*, where the grammatical marker is *alius*. The latter source is clearly Christian and literary.

On the other hand, a distributive list using Old Norse *sumr* occurs in the Gnostic Poem section of *Hávamál* (strophe 69) which recent scholars date to the pre-Christian period in Norway (Evans 1986, 13–19). In addition, a list employing the plural *suma* occurs in the first of the Old High German *Merseburger Zaubersprüche*, a pagan charm probably dating from the ninth century:

Eiris sazun idisi, sazun hera duoder.  
 suma hapt heptidun, suma heri lezidun,  
 suma clubodun umbi cuoniouuidi:  
 insprinc haptbandun, inuar uigandun. (Braune 1979, 89)

Finally, a distributive list which employs the plural *sumom*, as well as other grammatical markers, occurs in *Hyndlolióð* 3 in a clearly pagan context; in this case the distributive *sumr* figure is also associated with a gifts of men theme, although here it is not the Christian God but Óðinn who dispenses his bounty to men. These examples, together with its occurrence in Sanskrit and Greek, suggest that the figure may have had an origin in early Indo-European oral literature or, more likely, as it also occurs in biblical and patristic texts, that it is a fundamental technique common to several wisdom traditions. The figure may therefore have reached Ælfric and the *Hávamál* poet through different routes, and the Anglo-Saxon poets may have found an already familiar listing technique

reinforced by their reading of the Church Fathers. Geoffrey Russom, who relates the gifts of men theme to Germanic concepts of nobility, suggests that the Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse poets inherited both theme and figure from a common tradition. He notes a suggestion of 'a strong tie between theme and syntactic structure, a tradition of poetic organization that might well have been the common inheritance of England and Scandinavia' (1978, 4).

There are some examples in Old English poetry of short distributive lists which, like the *Hávamál* and *Hyndlolióð* lists just mentioned, are included in longer poems. The best known is probably the brief example in *The Wanderer*:

Woriað þa winsalo, waldend licgað  
 dreame bidrorene, duguþ eal gecrong,  
 wlonc bi wealle. Sume wig fornóm,  
 ferede in forðwege, sumne fugel oþbær  
 ofer heanne holm, sumne se hara wulf  
 deaðe gedælde, sumne dreorighleor  
 in eorðscræfe eorl gehydde. (78-84)

This list enumerates the fates suffered by the warriors whose passing the speaker is lamenting. It employs, both in the introductory lines and in the items themselves, the more leisurely, more expanded style of Old English poetry as compared to the terse verses of the *Edda*. An interesting feature is that there is an internal distributive organization as well as one relating to the introductory statement. All four items relate back to the phrase *duguþ eal gecrong* and tell of the fates suffered by different members of the troop, some of whom fell in war and all of whom are now dead. However, items two to four also distribute, using a more usual singular form of *sum*, the individual ways in which the bodies of the plural *sume*, who were taken by war, were disposed of. Each item begins in the b-verse and the first three occupy two half lines each. The final item is expanded for another half-line to mark the conclusion of the list.

A similar, though less complex, list occurs in *Elene* 131b-137. This one begins in the same way as the *Wanderer* list (*Sume wig fornám*) but then, rather than detailing the disposal of the bodies, it retains the plural *sume* and tells of the fortunes of those who did not die in the battle: some survived on the battlefield, some ran away and saved themselves, some were drowned in the river. The poet of *The Wanderer* does not tell us what happened to those who did not die in his battle, leaving the rest of his plural *sume* list unsaid; but he does refer to the *dreorighleor eorl*, presumably a survivor, who buried one of the bodies. These lists deal

with the theme of the distribution of fates on the battlefield, associating it with the *sum* figure. More commonly associated with the figure, however, is the theme mentioned earlier in this section, the gifts of men theme. An example comprising ten items occurs in lines 659–85 of *Christ*, but the most extended treatment is found in the two *Exeter Book* poems *The Gifts of Men* and *The Fortunes of Men*. These two poems are remarkable as they consist almost entirely of lists using the *sum* formula; the *Edda* contains no whole-poem distributive lists like them.

Like *Solomon and Saturn* 225–8a, quoted above, the distributive list from *Hávamál* illustrates what sounds like a proverbial utterance:

Erat maðr allz vesall, þótt hann sé illa heill;  
 sumr er af sonom sæll,  
 sumr af frændum, sumr af fé ærno,  
 sumr af vercom vel. (*Hávamál* 69)

Again, like most of the illustrative lists already considered, it is open-ended and comprises four items exhibiting a strong structural parallelism. The items follow the conclusion, as they do in the list in *Hávamál* 90, and all of them depend on the phrase *er sæll*, which is supplied for the first item only. The statement that no man is wholly wretched even though he be in ill health is illustrated by a list of ways in which men can be fortunate. However, unlike the illustrative lists already discussed, this one is not cumulative; that is, it does not attribute the various forms of good fortune to the same man but parcels them out among different individuals who are indicated by the repeated *sumr*. The strophe is appropriate to its context, being one of a series of strophes expressing similar sentiments in the Gnostic Poem section of *Hávamál*.

The list in *Hávamál* 69 uses *sumr* consistently, but there are other distributive lists in the *Edda* which avoid the repetition of *sumr* and employ some other distributive device as well. One of these is the one from *Hyndlolióð* which combines the distributive form with the gifts of men theme:

Biðiom Heriaföðr í hugom sitia!  
 hann geldr oc gefr gull verðugom;  
 gaf hann Hermóði hiálm oc brynio,  
 enn Sigmundi sverð at þiggia.

Gefr hann sigr sumom, enn sumom aura,  
 mælsco mǫrgom oc manvit firom;  
 byri gefr hann brǫgnom, enn brag scáldom,  
 gefr hann mansemi mǫrgom recci. (*Hyndlolióð* 2–3)

The ordering list fills strophe 3, but strophe 2 has been quoted as it provides the occasion for the list and the excuse for its inclusion in the poem. After mentioning the specific gifts given to heroes by Óðinn, the speaker continues with a list of the god's gifts to men in general. The distributive device here is the verb phrase *gefr hann* followed by a dative, and although the poet does employ *sumom* for the first two items, it is not the principal grammatical marker. For two items *sumom* is replaced by *morgom*, and for the remaining items by the dative case of a noun representing a class of recipients of Óðinn's gifts. The list clearly shares mnemonic features with other ordering lists, namely repetition, verbal balancing, the pairing of items using *oc* and *enn*, and the expansion of the final item to fill the whole line.

Some of the Old Norse lists which have been examined here record a wise man's observations of the world and illustrate their truth with listed examples, some are concerned with establishing what is best, most important or most characteristic of its kind, and some seek to define necessary relationships, both in the natural world and in human society, or to prescribe a social law. All conform, both in their forms and in the ways they are used, to established practices of wisdom poets in cultures making the transition from orality to literacy. The qualities revealed by a close analysis of their structure, content and contexts enable us both to appreciate the conventions which governed their composition and to conclude that the intentions of the literate poets who incorporated such lists into their poems may have been better preserved in the extant manuscripts than has been generally believed.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In examining the wealth of lists in Old Norse and other literatures I have been guided by the definitions given by Stephen Barney in his discussion of Chaucer's lists. He describes the list as necessarily possessing the qualities of aliorelativity and connexity (1982, 192); that is, there must be more than one related item and there must be one overall term or principle by which those items are related. He also suggests that the list must contain at least three items (1982, 298 note 11). In addition, I distinguish between simple lists, comprising named items only with a minimum of syntactical markers, and complex lists, made up of two or more simple lists joined, by a variety of internal linking devices, in either coordinate or subordinate relationships. Lists which are incorporated into longer lists are here designated sub-lists.

<sup>2</sup> Kemp Malone (1943, 65) interprets this phrase as referring to snowfall 'which makes the earth grow in bulk quite appreciably in northern climes'. This seems strained and unlikely, the growth of plants being a more obvious characteristic of

the earth. Furthermore, a very similar phrase occurs in the Icelandic truce formula quoted on p. 127, where no context of snow or ice is found, as well as in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, verse 17, line 5 (1933, 142), where it clearly refers to vegetation.

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Quotations from the Bible are cited from *The New English Bible*; those from Old English poems from *ASPR*; and those from Old Norse poems from Neckel/Kuhn.

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## HÁVÁMÁL AND SOURCES OUTSIDE SCANDINAVIA

BY CAROLYNE LARRINGTON

Nichts anderes als das reine Heidentum' (Lindquist 1956, 128)—thus *Hávamál* was regarded by scholars in the later part of the nineteenth century and in the early years of this century. If *Hávamál* was composed long before Christianity came to Scandinavia, it could not, it was reasoned, contain material from outside the Germanic area. Nevertheless, resemblances between the gnomic sections of *Hávamál* and other wisdom writings were frequently noted. While similarities of content with, for example, Old English wisdom verse could be ascribed to a common Germanic stock of ideas and expressions, where *Hávamál* appeared to echo a text from beyond the Germanic corpus, a different explanation had to be sought.

Like other wisdom verse, *Hávamál* shares the generic characteristics of elasticity and compendiousness (Larrington forthcoming, Introduction). Since a wisdom poem is not constrained by the dictates of narrative logic or chronology, the compilers of such poems often insert material which has no intrinsic connection with the preceding subject of discussion. In a typical example, Hesiod, having completed his calendar of agricultural tasks, turns to discussion of the best season for seafaring in order to bring into *Works and Days* an account of his own voyage, when he won the prize of a tripod at a festival at Chalcis. Poetic decorum is not a relevant consideration for the wisdom poet: if a gnome is recognisably true or useful it may legitimately be included.

The new orthodoxy concerning *Hávamál* is that the Codex Regius version is only the last in a long line of redactions, that only at this stage, or an immediately preceding stage, was the text fixed (*Hávamál* 1986, 2–3). For a period of some two hundred years then, after the establishment of Christian learning in Iceland and Norway, earlier versions of *Hávamál* could have absorbed newly imported Continental material into the *ljóðaháttir* metre. Several scholars believe that they have found evidence of such absorption. The purpose of this article is to discover whether any of these claims can, in fact, be upheld. I am excluding from discussion the complex arguments of Klaus von See regarding the rela-

tionship between *Hávamál*, *Hugsvinnsmál* and the *Disticha Catonis*, and between *Hávamál*, *Hákonarmál* and the Old English poem *The Wanderer* (von See 1972a and b), since I have addressed both of these questions elsewhere (Larrington forthcoming, chs. 3, 6.1). I also exclude Régis Boyer's supposed parallels between *Hávamál* and Proverbs and Ecclesiastes (Boyer 1972) which have been effectively dismissed by David Evans (*Hávamál* 1986, 15; Evans 1989, 131). I intend to examine the findings of four scholars, Singer, Pipping, Hagman and Köhne, to establish to what extent their identification of extra-Scandinavian sources can be upheld.

It is difficult to establish whether conscious borrowing or allusion is responsible for similarities between wisdom texts, or whether such parallels are of independent origin. Borrowings in wisdom poetry are particularly problematic because the general ideas which the literature tends to contain are often of such simplicity and obviousness that they are likely to occur quite independently in the culture of any pre-industrial society (cf. Hesiod 1978, 27). Thus to prove a direct borrowing in wisdom poetry, the scholar must show that the parallels satisfy more criteria for similarity than in other types of literature where independent origin is less frequent. Mere similarity of content cannot be enough, as Joseph Harris points out: 'On the one hand, gnomic poetry is the best hunting ground for borrowing since general ideas are also easy to steal; on the other, they are difficult to trace convincingly' (Harris 1985, 108). Such criteria include a striking singularity of expression, shared imagery, identity of context and interpretation. For this reason, some of the scholars whose findings are discussed below are understandably cautious in their speculations as to whether *Hávamál* has borrowed directly from other sources.

In the first decades of the century, Finnur Jónsson (1915) and Gering (1917) began to compile catalogues of proverbs in Old Norse and related modern Scandinavian languages and were able to show that many of the proverbial statements found in *Hávamál* also occurred both in other Old Norse texts and in Latin texts from the Scandinavian area. For example, the content of *Háv.* 58 was also known to Saxo Grammaticus: *Nemo stertendo victoriam cepit, nec luporum quisquam cubando cadaver invenit*, 'No one gets victory while snoring, nor does any wolf find a corpse when lying down' (Saxo 1931, 130). Book V of the *Gesta Danorum*, which tells of Eiríkr málsþaki (Ericus disertus), yields several other parallels to *Hávamál*.

Gering and Jónsson wisely did not speculate as to which of the proverbs in *Hávamál* might be of folk origin, and which might have passed from the poem itself into the common stock of folk sayings, so-called *geflügelte Worte*, quotations from a literary work which take on the function of a proverbial statement or common idiom in the popular language, and are used without conscious reference to the source. Andreas Heusler had treated at some length the problems inherent in attempting to establish the priority of one source over another in proverbial works, and had concluded that a proverb could only be definitely identified as such if similar proverbs could be found in texts from different geographical areas where no question of literary influence could arise, and where similarity of wording suggests a connection (1969, 293).

Samuel Singer was the first modern scholar to suggest that *Hávamál* had been influenced by biblical and classical Latin writings. He begins his *Sprichwörter des Mittelalters* (1944) with a discussion of the gnomes from *Hávamál* and *Sigrdrífumál*, finding parallels in sense, and occasionally in wording, to several of the *Hávamál* gnomes in literatures beyond the Germanic.

Yet most of the parallels adduced by Singer bear only a slight resemblance to *Hávamál* in wording, or else the different context of the Norse gnomic poem requires a different interpretation. Four stand out from the others and will be examined here in turn. At first sight, the comparison of *Háv.* 54–6 with Ecclesiastes 1: 17–18 is striking:

Meðalsnotr	Averagely wise
skyli manna hvern,	should every man be,
æva til snotr sé;	never too wise;
því at snotrs mannz hiarta	for a wise man's heart
verður sialdan glatt,	seldom becomes glad,
ef sá er alsnotr er á.	if he is wholly wise who owns it.
	( <i>Háv.</i> 55)

Dedique cor meum ut scirem prudentiam atque doctrinam erroresque et stultitiam: et agnovi quod in his quoque esset labor et afflictio spiritus; eo quod in multa sapientia multa sit indignatio, et qui addit scientiam addit et laborem. (Eccles. 1: 17–18)

(And I have given my heart to know prudence, and learning, and errors, and folly: and I have perceived that in these also there was labour and vexation of spirit; because in much wisdom there is much indignation: and he that addeth knowledge addeth also labour.)

However, while the second half of the *Hávamál* verse corresponds to some degree with the biblical sentiment, declaring that wisdom is not

necessarily beneficial, the context of the biblical passage is quite different. In Ecclesiastes the Preacher's contention is that everything in this world (including wisdom) is vanity and vexation of spirit; everything is as nothing in the sight of God. *Hávamál* is by no means as sweeping, merely warning that a man who is exceedingly wise cannot be carefree, for he can see ahead, beyond the immediate experience, to a possibility of future change or loss. Happiness is both desirable and attainable in *Hávamál* (as in the Old English poem *Precepts*, as will be shown below), but it is irrelevant to the concerns of the biblical author. *Hávamál* tells us that moderation in wisdom, as in eating and drinking, is best. The *meðalsnotr*, 'averagely wise' man of 54–6 is to be contrasted with the *ósviðr maðr*, 'foolish man' of 23, who lies awake all night worrying about trivial matters, about *hvívætna*, 'everything'. The Old English poem *Precepts*, advice given by a father to his son, offers another variation of this theme:

Seldan snottor guma sorgleas blissað,  
 swylce dol seldon drymeð sorgful  
 ymb his forðgesceaft, nefne he fæhpe wite.

(ASPR 1936, ll. 54–6)

(Seldom [i.e. never] does the wise man enjoy himself without anxiety, likewise the fool seldom is anxious about his future while he is enjoying himself, unless he knows of enmity.)

The poet relies on the antithetical *sorgleas* and *sorgful* to make the contrast between the wise and the foolish man: the happiness of a wise man is always tempered by his apprehension of future worries, while the fool enjoys himself in ignorance of difficulties ahead, unless his concerns are so obvious as to be inescapable. The thought here in *Precepts* belongs to a similar thematic area to that in *Hávamál*: that of the wise man and the fool, between which two extremes the *meðalsnotr* man occupies a medial position. The excessive wisdom of the *alsnotr* man of *Háv.* 55 topples him over into a kind of folly in which he can enjoy no pleasure for fear of what may happen, and thus aligns him with the *ósviðr maðr* whose stupidity has the same result. This is quite different from Ecclesiastes where the discovery that this world has no meaning leads to faith in a dimension beyond the earthly; like a Buddhist ascetic, the Preacher has known and rejected all earthly forms.

Other parallels cited by Singer are even less convincing. His comparison of Isaiah 13 with *Háv.* 21 is discussed below, together with Pipping's treatment of the same passage. Of *Háv.* 76/4–6 (*en orztírr deyr aldregi . . .*), he claims that it is certainly ancient, even though he admits he

cannot point to a direct source, while *Háv.* 84 (*Meyiar orðom . . .*) elicits the comment that the many Latin examples of this kind of statement indicate that the saying must have arisen in ecclesiastical circles (1944, 14–15). Concerning the first of these, subsequent researches have failed to reveal an exact source for *Háv.* 76/4–6, although its affinities with Ecclesiastes 3: 19 have been noted, as has the close parallel in *The Wanderer*, ll. 108–9 (von See 1972b, 48–50). Singer's intuition is simply not precise enough for the delicate field of source identification.

As for the second, anti-woman sentiments, as in *Háv.* 84, need not necessarily originate in Church teachings: Hesiod warns against deceitful women who flatter men for their property:

Μὴ δὲ γυνή σε νόον πυγοστόλος ἐξαπατάτω  
αἰμύλα κωτίλλουσα, τὴν διφῶσα καλίην.  
ὅς δὲ γυναικὶ πέποιθε, πέποιθ' ὄ γε φηλήτησιν.

Do not let a flaunting woman coax and cozen and deceive you: she is after your barn. The man who trusts womankind trusts deceivers (Hesiod 1914, 30–1; ll. 373–5).

Moreover, *Hávamál* is not generally biased against women. The poet emphasises that men can be as deceitful as women in their dealings with the opposite sex in 91: *brigðr er karla hugr konum*, 'changeable are the hearts of men towards women'; *Billings mæ*r is given full credit for her intelligence and resourcefulness in warding off the importunities of Óðinn; and in 130/5–10 *Loddfáfnismál* urges the acquisition of a good woman as confidante. In summary, Singer's parallels are of interest because they show how widespread and enduring these proverbial statements are, but he fails to establish a direct link between the Bible and *Hávamál*. Nowhere is there sufficient sharpness of similarity in thought, context and phrasing to convince.

One *Hávamál* verse to which Singer drew attention is taken up and treated further by Pipping (1949). Singer notes that the kind of comparison between men and animals found in *Háv.* 21, in which the comparison is to men's disadvantage, is relatively rare; however a parallel is offered by Isaiah 1: 3:

Hiarðir þat vito  
nær þær heim skolo,  
ok ganga þá af grasi;  
en ósviðr maðr  
kann ævagi  
sfnis um má[!]  
maga.

Cattle know  
when they should go home,  
and then leave the pasture;  
but a foolish man  
never knows  
the measure of his own stomach.

Cognovit bos possessorem suum, et asinus præsepe domini sui; Israhel autem me non cognovit, populus meus non intellexit. (Isaiah 1: 3)

(The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel hath not known me, my people hath not understood.)

Pipping offers two closer parallels of his own from Seneca's *Epistulæ Morales*. In the 59th letter Seneca observes that animals have more sense than humans in the matter of over-eating:

Vos quidem dicitis me prudentem esse, ego autem video, quam multa inutilia concupiscam, nocitura optem. Ne hoc quidem intellego, quod animalibus satietas monstrat, quis cibo debeat esse, quis potioni modus. Quantum capiam adhuc nescio.

You call me a man of sense, but I understand how many of the things which I crave are useless, and how many of the things which I desire will do me harm. I have not even the knowledge, which satiety teaches to animals, of what should be the measure of my food or my drink. I do not yet know how much I can hold. (Seneca 1917–25, I 418–19)

More arresting, read in conjunction with *Háv.* 21, is this expression from the 83rd Letter, also adduced by Pipping:

Dic, quam turpe sit plus sibi ingerere quam capiat et *stomachi sui non nosse mensuram*, quam multa ebrii faciant, quibus sobrii erubescant, nihil aliud esse ebrietatem quam voluntariam insaniam.

Show how base it is to pour down more liquor than one can carry, and *not to know the capacity of one's own stomach*, show how often the drunkard does things which make him blush when he is sober, state that drunkenness is nothing but a condition of madness, purposely assumed. (Seneca 1917–25, I 268–71)

The phrase I have italicised corresponds closely with the Norse *kann ævagi | síns um mál maga*, although there is no contrast with animals in the immediate context in Seneca. Pipping points out that Seneca was widely known in the medieval period as a school text (1949, 372), and suggests that this expression was introduced into *Hávamál* by means of an unknown intermediate source. Pipping believes his case to be strengthened by the information that cattle do in fact over-eat when suffering from various diseases. This, if true, would indicate that the *Hávamál*-poet shares a mistaken belief with the classical source. In that case it would be less likely that the image in *Hávamál* would have occurred independently. But as Joseph Harris points out, 'the wisdom here is not an error but a statement of the normal situation: the sicknesses mentioned by Pipping are by definition abnormal' (1985, 107). It is not a shared error that *Hávamál* and Seneca have in common however; rather both writers have observed a normal situation. *Hávamál* does not in fact state that

cattle know the measure of their stomachs; it merely points out that humans do not. The image of the cattle leaving the pasture to go home suggests the animals' evening walk back to the byre to be milked; the comparison stems from observing the ordinary habits of cows, rather than from agricultural expertise. The animals' behaviour would thus be interpreted as an example of innate common sense by a human moralist, whether Latin or Norse, irrespective of the fact that the animals are motivated by a different imperative. Pipping also argues that the idea of moderation in eating and drinking was not inherent in Germanic thought, for the Germans were notable trenchermen and drinkers, citing *Germania* chs. 22 and 23 as support (Tacitus 1948, 120–1). Thus the idea that over-eating was unwise would have to be introduced from elsewhere: in monasteries and feudal courts, under the influence of classical tradition, Pipping suggests (1949, 374).

Moderation is a perpetual theme in *Hávamál*; the poem advises restraint in eating, drinking and speaking. The theme is particularly prominent in the verses immediately preceding and following *Háv.* 21. The dangers of over-eating and drinking, noted in almost every wisdom literature from the Ancient Egyptian onward, are so obvious that, as Pipping himself admits, 'sensible Scandinavians would have perceived them quite early' (1949, 373). We might compare, for example, the Egyptian *Instruction of Amem-en-Opet* (ANET 1969, 424):

Do not eat bread before a noble,  
Nor lay on thy mouth at first.  
If thou art satisfied with false chewings,  
They are a pastime for thy spittle.  
Look at the cup which is before thee,  
And let it serve thy needs.

As in *Hávamál*, the penalty of greed in eating and drinking is to lose face before others, rather than to experience physical discomfort. Derogatory comments about those who sit about drinking too much are by no means unknown in the sagas: in *Vatnsdæla saga*, ch. 2, Ketill raumr reproaches his son for his slothfulness and drunkenness: *en nú vilja ungir menn gerask heimaelskir ok sitja við bakelda ok kýla vqmb sína á miði ok mungáti*, 'but now young men are starting to be stay-at-homes and sit around by the fire stuffing their guts with mead and small beer'. We might note also the scornful references in *Haraldskvæði* 11 to cowardly warriors who think mead-drinking preferable to fighting.

In conclusion, Pipping's main evidence for external influence on *Hávamál* is the verbal similarity between *stomachi sui non nosse mensu-*

ram and the Old Norse phrase, a parallel less striking when it is realised that Seneca's 83rd Letter refers to drunkenness, not over-eating, and makes no comparison with cattle, while the 59th Letter, though speaking of moderation in food and drink, has no reference to stomachs and their capacity. Pipping's parallel confirms rather that in wisdom writing an idea can occur independently in numerous cultures, and that an agricultural society, whether Roman or Scandinavian, will tend to draw comparisons between animal and human behaviour.

In 1957 Nore Hagman published a detailed comparison between certain stanzas of *Hávamál* and the Apocryphal Book of Jesus Sirach, a collection of wisdom dating from the second century BC (also known as Ecclesiasticus). Hagman collects some eight parallels between the Norse poem and Sirach; many of these simply deal with staple topics of wisdom poetry and could be as easily paralleled in Hesiod or in Celtic material (*Works and Days* 1914, ll. 317–19; ll. 717–18; *Instruction of Cormac* 1909, ll. 115–20). One or two parallels are worth looking at in closer detail:

*Háv.* 84/4–5 is compared with Sirach 33: 5:

Meyiar orðom  
skyli manngi trúa  
né því er kveðr kona,  
þvfat á hverfanda hvéli  
vóru þeim hiqrtu sköpuð,  
brigð í bríóst um lagið.

The words of a maiden  
should no man trust  
nor what a woman speaks,  
for on a whirling wheel  
were their hearts shaped,  
change lodged in the breast.

Præcordia fatui quasi rota carri, et quasi axis versatilis cogitatus illius.  
(The heart of a fool is as a wheel of a cart, and his thoughts are like a rolling axle-tree.) (Sirach 33: 5)

Hagman suggests that the images are identical, but it is by no means certain that the wheel in the Old Norse is a cartwheel. The word *sköpuð* suggests rather a potter's wheel, on which the hearts are formed, or perhaps a turning lathe. The phrase *hverfandi hvél* is found in *Alvíssmál* 14 as a name for the moon, which rules women's lives through the menstrual cycle (*tunglmein*, 'menstruation') (Albertsson 1977, 57–8). Thus changeableness, *brigð*, is incorporated into female existence. The occurrence of the same expression in a quite different context in Old Norse argues a native origin for the phrase; thus there seems no need to link the *hverfanda hvél* with the wheel of Fortune, as do both Singer and von See (Singer 1944, 16–17; von See 1978, 16–26). Nor is the context truly similar: the woman's *brigð* is her emotional instability, specifically, her fickleness in relationships with men, while the instability of the fool in Sirach is intellectual: he is giddy and changeable in his thoughts.



Other parallels noted by Hagman include two lists of the necessities of life, one in Sirach 29: 21, and one in 39: 31, which follows:

Initium necessariæ rei vitæ hominum aqua, ignis, et ferrum, sal, lac et panis similagineus, et mel et botrus uvæ, et oleum, et vestimentum.

(The principal things necessary for the life of men are: water, fire and iron, salt, milk, and bread of flour and honey and the cluster of the grape, oil and clothing).

Hagman compares this with phrases drawn from *Hávamál* 3–4: *eldz er þørf* (3/1), ‘fire is necessary’; *matar ok váða er manne þørf* (3/4–5), ‘food and clothing are necessary to mankind’; *vatz er þørf* (4/1), ‘water is necessary’ (1957, 16). While the list of life’s necessities is a stereotypical element in many wisdom literatures, the different contexts, dramatic in *Hávamál*, didactic in Sirach, suggest that it is most unlikely that the Apocryphal text could have influenced the Old Norse. Sirach 29: 21 refers to the minimum which a beggar needs to keep alive, while the Old Norse contains no implication that the visitor to the hall is the social inferior of the host. The second list in Sirach is much more extensive than the Old Norse, including such culture-specific items as wine, milk and honey, none of which occur in *Hávamál*. Had such a typically biblical collocation as ‘milk . . . and honey’ been found in *Hávamál*, suspicions of external influence would indeed have been justified.

Other parallels, although arresting at first glance, prove less so on closer examination. Sirach 6: 2–4 is compared with *Háv.* 50:

Hrørnar þøll,	A fir tree withers,
sú er stendr þorpi á	that which stands on a bare mound
hlýra[t] henne þøkr né barr;	neither bark nor needles protect it;
svá er maðr,	so is the man
sá er manngi ann;	whom no one loves;
hvat skal hann lengi lifa?	how should he live for a long time?

Non te extollas in cogitatione animæ tuæ velut taurus, ne forte elidatur virtus tua per stultitiam; et folia tua comedet, et fructus tuos perdet, et relinqueris velut lignum aridum in heremo. Anima enim nequa disperdet qui se habet, et in gaudium inimicis dat illum et deducet in sortem impiorum.

(Extol not thyself in the thoughts of thy soul like a bull, lest thy strength be quashed by folly; and it eat up the leaves, and destroy thy fruit, and thou be left as a dry tree in the wilderness. For a wicked soul shall destroy him who hath it, and maketh him to be a joy to his enemies, and shall lead him into the lot of the wicked.) (Sirach 6: 2–4)

The subject of the biblical text is self-conceit, warning against hubris. It is not concerned with the problem of loneliness; the image of the withered tree here evokes self-destruction through arrogance. There is no

suggestion in *Hávamál* of arrogance or lack of control, nor are there enemies, only a lack of friends. The identification of a human being with a tree, in particular a suffering human with a damaged tree, is an ancient one in Norse, as *Sonatorrek* 4 and 5 and *Hamðismál* 5 witness (Larrington forthcoming, ch. 6), although in these texts the context is elegiac rather than didactic, and the loss real, not hypothetical. Hagman has allowed the superficial similarity of the withered tree image to blind him to the major differences in meaning. Likewise his comparison of the false women *er flátt hyggja*, 'who think falsely' of *Háv.* 90, whose love is like catching reindeer on a thawing mountainside when one is lame, with *Sirach* 25: 20, where a garrulous wife is compared with 'a sandy slope for the feet of the aged', fails to convince. A talkative woman is not the same as a false woman, nor is the effect of the image of the sandy slope comparable with the humorous series of improbable and awkward situations in *Háv.* 90, of which the reindeer catching is the ultimate joke.

Hagman's parallels are valuable in so far as they force a close reading of the texts to discover whether any of the lines under comparison fulfil enough of the necessary criteria of similarity to establish that *Hávamál* has borrowed from *Sirach*. As the examples above show, most of the parallels either have only a superficial similarity of image, which does not extend to the thought or the context of the two texts, or else they consist of characteristic motifs found widely in wisdom literatures other than Old Norse and the Bible.

R. Köhne's study, published in 1983, seeks to establish links between *Hávamál* and Middle High German wisdom poetry. Taking as his starting point Singer's comment that the North did not remain as isolated and 'ancient-Germanic' as has generally been thought (1944, 20), Köhne seeks to show that the *Mittelalterlichkeit* of *Hávamál* is not a product of clerical learning, but has been influenced more broadly by secular German wisdom writing. The first part of his study is devoted to a refutation of von See's 'Disticha Catonis und *Hávamál*' (1972a), in which he demonstrates that some of the themes in *Hávamál* which von See attributes to the influence of the *Disticha* can be paralleled in German literature: for example, the friendship test of *Háv.* 52 (Holtsmark 1959; *Wigamur* 1926, 243, ll. 1070–5). In the second part of the study, Köhne turns to some interesting parallels between *Hávamál* and Middle High German gnomic poetry.

Close textual and contextual parallels exist in three instances. One of these is a parallel to *Háv.* 21, already discussed above. Köhne offers a

new and closer parallel from Frîdank's gnomic poem *Bescheidenheit* (1872, 378) which dates from around 1230.

Ein vihe, daz lützel sinne hât,  
 swenn ez ze dorf von velde gât,  
 so erkennet iegelîchez wol  
 hûs und hof, darz komen sol:  
 so trinket leider manic man,  
 daz er hûs noch hof erkennen kan.  
 diz laster liuten vil geschiht  
 und geschiht doch dem vihe niht (ll. 17–24).

(An ox, which has little sense, when it goes to the village from pasture, each one recognizes the house and yard where it should go: unfortunately, many a man drinks so [much] that he can recognize neither house nor yard. This vice happens to people a great deal, and yet it does not happen to the ox.)

The Seneca passage above does not show the beasts leaving the field, while *Hávamál* and Frîdank have this detail in common. Köhne admits that the extension of the comparison from not knowing the measure of one's stomach to not recognising one's house and yard is not found in *Hávamál*, but nevertheless argues from the similarity of *swenn ez ze dorf von velde gât* to *nær þær heim skolo | ok ganga þá af grasi* that the observations must have a common source (Köhne 1983, 390).

The second is from a Minnesang poem, *Leich* III, by Rudolf von Rotenburg, who was composing around 1250 (1952, 368). The parallel is with *Háv.* 50, the *hrørnar þöll* cited above. Von Rotenburg also compares himself with a tree with no bark:

Ich muoz mich dem boume wol gelîchen  
 der dâ sunder rinden stât,  
 unz mîn lîp der minneclîchen  
 sich gefremdet hât (ll. 85–8).

(I must compare myself with the tree, which stands there without bark, as long as my body is estranged from the lovely woman).

This parallel is more satisfactory than Hagman's, for the contexts are closer; both are concerned with love, although von Rotenburg is lamenting his estrangement from his beloved, while the *Hávamál* verse depicts rather the absence of any kind of affection.

The third has to do with the image of the eagle of *Háv.* 62/1–3:

Snapir ok gnafir  
 er til sævar kœmr  
 qrn á aldinn mar.

He snaps and stretches out his neck  
 when he comes to the sea  
 the eagle to the ancient ocean.

Köhne explains this not as a sea-eagle hovering over the waves in search of prey, but as a lost land-eagle, which finds itself in difficulties when

away from its normal habitat (cf. Müllenhoff 1891, 285), just as the man with no supporters at the *þing* finds himself at a loss (Köhne 1983, 392–3). Köhne links this image to *Der verflogene Falke* by der Stricker (fl. 1215–50), where a falcon lost over the sea is a subject for satiric comment (der Stricker 1968, ll. 79–83).

Other evidence of German influence which Köhne brings forward can be briefly summarised as follows:

(a) Use of the *Priamel*-type form in *Háv.* 85–9, a form well-attested in medieval German poetry, but rare in Scandinavia (Köhne 1983, 391). The *Priamel* was a specifically German literary genre, and has been defined as an independent genre consisting originally in epigrammatic improvisation, which sought to bind together a series of parallel units in a particular form into an inner unity, for an artistic purpose (*Reallexikon* 1926–8, 724). Singer believed that the form originated in Germany, and thought it more probable that it should have migrated to Scandinavia from Germany, rather than vice versa (1944, 150).

(b) The existence of a parallel to a collocation in the *Hávamál Priamel* in a gnomic poem of Heinrich der Teichner, dating from the second half of the fourteenth century. In a list of those things a man is not to trust in *Hávamál* are a coiled serpent and the bed-talk of a woman, *ormr hring-leginn*, *brúðar beðmál* (86/4–5), while the German poet has:

daz ich für ein taw wil haben,  
daz wiert mir vil oft ein hagel.  
Junch vrawn plikch und slangen zagel,  
also ist dw werlt gestalt.

(Heinrich der Teichner 1953, I 91, ll.12–15).

(What seems to me to be dew often turns out to be hail. The world is constituted like a maiden's glance and a serpent's tail.)

(c) The occurrence of *Tveir ro eins heriar*, 'Two are as an army to one', in *Háv.* 73. Recognised as a misunderstood German proverb (Köhne 1983, 391), it has reflexes in German: *zwêne sint eines her* (*Iwein* 4329) and medieval Latin, composed in the Netherlands: *duo sunt exercitus uni* (*Ysengrimus* 311) (see Singer 1944, 149–50).

(d) The occurrence of the motif of the *Pechvogel* in *Háv.* 66–7, the man plagued by ill-luck, which Köhne sees as a reflection of the uncertain social and material existence of the medieval *Spruchdichter*. Related to this is the use of first-person anecdotes to illustrate general wisdom, and the persona of the wandering poet. Köhne revives a theory, first put forward by Åke Ohlmarks (1948, 21–30), which suggests that the victory of skaldic poetry in court circles meant that the Eddic poets, whom

Ohlmarks identifies as *pulir*, were forced to live by wandering from household to household. While Köhne does not accept this in its entirety, he suggests that the literary persona of *Hávamál* here is a well-known figure: the poet as a homeless and unhappy outsider in society, whom Sigurður Nordal wanted to see as a spiritual relation of Egill Skalla-Grímsson (1983, 402).

While the character of the persona of *Háv.* 66–7 is in some ways quite unlike the Egill of Nordal's article (1924, 152), Köhne believes that Nordal's identification of the peasant-like, traditional character of *Hávamál* with the milieu of *Egils saga* is essentially correct. Thus he relates the widely-travelled poet whose personal experiences are the inspiration for his poetry, epitomised by Egill, to the poetic persona of *Hávamál*, and thus to the type of literary persona constructed by the thirteenth-century German *Spruchdichter*.

Köhne concludes that, if von See's dating of *Hávamál* to the early thirteenth century is correct (von See 1975, 118), then a literary influence on the poem from the medieval *Spruchdichtung* of Germany is a possibility to be reckoned with.

Köhne has brought forward the closest parallels yet between *Hávamál* and extra-Scandinavian material. However, the three textual parallels, of the cattle, the fir-tree and the eagle are as likely to be the products of common Germanic sources—the 'gemeinsame (poetische?) Vorform' to which Köhne alludes in his discussion of *Háv.* 21 (1983, 390)—as of direct literary influence from the German upon the West Norse. The cattle-image in *Fríðank*, as von See (1987, 142) points out, contrasts the animals with a drunkard who cannot recognise his own house, not someone who cannot estimate the measure of his own stomach. Just as Hagman's comparison with Seneca fails because it does not reproduce the series: cattle/greedy man/measure of stomach which the *Hávamál* stanza has, so Köhne's series gives us cattle/drun kard/house and yard. Two out of three elements are different.

The image of the damaged tree is, as we have seen above, paralleled elsewhere in Old Norse, and a similar identification of the human with the tree lies behind the tree imagery in the Old English poems *Fortunes of Men* 1–6 and *Exeter Maxims* 23a–26 (Larrington forthcoming, ch. 4; see also von See 1987, 142). That the eagle comparison of *Háv.* 62 could be related to the *Tierbǫspel* falcon is possible; however the actions of the eagle seem to fit better the image of the sea-eagle diving for fish than a land-bird. The man at the *þing* is not, as Köhne suggests (1983, 393), at a loss outside his normal habitat, for human society is where he belongs.

Rather the comparison evokes an anxious man craning his neck to look for supporters for his case, opening and shutting his mouth as he struggles to express himself. There is no suggestion in the *Hávamál* text that he ought not to be there in the first place. The appearance of eagles in dreams in the saga texts—*Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu* (1953, 17–18) is a case in point—where there is no reason to suspect extra-Scandinavian influence, suggests that the eagle image was available for use by Icelandic writers as a signifier of psychological processes.

The other evidence adduced by Köhne (a–d above) is similarly inconclusive. As to the *Priamel* form, 'so elementary a poetic form as the list' (*Hávamál* 1986, 23), or catalogue, is typical of wisdom poetry in Old English also, as Nicholas Howe has shown (Howe 1985), where influence from a late medieval German genre is out of the question.

That women and snakes are seen as untrustworthy in Heinrich der Teichner's poem is not surprising: both have been regarded as such, in a range of wisdom literature from Indian to Greek, since the Book of Genesis. It should be noted that in the poem, the woman is a *junch vrawn*, 'maiden', and it is her glance (or perhaps, more generally, her behaviour) which is misleading, while in *Hávamál* it is the *words* of the woman which are unreliable. Köhne is not comparing like with like here.

The similarity of the proverb *Tveir ro eins heriar*, 'Two are as an army to one', in *Háv.* 73 to instances in German and Netherland texts is paralleled by the widespread *køld eru kvenna ráð*, 'cold are the counsels of women', or a similarly expressed proverbial sentiment, which occurs in such diverse texts as *Vølundarkviða* 31, *Njáls saga* ch. 116, *Proverbs of Alfred*, ll. 336–9, and Chaucer's 'Nun's Priest's Tale' VII l. 3256, (Whiting 1968, 484). Proverbs, as Heusler was well aware, could travel widely through the Germanic area without the question of direct literary influence necessarily arising.

Nor is the hypothesis that the persona of the wandering poet must be related to the German *Spruchdichter* to be accepted. Although Köhne points to Spervogel as typical in his use of the first person in gnomic poetry, the *Reallexikon* (1984, 163) warns against taking first person utterances in *Spruchdichtungen* too literally; collective and personal experience cannot always be distinguished. In the 'begging lyric' in particular, the second person is conventionally used for the personal plea, but the 'conditions of life' referred to are drawn from collective experience.

A better—and native Scandinavian—model for the traveller who wanders through the world in search of experience is of course Óðinn.

Köhne mentions Víðfari in *Hænsa-Þóris saga* (who is not said to be a poet, but functions rather as a plot device, spreading information about people's movements), but, disingenuously, makes no reference to wanderers such as Gestr, Norna-Gestr and Víðfǫrull. These are reflexes of Óðinn, when not actually Óðinn himself, figures of great age and wisdom who visit human halls in order to test those within. These are much more probable models for the poetic persona in *Hávamál* than a geographically distant German *Spielmann*. Óðinn's visits to strange halls in disguise, to learn or to teach, are best exemplified by *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál* in the Poetic Edda, but Schlauch (1931, 973–5) points to his appearance under the name of Gestr in *Óláfs saga hins helga* and that of a mysterious troublemaker calling himself Svipalldr in *Haralds saga hringsbana*. Other Óðinn-like figures, although mortal, include Norna-Gestr, in *Norna-Gests þátr* in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, Tóki in *Tóka þátr Tókasonar* (in *Flateyjarbók*) and Víðfǫrull in *Rémundar saga keisarasonar*. (For references, see Schlauch 1931, 971–4).

The purpose of this article has been to consider the findings of four scholars concerned with extra-Scandinavian material in *Hávamál*. None of the parallels proposed has been convincing. Singer's citations offer only vague similarities, Pipping's parallel is close only if we conflate two or three phrases from Seneca's *Epistulæ*, and Hagman's similarities could be found in comparing any two wisdom literatures at random. Köhne's German parallels come closest; but these could be accounted for by the existence of ancient literary motifs common to both the Scandinavians and the Germans, or simply as frequently observed natural phenomena. If the date of composition for *Hávamál* is as late as the early thirteenth century, it is possible that literary influences from the south were able to affect it, just as Continental traditions were drawn into the *Sigurðr* cycle in the Edda, as Mohr (1938–9; 1939–40) and Andersson (1980) have shown. Borrowed ideas are more easily incorporated into a compendious structure such as *Hávamál* than into a more tightly-constructed narrative; but nevertheless, the case for extra-Scandinavian borrowings into *Hávamál*, in my view, remains to be made.

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NÍÐ, ADULTERY AND FEUD IN *BJARNAR SAGA*  
*HÍTDÆLAKAPPA*

BY ALISON FINLAY

*Bjarnar saga hítðelakappa* can be characterized in two contrasting ways, each revealing the perspective of the observer. Bjarni Einarsson called it an *ástarsaga* in his study of four sagas, each based on the rivalry of two men, one or both of them poets, for the love of one woman (1961, 40). To Theodore Andersson, comparing the structure of the Family Sagas, 'of all the sagas, *Bjarnar saga* comes nearest to the pure conflict pattern' (1967, 137). In practice, these apparently divergent descriptions are not as far apart as they may seem, since all four of Bjarni Einarsson's *ástarsögur* (*Gunnlaugs saga*, *Kormaks saga*, *Bjarnar saga* and *Hallfreðar saga*), like other sagas of Icelanders in which erotic themes appear, concentrate more on the conflict arising out of rivalry in love than on any actual relationship between man and woman.

Andersson, with his comment that love is 'the most frequent cause for conflict' in the sagas of Icelanders (1967, 12–13), notes this emphasis. But in *Bjarnar saga*, at least, the relationship between love and conflict is more complex and more interesting than he suggests. Here, a situation is established in which love is not merely a stimulus for feud, but in which sexual themes and physical violence are intimately linked. The connection between them is the symbolic accusation central to *níð*, in which insinuations of homosexuality or other perversions mirror and express the physical cowardice attributed to the individual under attack. The author of *Bjarnar saga* exploits this parallel to the point where the exchange of verbal or symbolic abuse forms the structure of a considerable part of the feud he builds up. Insults are the currency of the feud in the same way as killings or physical attacks are in other sagas. At the same time, while it is true that the saga deals primarily with acts of aggression between the poet-protagonists, the sexual element in the abuse not only alludes to but actually helps to inform us of the adulterous relationship, itself largely motivated by revenge, between Björn and Þórðr's wife Oddný. This adultery is narrated otherwise only by means of what Ursula Dronke calls the 'paternity theme' (1981, 69–72). This theme is introduced by a hint in a verse attributed to Björn, that Oddný

will bear a son resembling Björn himself (*Borgfirðinga sögur* 1938, 145), and continued retrospectively in Björn's recognition of Þórðr's supposed son Kolli as his own (171–2). But the adultery itself is never directly recounted.

In this paper I intend to examine the treatment of *níð* and verbal attack in *Bjarnar saga* in order to illuminate three problems:

- 1) The extent to which the concept of *níð* was inherently symbolic;
- 2) The role of verbal attack in the structure of *Bjarnar saga*;
- 3) The saga's exaggerated characterization of Þórðr Kolbeinsson, who is presented as a conniving coward with scarcely a redeeming feature.

### 1) *Níð*

It is difficult to define the semantic boundaries of the term *níð* (cf. *Kulturhistorisk leksikon*, s.v. *Nid* and refs). The translation 'slander', while capturing the important fact that *níð* was an offence in law, and invoking the general sense of the much vaguer cognates such as Old English *nīþ* 'malice, enmity, violence', fails to distinguish it from other terms in a catalogue of both specialized and general descriptions of insults, gathered in *Grágás* and Norwegian legal texts under the heading *Um fullréttisorð* 'concerning insults incurring full compensation' (*Grágás* 1852–83, Ib 181). (All quotations from legal texts are normalized.) Most of the insults described as *níð* in legal texts are of one of two kinds. Some seem to fit the description given in the Norwegian *Gulapingsløg* of *yki* 'exaggeration': *Þat heitir yki ef maðr mælir um annan þat er eigi má vera, né verða, ok eigi hefir verit*, 'it is called *yki* if one man says of another something which cannot be, or come to be, and has not been' (*Norges gamle Love* 1846–95, I 57). Others are less far-fetched charges which, lacking a narrative context, we cannot say to be without a literal foundation, but may suspect from comparable instances referred to in the sagas to be symbolic; for instance, a charge of homosexuality, particularly passive homosexuality, implying physical cowardice.

Commentators on *níð* tend to find what they are looking for. Sørensen (1980; 1983), although dealing specifically with literary instances, follows the indications of the legal texts in his emphasis on the symbolic aspect of *níð*. But the sagas provide examples where straightforward charges of cowardice seem to have the same force. Even the laws do not support his exclusive concentration on sexual symbolism, since non-sexual insults such as calling a free man a thrall or a troll are equally strongly condemned by the law.

Older studies of *níð* made the assumption that only insults in verse could qualify. Noreen (1922) confined his discussion of verbal *níð* to examples in verse; Almquist, hoping to find in *níð* a basis for modern Icelandic superstitions about the magical powers attributed to poets, also virtually dismissed prose of a non-formulaic kind as a medium for *níð* (1965, 45–8). Sørensen attempts to redress the balance by including ‘accusations of the same tenor in prose’ (1980, 12; 1983, 11), but adds that when found in the sagas, prose insults are often cast in formulaic terms, using alliterative form or fixed idioms (1980, 36–7; 1983, 30–1). The laws give little specific help. *Grágás* includes a section on poetry, in which it is forbidden to compose poetry of any kind about anyone, presumably because skaldic verse was ideally suited to *double entendre* and what *Grágás* calls *lof þat er hann yrkir til háðungar*, ‘the kind of praise that he composes as insult’ (*Grágás* 1852–83, Ib 183).

Elsewhere, the laws concentrate almost exclusively on the substance of the insult. Where there is reference to its form, the issue is to differentiate between verbal and carved *níð*. Whereas *Gulapingslög* differentiates between *tunguníð* ‘spoken *níð*’ and *tréníð* ‘wooden *níð*’ (*Norges gamle Love* 1846–95, I 57), *Grágás* seems at one point to apply the word particularly to its visual form, offering what reads like a definition: *Þat eru níð ef maðr skerr tréníð manni, eða rístr eða reisir manni níðstong*, ‘it is *níð* if one man carves a *tréníð* against another or carves or raises a *níðstong* against another’ (*Grágás* 1852–83, II 392). On the other hand, this passage is found within the section headed *Um fullréttisorð*, dealing otherwise with verbal insult. The word *níð* occurs again in the section on poetry in *Grágás* (1852–83, Ib 184) as the object of the verb *kveða*, the verb to be expected in a reference to verse but also frequently used of prose utterance.

It is noticeable that in the sagas, too, a preference is sometimes shown for using the word *níð* to refer to its visual form. In *Bjarnar saga*, although there are many references to verbal insult, the word *níð* is only used of the carving raised by Björn, which is differentiated from the accompanying verse; Björn is prosecuted *fyrir níðreisning ok vísu* (*Borgfirðinga sögur* 1938, 156). The similar carved representation in chapter 2 of *Gísla saga* is also called *níð* (*Vestfirðinga sögur* 1943, 10), and that described in *Vatnsdæla saga* is referred to both in the saga itself and, following it, in the *Þórðarbók* redaction of *Landnámabók*, as *níð* (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939, 88, 92 n. 1; *Landnámabók* 1921, 96; cf. *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók* 1968, lxxxviii–lxxxix). There are, of course, other examples where verbal abuse is described as *níð*, such as those in *Kormaks*

saga and *Njáls saga* referred to later in this paper; and it is often the case, as in *Bjarnar saga*, that carved or pictorial níð is accompanied by one or more verses. In *Egils saga* (1933, 171) and *Vatnsdæla saga*, runes are said to be inscribed on the níðstøng, and this must also be the sense of *rísta* in *Grágás* (1852–83, II 392). In these cases, then, the níð can be said to have a verbal content, very probably poetical. In *Gísla saga*, however, the poet's role seems to be forgotten; there is no mention of verse or incantation accompanying the níðreising, and the emphasis on the visual is carried to its logical conclusion in that it is a *smiðr*, not a poet, who is commissioned to produce the níð.

There seems, then, to have been some preference for describing visually represented insults, in particular, as níð. As to whether verbal níð was necessarily versified, it may be sufficient to conclude, with Sørensen, that the difference between prose and verse insults was one of degree: 'it is certain that versified níð had a special impact, as had skaldic poetry generally. Poetry was held in high regard, and was a better medium than prose, easier to remember and better fitted to be spread abroad and attract attention' (1980, 36; 1983, 30). It is also probable that, besides having this kind of authority and memorability, poetry was a more natural medium for the element of symbolic representation which may be what *trénið* and *tungunið* had in common. Folke Ström describes the symbolic potential of graphic representation, though without distinguishing between verse and prose (the context is a consideration of how far níð should be identified with *ergi*):

I have tried to show that the problem ought not to be put in this way. The sexual meaning cannot be isolated from the other elements which go to make up the *ergi* concept. *Ergi* in its narrower sexual sense merely constitutes the physical side of a personality type that was regarded as deeply contemptible. But the sexual component lent itself to visual illustration in a form which everyone could understand, and could therefore serve as a concrete expression of the corresponding mental quality; that is what we should call a symbolic presentation. Cowardice is an abstract concept, to which the mind tries to give a visual form which is plainly offensive and at the same time generally valid.

If, as I have suggested, we call the sculptural form of níð 'symbolic níð', such a choice of terminology need not imply neglect of the symbolic properties that verbal níð can also possess . . . it cannot be denied that there were numerous ways in which an insult could be given symbolic shape by the use of words (1974, 18).

Thus, Ström argues, the import of a fantastic charge of sexual perversion and that of a straightforward accusation of cowardice were, formally, the

same. But the resources of visual representation—and, we may add, of skaldic imagery—lent themselves to the graphic expression of an abstract concept.

The formulations of Ström and Sørensen lead to the conclusion that the distinction between prose and verse was not a definitive one, although insults in verse would inevitably be felt to have greater force. The actual term *níð*, however, is used so sparingly in the texts that its specific application is probably irrecoverable, particularly since the instances which have come down to us have so often been damaged by scribal embarrassment or incomprehension. The verse accompanying Björn's *tréníð*, for instance, is incomplete; many other examples, such as the verses of Sigmundur Lambason in *Njáls saga*, are referred to but not quoted. It is quite likely that some insults quoted in prose in saga texts may once have existed in versified form. At all events, the common use of verse for *níð*, and its intensifying power, undoubtedly explains the frequency with which stories of the exchange of verbal abuse were attached to poets.

There are several references in saga literature to poets playing what might be called a professional role, composing abusive verses on behalf of others. In *Þorvalds þáttur ins víðfjóra*, a scurrilous verse is introduced with the words *tók þaðan af svá mjök at vaxa illviljafull ofsókn ok hatr heiðingja við þá biskup ok Þorvald, at þeir gáfu skáldum fé til at yrkja níð um þá. Þar er þetta í (Kristnisaga 1905, 73). Þorsteins saga hvíta*, which includes a compressed version of the theme of rivalry in love common to the four poets' sagas (though the rivals in *Þorsteins saga* are not poets), has a similar reference. The hero, Þorsteinn inn fagri, is mocked by his opponent when he falls ill with scurvy: *menn hlógu at honum, ok var Einarr upphafsmaðr at því . . . Einarr spottar hann mjök ok lét kveða um hann (Austfirðinga sögur 1950, 9)*. Here it is clear that a form of the insult already existed in prose before the versified version was commissioned. The same is true in *Njáls saga*, where Hallgerðr coins her famous gibe about Njáll and his sons, calling them *karl inn skegglaus* and *taðskegglingar (Brennu-Njáls saga 1954, 113)*. She calls on Sigmundur Lambason, previously described as *skáld gott . . . spottsamr ok ódæll (105)*, with the words, *kveð þú um nokkut, Sigmundur, ok lát oss njóta þess, er þú ert skáld (113)*. Sigmundur complies by composing *vísur þrjár eða fjórar, ok váru allar illar*. These are later described by Skarpheðinn as *flím* and *níð (116, 117)*. The Njálssons feel called upon to kill Sigmundur in revenge, cutting off his head and sending it to Hallgerðr; the same fate, incidentally, as that inflicted by Þórðr Kolbeinsson on his slanderer,

Björn, in *Bjarnar saga*. When settlement is made for Sigmundur's death, Gunnarr adds a stipulation forbidding anyone to repeat *orð þau in illu, er Sigmundi dró til hqfuðsbana* (118), which, while acknowledging Sigmundur's complicity in the slander, refers as much to Hallgerðr's original insults as to Sigmundur's versified version. Thus the role of the poet in both these accounts is to intensify the expression of a slander already formulated in prose.

A reputation for abusive verse is attached to all of the poets of the sagas referred to by Bjarni Einarsson as *ástarsögur*, although the quoting of or even reference to specific abusive verses does not figure substantially in every saga. An accompanying feature is that the poets are usually also described as rugged in appearance and abrasive in temperament. The hero of *Kormaks saga* is accused of *níð* against Steingerðr's second husband, Þorvaldr tinteinn, as well as an obscene verse, insulting Steingerðr rather than her husband, falsely attributed to him by his enemies in order to set Steingerðr against him. A verse attributed to Kormakr seems to anticipate an exchange of *níð* with his enemies (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939, 265), and a tradition of this kind may have motivated the saga's otherwise unsupported reference to Þorvaldr as a skald (263). But in the existing text, the aggression, both verbal and physical, is completely one-sided: Kormakr's first, comparatively mild gibes at Þorvaldr call forth a challenge to a duel, for which both Þorvaldr and his brother Þorvarðr fail to appear. This prompts a verse from Kormakr for which he is accused of *níð*, although there is no symbolic or sexual element in it. It straightforwardly accuses both brothers of cowardice, particularly Þorvaldr, who had to get his brother to fight on his behalf (279). The situation is comparable to those generating examples of *níð* in other sagas. Both in *Gísla saga* and in *Vatnsdæla saga*, *níð* is occasioned by failure to appear for a duel, and in *Gísla saga* as in *Kormaks saga* both the participant in a quarrel and the man appointed to fight on his behalf are ridiculed. *Kormaks saga* states, and *Gísla saga* may imply, that one is more deserving of ridicule than the other. It is a gradation readily conveyed by pictorial *níð*, as *Bjarnar saga* makes clear:

Þess er nú við getit, at hlutr sá fannsk í hafnarmarki Þórðar, er þvígít vinveittligrá þótti; þat váru karlar tveir, ok hafði annarr hqtt blán á hqfði; þeir stóðu lútir, ok horfði annarr eptir qðrum. Þat þótti illr fundr, ok mæltu menn, at hvárskis hlutr væri góðr, þeira er þar stóðu, ok enn verri þess, er fyrir stóð (*Borgfirðinga sǫgur* 1938, 154–5).

Another of Kormakr's verses, although corrupt, includes a general asser-

tion of the power of poetry as an instrument of aggression (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939, 280).

Although Kormakr's aggression against Steingerðr's first husband, Bersi, takes a physical rather than a verbal form, it may be noted that a symbolic insult is levelled against Bersi by Steingerðr when she divorces herself from him after he has been wounded (not by Kormakr) in the buttocks. She says that he should now be called *Raza-Bersi* 'Arse-Bersi' (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939, 254). The implication is that Bersi has suffered a *klámhogg* 'blow of shame', the term commonly applied to a blow in the buttocks, a fate which more drastically befalls the hero of *Bjarnar saga*. The blow has symbolic connotations, as Sørensen explains, not only because it implies that the victim was turning to flee when struck, but also because it suggests a posture of sexual submission (1980, 84; 1983, 68). The fact that this insult is put into Steingerðr's mouth reflects the unusually assertive role she plays, though intermittently, in the saga. In view of the frequent involvement of poets in exchanges of *níð*, the association of the blow and/or the insult with Bersi (to whom verses are attributed in the saga, although he is not said to be a poet) may have originated in earlier tradition in a quarrel of this kind with Kormakr.

The element of *níð* in *Kormaks saga* is confused and poorly integrated into the narrative, but it is clear that *níð* was firmly associated with Kormakr. Less substantial are the associations of *níð* with Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld and Gunnlaugr ormstunga. Both are characterized as *níðskár* 'slandrous' when introduced to their respective sagas in set-piece descriptions which, in this and other respects, are so similar that one may well be derived from the other (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939, 141; *Borgfirðinga sögur* 1938, 59).

In *Gunnlaugs saga*, the support given to this term is trivial and not of consequence for the development of the love-rivalry theme. The nickname *ormstunga* is perhaps the best evidence for the tradition of verbal abuse attached to this poet. The fact that the remnant of such a reputation clings to him, but is not directed towards the development of the saga's narrative, is evidence that such a reputation was considered part of a poet's stock-in-trade, rather than simply arising out of the shared theme of these sagas. It is striking that, although *Gunnlaugs saga* is closest to *Bjarnar saga* in that rivalry between two poets is essential to the narrative, the poetic competition takes the form of a quarrel over precedence in presenting skaldic eulogies rather than an exchange of verbal abuse. The poet's reputation for *níð* is vestigially preserved, but is divorced from its association with the theme of rivalry in love.



In *Hallfreðar saga*, too, it may be suspected that the poet's reputation for *níð* is inspired by his nickname, *vandræðaskáld*. But *níð* is fundamental to his sexual rivalry with Gríss, although as in *Kormaks saga*, it is not reciprocated in kind. He is credited with five derogatory verses, including three in which he taunts his rival for loutish behaviour in bed with his wife, and a further sequence of verses (not quoted or described) for which he is prosecuted (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939, 188, 193). There is a reference in the *Sturlubók* redaction of *Landnámabók* to *níð Hallfreðar*, which is said to have motivated the killing of Hallfreðr's brother by Kolfinna's brother (*Íslendingabók. Landnámabók* 1968, 224). This killing is referred to in the saga, but *níð*—presumably Hallfreðr's verses about Gríss and Kolfinna—is not said there to be the motive.

It is difficult, then, to differentiate the connotations of the term *níð* from those of other terms such as *yki* and *fullréttisorð*. Neither the laws nor saga texts make it clear to what extent *níð* was of its nature symbolic nor whether insults in verse were more likely to be described as *níð* than those in prose, in spite of the stress laid on these aspects by different studies of *níð*. The picture is evidently blurred by the particularly poor literary survival of accounts of damaging insults, whether because of the prurience of Christian scribes or the caution of oral raconteurs fearing legal redress. Nevertheless, the examples referred to here demonstrate a tendency of the sagas to associate stories of *níð* with poets, confirming that insults in verse were thought to be particularly forceful and memorable. My more detailed consideration of verbal abuse in *Bjarnar saga* will demonstrate how the symbolic interpretations of *níð* could be exploited by a saga writer in a metaphor central to his narrative theme.

## 2) *Níð* and verbal attack in *Bjarnar saga*

The table below summarizes the exchange of insult between Björn and Þórðr in *Bjarnar saga*, including only those verses or references to verses which seem to exist solely for the purpose of insult. This leaves out a number of verses, mainly by Björn and including slighting references to Þórðr, which comment on the developing feud between the two men as it is related in the saga. (References are to *Borgfirðinga sögur* 1938.)

Offence	Retaliation	Public reaction or legal consequence
(i) Þórðr's <i>spotti ok áleitni</i> against Björn in youth (p. 112).	None preserved; but see (ii), (iii) below.	—
(ii) Þórðr's verse <i>Út skaltu ganga . . .</i> accuses Björn of flirting with servant girls (v. 4).	Björn counters with <i>Hér munk sitja . . .</i> (v. 5). Reference to <i>enn þann bragarháttinn sem fyrir meir</i> (p. 141) implies earlier exchanges in the lost beginning of the saga.	—
(iii) Þórðr accuses Björn of selling him contaminated meal (v. 14).	Björn accuses Þórðr of selling him stale suet and a moth-eaten cloak (v. 15).	—
(These verses may refer to events in the saga's lost opening).		
(iv) Björn jeers at Þórðr for being bitten by a seal (v. 18).	Þórðr taunts Björn for stooping to lift a newborn calf (v. 19).	Björn prosecutes Þórðr who is fined a hundred of silver for the verse. The poets are forbidden to speak verse in each other's hearing (p. 154).
(v) Björn erects a <i>trenið</i> with carved representation of two men in postures implying a homosexual act. He adds a verse which, although defective, identifies Þórðr as the passive figure (v. 20).	—	Þórðr prosecutes Björn who is fined 3 marks of silver <i>fyrir niðreising ok vísu</i> —only a fifth of the fine paid by Þórðr for v. 19 (p. 154; see p. 56 n. 5, p. 154 n. 2).
(vi) Björn's <i>Grámagaflím</i> is quoted in the text but is not recited by the character who mentions it. It asserts that Þórðr was conceived when his mother ate a rotten fish from the shore, and <i>væri hann ekki dála frá mǫnnum kominn í báðar ættir</i> (p. 168; vv. 26–8).	Þórðr's <i>Kolluvísur</i> are said to be recited by a saga character, but are not recorded in the text (p. 170). Presumably they accused Björn of dealings (sexual?) with a cow, perhaps alluding to the anecdote preceding v. 19.	Two minor characters dispute <i>hvárr háðugligar hefði kveðit til annars</i> . Björn kills the man he hears reciting the <i>Kolluvísur</i> (p. 170), although the prohibition against reciting applied only to the two poets (see (iv)).

(vii) Þórðr recites his *Dag-geisli* (not recorded) in honour of Björn's wife Þórdís (p. 174). Björn recites his *Eykyndils-vísur* (not recorded) addressed to Oddný (p. 174). Þórðr's son Arnórr condemns the exchange: *eigi um slíkt sætt*; but Kolli's contrasted reaction underlines the equivalence of the performance: *mér þykkir jafnskapnaðr, at verki komi verka á mót* (pp. 174–5).

(viii) Each recites all his verses after Þórðr has called for a reckoning. Björn has composed one verse more. Þórðr evens the score with the abusive v. 31. Björn recites a further verse boasting of the harshness of his verses against Þórðr (v. 32). It is said that *varsú skemmtan sum ein áheyrilig* (p. 189).

(ix) Finally, although not a verbal attack, the *klámhogg* inflicted by Þórðr on Björn may be mentioned here, since Sørensen has argued that it is to be considered 'a symbolic action with a sexual component, corresponding to that of *níð*; the mutilated man was deprived of his manhood' (1980, 84; 1983, 68).

Þórðr declares that he will strike Björn a *klækishogg* 'cowardly blow'—a slip of the tongue for *klámhogg*. Björn comments that these are the only blows Þórðr will ever strike (p. 202). Þórðr fells the already disabled Björn with a blow that cuts off his buttocks (p. 203).

The contents of the items listed under (i) to (iii) remain uncertain because of the saga's incomplete state of preservation. The first five chapters in modern editions are taken from the expanded *Bæjarbók* version of Snorri Sturluson's *Óláfs saga helga*, which includes a *páttur* apparently closely based on the now lost beginning of *Bjarnar saga*. This text mentions, without the detail the original *Bjarnar saga* presumably included, the *smágreinir, sem milli fóru þeira Bjarnar ok Þórðar* in their early days (*Borgfirðinga sögur* 1938, 112). This reference implies some give-and-take of offence rather than a completely one-sided quarrel; nevertheless, it is made clear that Þórðr is the instigator and that Björn, fifteen years his junior, is, like others, victimized by his *spott* 'mockery' (an activity commonly attributed to aggressive poets) and *áleitni* 'malice'. Björn is introduced to the saga without mention of any of the troublesomeness or impetuosity attributed to other poets.

It is between (i) and (ii) that there takes place the major cause of offence: Þórðr's act of betrayal in deceiving Björn's betrothed, Oddný,

with a false report of Björn's death, and marrying her himself. This injury is apparently redressed when the two men meet by chance in the Brenneyjar (off present-day Göteborg, Sweden), where Björn humiliates Þórðr by stripping him of his ship and a newly acquired inheritance. King Óláfr Haraldsson pronounces settlement of their quarrel, declaring that the two offences—Þórðr's marriage to Oddný and Björn's piracy—should cancel each other out; but the quarrel is reopened by Þórðr, again unable to resist finding petty grievances against the man who is now ostensibly on friendly terms with him. Two pairs of verses, listed here as items (ii) and (iii), are presented in the context of the disastrous winter visit paid by Björn to Þórðr at Þórðr's insistence. Their unusual *fornyrðislag* metre and tone of petty insult stand out against a background of more serious friction, for it is in the interval between these pairs of verses that the scene is set for the adultery between Björn and Oddný. This is signalled, but never spelt out, by a sequence instigated when Þórðr deliberately provokes Björn by a verse reference to his own success in gaining Oddný. This arouses a vigorous series of four verses from Björn, three recalling the raid in the Brenneyjar and Þórðr's cowardly behaviour there, the last predicting that Oddný will bear a son resembling Björn himself. Framing this more substantial quarrel, the *fornyrðislag* verse pairs seem trivial and irrelevant, certainly lacking in symbolic content, but their placing and symmetry set the pattern of an exchange of verbal insult which grows increasingly serious.

The next pair of verses (iv) marks a transition, in that Björn is the first to offend, having taken up the role of aggressor after Þórðr's taunt about his own marriage to Oddný—an aggression enacted, in narrative terms, by Björn's adultery with Oddný, and continued through the sequence of exchanges (iv), (v) and (vi). It is in this part of the saga that the insults exchanged begin to fit into the category of symbolic *níð*.

In exchange (iv), the import of Björn's verse 18 is relatively harmless. However, Þórðr is described as a pallid suet-eater, implying both cowardice and ignobility, and the reference to his hasty flight back to shore alleges a timidity not supported by the prose, which describes him catching the seal with his bare hands. Here, as occasionally elsewhere, the author of the prose account seems to minimize the offensiveness of the verse.

Þórðr's answering verse, though less innocuous, is also puzzling in that Björn's resulting prosecution elicits enormous compensation—equivalent to a man's wergild, and five times what Björn later has to pay for the apparently far more offensive *níðreisning* and accompanying verse. It may

be that this discrepancy arose out of the probable link between Þórðr's verse and the *Kolluvísur* (vi); that is, the author may have had a sense that more than one verse was, or had once been, attached to the incident. The law texts certainly treat *níð* as cumulative, so that the penalties are heavier for a larger number of stanzas. Another possibility is that Þórðr's riposte was indeed, in an earlier version of the anecdote, longer and/or more offensive, and for that very reason was not perpetuated.

Þórðr's verse mocks Björn for 'groping for a crooked calf under the dirty tail of a cow'. There is possibly a sexual innuendo; lifting an infant may have been an acknowledgement of paternity (Dronke 1981, 71 n. 29). But the saga prose ignores this possibility in favour of a more straightforward interpretation of the insult. Björn has stooped to do what his servant had refused to do; before reciting his verse, Þórðr says that Björn has *fengit . . . þar svá bæði kvenna ok karla um slíka hluti at sjá, at eigi myndi nauðsyn, at hann byrgi kúm* (*Borgfirðinga sögur* 1938, 153). The laws explicitly include calling a man a thrall among instances of full-blown *fullréttisorð* (*Gulapingslög, Norges gamle Love* 1846–95, I 70), although the explicit mention of *kvenna* and the use of the verb *bjarga* 'to help a woman or animal in labour' (Fritzner 1886–96, I 143b) may add a symbolic dimension to the insult by suggesting that Björn has played the female role of midwife.

The structure of the saga at this point conforms to the typical pattern of saga feud in that, although the dispute is formally settled by law, the psychological pressure of the quarrel is such that new and more serious forms of aggression break out. The immediately following instance, (v), is that of the *níð*, apparently carved, which appears on Þórðr's land and is attributed to Björn, who is at any rate explicitly responsible for the accompanying verse. The carving represents two men, one behind the other in significant stooping posture, and it is said that *hvárskis hlutr væri góðr, þeira er þar stóðu, ok enn verri þess, er fyrir stóð*, 'the situation . . . of the one standing in front was worse' (*Borgfirðinga sögur* 1938, 155). The sexual connotations of the carved *níð* are closely related to the saga's theme, as Sørensen has remarked:

Folke Ström suggests as a possible interpretation of the *níð*-effigy in *Bjarnar saga* that it represents the two chief characters, thus Þórðr as the passive member and Björn as the active participant . . . It is possible to read the 'people's' opinion as a commentary on *ergi* in the case of Þórðr and on phallic aggression in the case of Björn. The aggression is then disapproved, not only because it is thought to be shameful, but also because it is uncivilised, savage. If we read the passage in this way the effigy not only demonstrates that Þórðr

is not a man, it also manifests that Björn is. Hence, the symbolic *níð* situation mirrors the fact that Björn has illegal sexual relations with Þórðr's wife, and the insinuation that Þórðr is not able to have normal relations with her himself (1983, 57; the argument modifies that of 1980, 70).

Much of Sørensen's argument is directed towards accounting for the apparently surprising inference that Björn's *treníð*, if it indeed alludes to the relationship between himself and Þórðr, implicates Björn himself in the imputation of homosexuality. Sørensen deals with this by laying great stress on the passive homosexual role as the essential image of *níð*, whereas the active role symbolized the aggression of homosexual rape. However, this explanation does not succeed in explaining away the disapproval directed at both depicted figures, which he characterizes as the comment of 'the people'—thus not shared by the perpetrator himself. This leaves out the fact that the verse said to be spoken by Björn, incomplete and corrupt as it is, also registers the concept of the sliding scale of disapproval:

Standa stýrilundar  
staðar — — — ;  
glíkr es geira sækir  
gunnsterkr at því verki;  
stendr af stála lundi  
stýrr Þórrøði fyrri.

(*Borgfirðinga sögur* 1938, 155)

If the apparently commonplace warrior kenning *geira sækir* 'advancer of spears' conceals a phallic allusion, as sword kennings or *heiti* sometimes do, then the comment *glíkr es geira sækir | gunnsterkr at því verki* must be the proud boast of the aggressor, rather than a sarcastic reference to Þórðr. But the last two lines, by expressing direct comparison, implicate both participants in some degree of disgrace: 'trouble comes *more* to Þórðr from that tree of steel.'

Sørensen finds it even more difficult to explain the similar effigy in *Gísla saga*, where it is explicitly said that the two images represent Gísli and Kolbjörn, and that the shame applies to both. Sørensen attributes this overt disapproval to Christian influence, but it is difficult to imagine, if this is correct, why the indecency was not eliminated altogether. There seems no reason why 'phallic aggression', if it indeed played a central part in the imagery of *níð*, should not always have been disapproved by those, pagan or Christian, who did not perpetrate it themselves, as was the case with other anti-social practices such as *seið*. The willingness of the practitioner of *níð* to incur public disapproval is in keeping with the

alienation from society often shown to be characteristic of the poets of the poets' sagas.

Björn's *níð* is answered, not by a comparable attack by Þórðr, but by the prosecution in which Þórðr, puzzlingly, is awarded a much lower compensation than that achieved earlier by Björn, although the offence seems greater. Although it may be noted that in *Grágás* the penalty for *níðreising* is, surprisingly, less severe than that prescribed for the most acute kind of verbal insult, the fact that Björn's *tréníð* is accompanied by verse might be expected to cancel out this consideration.

The *tréníð* incident marks the climax of the exchange of insults in the saga, and the point where physical violence takes over from verbal abuse as the major currency of the feud. The saga's structure has been criticized for looseness and arbitrariness, but there is evidence of careful planning in the progression from verbal attack to a sequence in which Þórðr sets in motion a number of physical assaults on Björn, while prevailing on others to carry them out. In the final phase there is further progression, in that Þórðr is personally drawn into the conflict. The middle sequence serves the double purpose of maintaining the pusillanimous character attributed to Þórðr throughout the saga, and of mustering other enemies against the initially popular Björn, as he is forced to kill men whose fathers eventually join in Þórðr's fatal ambush of him. One such killing, however, is not instigated by Þórðr but is motivated by the recital of verses listed under (vi); here, therefore, the physical and verbal aspects of the feud converge. That this exchange is carefully placed is demonstrated by the fact that Björn's *Grámagaflím* is said to have been composed *eigi miklu áðr* (p. 168). The author is not attempting a chronological account of the verbal attacks in the order of their composition, but placing them to suit his artistic purposes. His objects, in this case, are to correlate the two themes of verbal and physical attack, and to introduce the theme of paternity, which is fantastically adumbrated in the *Grámagaflím* and is embodied in the immediately following incident by Björn's recognition of Kolli as his son.

The word *flím* implies a less severe form of slander than *níð*, and the tortuous frivolity of the *Grámagaflím* reflects less directly than the *tréníð* on the poets' quarrel. It describes how Þórðr's mother, walking on the shore, found and ate a rotten lump-fish, subsequently became pregnant, and gave birth to Þórðr. The sexual element is minimal, being limited to the assertion that Þórðr is *jafnsnjallr sem geit* 'as brave as a nanny-goat' (v. 28). Both the imputation of femininity and the animal comparison are familiar features of *níð*; the laws heavily proscribe likening a man to any

kind of female animal (*Gulapingslög, Norges gamle Love* 1846–95, I 70), and Fritzner cites specific instances of the suggestion of cowardice through comparison with a nanny-goat, including the phrase *ragr sem geit* (Fritzner 1886–96, I 573b). In addition, the imputation of unnatural origin conjures up associations with the giant world, as in *Hyndluljóð* 41 (*Edda* 1962, 294), where Loki becomes the mother of ogresses after eating a woman's heart (Dronke 1981, 70). Accusations of supernatural origin were also punishable, as is shown by the fact that calling a man a troll is also specifically proscribed by law (*Gulapingslög, Norges gamle Love* 1846–95, I 70).

At first sight, a satire on Þórðr's birth is not very relevant to the theme of paternity, but the poem evokes this theme in two ways besides its placing immediately before Björn's recognition of Kolli. Firstly, the eyes of both offspring (Þórðr in the *Grámagaflím*, Kolli in v. 29) are emphasized as an index of character and, by implication, of descent. The allusions to *Rígsþula* identified by Ursula Dronke in Björn's recognition verse particularize this feature, itself a commonplace, into a comment on paternity (1981, 65–72). Secondly, the poet makes a point of detailing the expectant mother's announcement to her husband of the impending birth:

sagt hafði drós  
auðar gildi  
at hon ala vildi (v. 28).

These lines seem, in themselves, weak and redundant after the poem's graphic description of all-too-evident pregnancy. Joseph Harris has suggested that *ala* here is to be taken in its secondary sense of 'bring up, rear', and that the insult lies in the implication 'that Þórðr's was one of those poor families for which the possibility of exposing its infants, a practice frowned on even during the pagan period, was a real alternative; the phrasing further suggests that Þórðr was actually a marginal case—the decision could have gone either way!' (1980, 330–1). Carol Clover, arguing that exposed infants were more likely to be female, adds that being a candidate for exposure 'must also imply physical weakness or malformation, and it must also imply femaleness—or better yet, sexual ambiguity' (1988, 159). While Clover's suggestion brings this interpretation within the range of implications customary in verbal abuse, it rests on a usage of *ala* that seems to me unlikely in the context, and does not account for the use of the pluperfect *hafði*. Having the mother announce the coming birth, almost as an afterthought, imposes a role of superfluity and ignorance upon the husband about to become the titular father of a



child which is not his own—an obvious parallel with the situation of Þórðr, unknowingly fostering his enemy's son.

The verses by Þórðr which are said to be compared with Björn's satire are not quoted, and may, indeed, never have existed. It is usually assumed from the name *Kolluvísur* 'cow verses' that they expanded on and perhaps included verse 19 (item (iv)). Ursula Dronke remarks:

The *Kolluvísur* would almost certainly have been an elaboration of the mockery expressed in an earlier *lausavísa* attributed to Þórðr [v. 19] . . . For a man to pick up a new-born child may signify that he accepts paternity; it is not difficult to see what coarse comedy Þórðr could have made out of the incident in his *Kolluvísur*, or to imagine the incident being invented and given circumstantial detail, to provide a convincing occasion for such verses, by a teller of the saga (whether the verses were authentic or not) (1981, 71).

If this speculation is correct, it points to an interesting modulation of the paternity theme, as Dronke comments:

If Þórðr mocked Björn as father of a calf by a cow, it would be a pointed riposte . . . in their increasingly bitter game of verbal combat, for Björn to claim that the bravest-looking of Þórðr's flock of children was not a child of Þórðr's begetting, but of Björn's: identifiable by the dauntless glance, not *jafnsnjallr sem geit* (1981, 71).

Unfortunately, we cannot be confident that this was the gist of the *Kolluvísur*. As already stated, the insult in verse 19 is given a different explanation in the prose. Moreover, although commentators on *níð* mention 'bestiality' as one of the perversions condemned, I have found no references in the laws to insults that could be described as allegations of bestiality, other than those that liken the victim to a female animal. Likening a man to a stallion or a bull is specified as an insult, though one only half as serious as comparison with the female counterpart (the Norwegian *Frostapingslög, Norges gamle Love* 1846–95, I 225). Likening a man to a male animal may be tantamount to the accusation of having sex with female animals, but to think of this as insulting seems at odds with the symbolism of phallic aggression outlined by Ström and Sørensen (see above). Indeed, in the flyting in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I* 42, Guðmundr uses such an image against his opponent by likening him to a mare, and glorying in having 'ridden' him (*Edda* 1962, 136). In any case, the legal status of such an insult as *hálfrettisorð* makes it seem rather too tame to evoke the violent response of Björn, who leaps out of hiding and kills the man who recites the verses, or to justify the comment that they were *miklu háðugligri* than the *Grámagafli*m (*Borgfirðinga sǫgur* 1938, 170).

After the recognition episode, and two largely irrelevant though again symmetrical incidents involving the harbouring of outlaws, the poets are again compared (vii) in the setting of a confrontation in which they are said to recite two love-poems, neither of them recorded in the saga or mentioned elsewhere: a poem by Þórðr about Björn's wife Þórdís, countered by Björn's verses in praise of Oddný. This incident is included in this discussion because, technically, love songs addressed to another man's wife represented an offence against her husband of the same kind and seriousness as *níð*, and are condemned alongside it in *Grágás* (1852–83, II 393). It is plain that they are not taken so seriously in *Bjarnar saga*, where the recital takes place in a comparatively genial atmosphere. Once again we see the author suggesting an equivalence of performance between the two poets, though it must be considered extremely unlikely that Þórðr's *Daggeisli*, at least, ever existed. The narration of Björn's marriage is lost in a lacuna in the saga, so there is a remote possibility that the missing portion of text also included an account of Þórðr's becoming attached to Þórdís and giving her the nickname *landaljómi*, but this is not supported elsewhere in the saga and is at odds with Þórdís's extreme hostility to Þórðr after Björn's death. Several of the saga's verses attributed to Björn address or refer to Oddný as *eykyndill*, but none of them is of the lyrical kind implied by the context here.

Although the incident deals with verses addressed by each poet to the other's wife, it serves as a further reminder of the paternity theme, in view of the contrasted attitudes of Þórðr's supposed son Kolli and his actual son Arnórr (who later achieved distinction as a poet, and the title *jarlaskáld* or *jarlsskáld*). Kolli's support hints at his as yet unacknowledged affinity with Björn, while Arnórr's contrasted attitude alludes to his later reputation as a Christian poet, unlikely to be sympathetic to the avowal of love outside marriage.

The physical aggression continues with another bout of three attacks, the first instigated by Þórðr, the second and third marking Þórðr's final acquiescence in his own physical involvement in the feud, as he himself leads two unsuccessful ambushes against Björn. There follows the long digression in which Björn wins the support of the powerful Þorsteinn Kuggason. While the structure of this part of the saga is less clear, the increasing seriousness of the physical violence, always instigated by Þórðr, is apparent, and once again the theme of comparison of poets forms a counterpoint. This theme reaches its climax in the final incident before the killing of Björn, Þorsteinn Kuggason's attempt to bring about a settlement (viii). No verses are cited or referred to in detail, but the

quarrel in verse becomes the issue on which the settlement depends. When other, unspecified grievances have been discussed, Þórðr insists that the verses each has composed about the other have not been included in the reckoning, and proposes that each should recite all his verses in order to see who has composed more. The issue is the number of verses rather than the degree of offence in their content. We are reminded of the prohibition in *Grágás* (1852–83, Ib 183) against composing any kind of verse about anyone, since Bjørn agrees that Þórðr may compose one last verse to level the score, ‘ok lát eigi ákveðin orð í vera’, ‘and let there be no offensive words in it’ (*Borgfirðinga sǫgur* 1938, 189). It is difficult to see how producing an innocuous verse could give Þórðr any satisfaction, but apparently levelling the numbers was considered sufficient to satisfy honour. The result, however, justifies those who had condemned the recitation as *óskylt*: the insult in Þórðr’s verse prompts Bjørn to retaliate with another. This completes a last symmetrical pair of verses, leaving the situation as it was. The settlement breaks down, with the implication that the anger and dishonour generated by verse-making, once the verses are actually spoken, take on a life of their own which defeats the rational processes of peaceful settlement; a variation on the insight expressed in many sagas in the context of feud, where the terms of the quarrel are usually physical attack or other kinds of dishonour rather than abusive verse-making.

In this survey of verbal attack in *Bjarnar saga* I have tried to show how the particularly transparent symmetry of the insults exchanged by the poets suggests a kind of equivalence in their performance, with the significant exception of Bjørn’s *níðreising ok vísa*, which remains unanswered and represents, accordingly, the verse which Þórðr feels obliged to answer in chapter 29. I am not claiming that this survey represents a literal tally of all the verses said to have been included in the reckoning discussed under (viii), but I believe that it shows how the saga writer deliberately arranged the anecdotal and poetic material which were his sources in order to lead up to the unsuccessful settlement, possibly expanding the material where necessary by inventing the titles of some of the poems he alludes to but does not quote, such as the *Daggeisli* and the *Kolluvísur*.

It is clear that although the saga writer attempted to show the poets as closely competitive in their practice of *níð*, the traditions at his disposal do not bear this out. More of Bjørn’s abusive verse is quoted, and its content is more damaging. The heavy penalty imposed on Þórðr for the comparatively innocuous verse 19 may represent an attempt to redress

the balance, to imply that Þórðr's offence was more grievous than the evidence suggests it to be. It is clear that a much stronger tradition of *níð* was attached to Björn than to Þórðr. He is responsible for the saga's two examples of symbolic *níð*: the *tréníð* and the *Grámagaflím*.

### 3) The character of Þórðr Kolbeinsson

Þórðr is introduced to the saga with two of the characteristics frequently attributed to poets—a mocking tongue and general unpopularity: *Ekki var Þórðr mjök vinsæll af alþýðu, því at hann þótti vera spottsamr ok grár við alla þá, er honum þótti dælt við (Borgfirðinga sögur 1938, 112)*. However, the fact that Þórðr's victims are said to be those whom he considers it easy to get the better of (among whom we may include the juvenile Björn) hints at the cowardly aspect of his character, suggesting that the saga writer saw him more, ultimately, as a victim than as a practitioner of *níð*. Björn's insinuations of *ergi* are amply borne out by Þórðr's cowardice. Not only does he draw back ignominiously from confrontations he has himself instigated—as in chapter 25, where, faced with Björn's purposefully thrown spear, he *tók ráð it vitrligsta, lét fallask undan hogginu (177–8)*—but the saga also emphasizes this trait through the play on his confusion of the words *klækishogg* and *klámhogg*, and his guile. He is depicted as a skilful flatterer, both in his dealings with Björn and in his inveigling of accomplices such as Þorsteinn Kálfsson (164–6) to undertake violence on his behalf. The warning of Björn's mother, *því flára mun Þórðr hyggja, sem hann talar sléttara, ok trú þú honum eigi, 'Þórðr will be thinking the more falsely the more fairly he speaks, so don't trust him' (138)*, recalls the cynical disjunction of thought and speech propounded by *Hávamál* 45:

Ef þú átt annan, þannz þú illa trúir,  
vildu af hánom þó gott geta:  
fagrt scaltu við þann mæla, enn flátt hyggja  
oc gialda lausung við lygi (*Edda* 1962, 24).

The allusion establishes Þórðr as the type of the hypocritical false friend. Guile as the ruling principle of his character is maintained to the last chapter of the saga, where he secretly persuades Björn's inexperienced brother to accept a paltry compensation for his death.

The malice attributed to Þórðr, then, differs from the rash outspokenness characteristic of other poets. Although he is the instigator and obsessive pursuer of the feud against Björn (he is the prime mover in six of the nine exchanges listed above, as well as numerous physical attacks),

he is represented as devious and cautious in his methods, and no serious verbal attacks are quoted. It has been suggested that the saga is unusually crude and exaggerated in its representation of Þórðr (Andersson 1967, 137). I would suggest, in the light of the centrality of *níð* and its symbolism in the saga, that the author's intention was more sophisticated than a simple desire to exalt his hero at the expense of the villain. He attempts to present Þórðr's physical cowardice as a literal reflection of the *ergi* alleged in symbolic form by the hero's satires.

I have tried to show that the author of *Bjarnar saga* not only uses the sexual imagery associated with *níð* to represent the adultery central to his narrative, but builds the process of the exchange of verbal abuse into the structure of the feud in which the adultery is an element. To this end, he deliberately emphasizes and extends the pattern of paired verses which was probably already evident in the anecdotal material which was his source. When the feud builds up to the point where physical violence supersedes verbal attack, the process of comparison and competition between poets is maintained in milder forms, leading up to the final attempted settlement—parallel to the previous, initially successful one, achieved by King Óláfr. The breakdown of this last settlement, signalling that reconciliation of the poets is impossible, introduces the final conflict.

The imagery of *níð*, which represents in sexual terms the humiliation of an abject rival by a proud aggressor, is reflected in the physical conflicts of Björn and Þórðr, in which Þórðr's cowardice is continually emphasized. The suggestion that this characteristic represents a deliberate echo of the symbolic image of *níð* does not solve all the contradictions in the characterization of Þórðr, but it may explain why the author emphasized this feature so heavily in the face of all the problems it raised.

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## EDITORS' NOTE

Volume XXIII, part 4 of *Saga-Book* is issued to commemorate the centenary of the foundation of the Viking Society for Northern Research as the Viking Club in 1892. It contains two new articles, an account of the intellectual interests and ideas about Scandinavian antiquity of the second half of the nineteenth century that led to the foundation of the Society, and a history of the Society from its foundation down to the present. Then there are reprinted in facsimile a selection of articles that appeared in *Saga-Book* during the first decade of the Society's existence which are intended to give a taste of the interests and activities of its first members. W. G. Collingwood's 'The Vikings in Lakeland: their place-names, remains, history' first appeared in Vol. I, part II, pp. 182-96, in January 1896; Dr. Phené's 'A ramble in Iceland' and Eiríkr Magnússon's "'Edda'" appeared in the same number, pp. 197-218 and 219-39; Sophus Bugge's 'The Norse lay of Wayland ("Vølundarkviða"), and its relation to English tradition' and A. R. Goddard's 'Nine Men's Morris: an old Viking game' in Vol. II, Part III, pp. 271-312 and 376-85, in January 1901. Sophus Bugge's article was translated by Miss E. Warburg and read by her at the meeting on 21 April 1899 (the two-page plate illustrating the Franks casket that was added by the editor after p. 280 has not been reproduced). Of the authors of these articles, perhaps a word needs to be said about Dr. Phené (the following remarks are provided by John Townsend). John S. Phené was an architect with an 'immense' knowledge of archaeology, especially that of Asia Minor and Greece, who died 'at a great age' in 1912 (his date of birth is not known, but he was in the Crimea in 1853-54). There is an obituary in *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, n.s. 18 (1912), p. 112.

In early issues of *Saga-Book* it was usual to print reports of the proceedings at the meetings of the Viking Club, and these included discussions of the papers read. The five papers reprinted here from Vols I and II were all presented at meetings in 1895 and 1899 and we are also reprinting the accounts of the discussions that took place. It is hoped that they will give further impressions of the nature of the society in its early years.

## THE VIKING SOCIETY: A CENTENARY HISTORY

BY J. A. B. TOWNSEND

On 23 April 1892, J. R. L. Corrigan sent out a circular to members of the Orkney and Shetland Society of London (founded in 1819 'for the relief of natives of Orkney and Shetland, their wives or children resident in London, in circumstances of difficulty or distress'), informing them that a proposal had been made to the committee that 'in view of the increasing number of young men from the North who are coming to London, it would be desirable to form a branch Society of a social and literary character, similar to those carried out in Glasgow and Edinburgh'. This proposal had been 'heartily' received by the committee and he, Corrigan, had been instructed to bring the matter before the natives of Orkney and Shetland resident in London. He, therefore, 'cordially invited' all those who were interested in such a scheme to attend the Annual General Meeting of the society when the subject would be discussed. He added that he had found, from personal experience, that a want existed for a society such as this, which would 'give an opportunity for acquaintanceship and social intercourse on common grounds', which was difficult to obtain in London. He earnestly requested that members should make every endeavour to attend the meeting.

Consequently, some forty natives of Orkney and Shetland responded to this appeal and attended the meeting, which was held at 63, Chancery Lane on Thursday 5 May of that year, at 8 o'clock in the evening. They heard the chairman, T. McKinnon Wood, explain the committee's proposals in a 'very clear manner', which, no doubt, helped to persuade them to accept unanimously the subsequent motion that 'a branch of the society be formed of a social and literary character, with a separate secretary, treasurer and committee of members responsible for the management and finances of the club'. Corrigan proposed the motion and William Moar seconded it.

And so the Viking Society was born, those present resolving themselves at once into a preliminary meeting of the new branch and settling down to business 'with the utmost enthusiasm'. T. McKinnon Wood was elected Chairman; Alfred Johnston, Secretary; J. R. L. Corrigan, Treasurer; and Messrs J. F. Watters, W. Inkster, J. Corsie, W. Muir, James B. Smith and G. A. G. Robertson, Committee. It was decided that meetings



should be held on the first Thursday of each month. Then, at a subsequent, preliminary meeting of the committee, Johnston and Corrigan were instructed to draw up a list of rules for consideration a fortnight later.

It is probably relevant to say a few words here about Alfred Johnston, though a fuller account of his life may be found in a memoir by his nephew, James Halcro Johnston, published in *Saga-Book* XXII 7, 1989, pp. 457–62. He is generally acknowledged to be the true founder of the Society and played a leading role in its affairs for over fifty years. He was born at Orphir House, Orkney, on 25 September 1859 and died in Welwyn Garden City on 19 February 1947. After flirting with the careers of engineer and lawyer, he settled upon that of an architect, but he was not, I fear, a very successful one, his main interests always lying in his native Orkney and her past, though he lived most of his life in exile in England. He was an early enthusiast for home rule for Orkney and Shetland and established the Udal League in 1886 but this was never as successful as he had hoped. (A fuller account of the league can be found in an article by W. P. L. Thomson in *Orkney View* no 2, October 1985, pp.15–17.) For his work in the Old Norse field he was honoured by Iceland and Norway and was awarded a civil list pension by King George V (on the recommendation of Ramsay Macdonald). On a handwritten scrap of paper preserved in the Orkney archives he lists his favourite games as 'Chess, billiards and cribbage' and his hobbies as 'Archaeology, Anthropology, Astronomy, Bibliography, Genealogy, Geology, Meteorology, Numismatics, Natural History, Philology and Stamp Collecting'!

Upon presentation of the draft rules to the committee on 19 May, Johnston suggested that, for the sake of brevity, the branch might be known as the Viking Club and thus the society acquired its distinctive name. A further meeting on 27 May produced the final draft of the rules to be presented to the full membership for their approval and also discussed the future conduct of the club. A full meeting had then to be called hastily for 1 June to enable the secretary to have the rules printed and the club officially constituted so that he could approach possible speakers before the summer holiday commenced.

Now that the club has been officially constituted, it is time to consider what its constitution was and to discuss a bizarre innovation of Johnston's, which, he felt, would give 'go and originality to the whole affair'. This latter, incidentally, was accepted by the council only at the second attempt, Johnston expressing the view that it was rejected at the first attempt more because he had not sufficiently argued his case than because

of any 'genuine opposition to it on the part of the council'. I refer to the introduction of old terms for members, officers, meetings, etc. A glance at these (which I have printed in Appendix 1), particularly the extended table of 9 November 1893, would incline one to think that he was perhaps over-sanguine in this opinion, but, strangely, this did not prove to be the case.

As to the constitution itself, Johnston put forward his proposals under four main heads:

1. The branch should be conducted on those lines which best accorded with the traditions and recollections of their native islands and the endeavour should be made to make it (in the 'chief town in the world') a model for others.
2. It should be distinctly Orcadian and Shetlandic in feeling and spirit, with papers being read that dealt with those islands and kindred subjects. (As far as was practicable, that is).
3. The social object was the first and most important part of the work, including music, entertainment and plenty of opportunity for talk. It should have a recognised meeting place for social intercourse, but, at first, half-and-half social and literary meetings would have to be arranged, with the AGM being held in conjunction with the parent society, on St Magnus Day, 16 April, or as near that day as possible.
4. The book of laws should be made as characteristic of Orkney and Shetland as possible by the introduction of the old names.

This last was the most controversial proposition, but, as I have said above, Johnston managed to get his way on it. In the days of the Udal League, as Thomson points out in his article cited above, he had proposed the use of the old names in his suggested constitution for a devolved Orkney and Shetland and this probably gave him the impetus for their use in the new club. If he could not have his native Orkney run by elected heradstings (local parish councils) who in their turn elected members for the lawting (one for each island) which in its turn chose representatives for the Alting (the supreme legislative body over both islands), he could at least have his own club run by officials with funny Norse names.

He justified their use both to the council and to the membership as a whole in the following terms. In whatever part of the world Orcadians and Shetlanders settle they retain a very strong attachment to their native islands and invariably bind themselves together in clubs or societies on the patriotic and common ground of loyalty to the 'Old Rock'. Orkney and Shetland are no mere Scotch counties but have a distinct social and

political history of their own. The Norwegian earldoms were endowed with legislative and fiscal independence and their sovereignty was impignorated to Scotland in 1468 and never redeemed. It was necessary, therefore, for the club to assert a distinctive local character by using the old terms borrowed from the Old Norse governorship and institutions of the islands. Hence Al-ting for the AGM and udallers for its members, from the old udal system which governed the local institutions. The schynd bill, or written warrant of udalship, becomes the certificate of club membership. Skatt, which was the contribution by the udallers to defray the expense of governorship, becomes the subscription. The Great Foud, who collected the skatt, becomes the Treasurer & Financial Secretary. The Jarl becomes President, and the Law-Man, the keeper and expounder of the Law-Book, the Secretary. The lawrightmen, who were elected by the udallers to watch over their interests, become the councillors. The Ranselman, or searcher-out of irregularities, becomes the auditor. The udallers of old, after the spring sowing, would go a-viking with the jarl and return, in the autumn, for the harvest before spending Yule in banqueting and hearing the skalds recite the sagas. In the same way, the modern Orkney and Shetland 'vikings', crowded out of their native wicks (perhaps a hint of bitterness here on Johnston's part?) pursue their commercial tasks in their places of exile and spend their winters in social and literary *foy* and *ting*.

All was now ready for the official launch of the club with the first social and literary meeting of its first session. This was held on 13 October 1892 at the King's Weigh House Rooms, Thomas Street, Grosvenor Square, and took the form of a Herst Foy (Harvest Festival) with Mrs Jessie Saxby addressing the members on 'Birds of omen'. Further meetings continued to be held until the end of the year, culminating in the Yule Foy (First Grand Concert) of 16 December, when 150 udallers and friends were present. The club appeared to be flourishing but doubts were beginning to appear under the surface. These largely concerned the viability of a club with so narrow a remit. It was felt that it could never grow large enough to ensure a stable and continuing income and that its influence would always be limited. Doubts were also expressed as to their ability to fill the officers' positions with a continuing supply of young men from the Northern Isles and to find sufficient men of calibre, with the necessary connections, to occupy the honorary posts.

The Law-Ting,<sup>1</sup> at its meeting of 29 December that year, showed its concern by authorising an 'urgent and earnest' appeal to be sent out urging everyone in and about London connected with, or interested in,

Orkney and Shetland to join the club. This appeal pointed out that, as the subscription was so low (half-a-crown per annum) there was 'practically nothing to hinder any from associating themselves, if only nominally, with their fellow countrymen, therefore supporting and advancing such a desirable and patriotic society and making it a thoroughgoing success, as it deserves to be'. Other, more drastic, moves were being considered, however. At the meeting of the Law-Ting on 19 January 1893, the Lawman instituted a series of discussions on various proposals as to the amendment of the laws of the club, in preparation for the First Al-Thing on 13 April—the first of such amendments being to extend the qualification for membership to include 'students of northern literature'. This revision was placed in the hands of the Huss-Thing, the committee deputed to undertake the general management of the club under the permanent chairmanship of the Lawman. This committee drew up a draft of the first annual report of the club, together with a draft revision of the laws, which were both duly adopted by the Law-Ting, with one member dissenting. Alfred Johnston, as Lawman, was thereupon empowered to draw up a new list of terms suitable for the new Law-Book, with the assistance of Eiríkr Magnússon.

Before passing on to the debate, and the consequent furore, aroused by this annual report, I should briefly outline its proposals. (The full text was reprinted in *Old-Lore Miscellany* 10, 1935–46, pp. 187–94.) It admits that 'the club under its present constitution . . . ostensibly precludes the admission of students interested in Northern History in a general way. Even if these persons are eligible under the wide law of being "specially interested in Orkney and Shetland"—a qualification that was added in order to augment what seemed to be an otherwise precarious membership—it must be admitted that the present government does not possess a sufficiently plain object which would appeal to those Northern students.' Further, 'it is too obvious that by adhering to the present limited qualification of members the club would never expect to become large enough to ensure its permanent and firm establishment with a workable income.' It went on to point out that there was much want felt in London for a Northern literary society because of the increasing interest then being taken in the sagas and literature of the North, adding that it 'only remains for this club boldly to take the initiative by reconstructing its constitution to include all those interested in such studies in order to ensure its complete success'. The report adds gnomically that the title 'Viking Club' seemed somewhat prophetic in that it was especially

suitable for such an extension. (Perhaps there is a hint here of Johnston's hidden motive for such a title?)

The report goes on to assert that such an extension would not cause the identity of Orkney and Shetland members to be submerged as the membership was not likely to grow to such an extent as to swamp the original promoters. 'But,' it points out, rather over-optimistically, as the sequel showed, 'even if such took place, it must be remembered that the club would nevertheless be one in brotherhood and sympathy.'

The discussion of this report at the AGM proved, in the words of the minute-book, to be 'long and animated'—and a bit muddled as well. 'Mr J. F. Watters moved as an amendment that the new departure referred to be rejected but as it proved impossible for him to specify the exact words in the report to which he objected his amendment was ruled out of order'. He moved instead a motion for the rejection of the report but it was pointed out that its adoption did not necessarily bind the club to the new constitution and rules. The logic of this seems rather odd, but it meant that his motion did not receive a seconder and the report was carried. Johnston then read out the new constitution and rules and Watters, with G. A. Copeland, tried to get the meeting postponed so that the proposals could be printed and distributed among the full membership for their consideration. This was rejected so they proposed instead that the new constitution and rules be rejected. This motion was then carried by 16 votes to 11. As a result, the Jarl (T. McKinnon Wood) and the Vice-Jarl (Rev. A. Sandison), together with Johnston, refused to remain in office and the election of officers for the coming session had to be postponed until the following week. J. F. Watters was appointed stand-in secretary so that notice of this meeting could be sent out, as the competent officers all refused to undertake to do this.

Before this adjourned meeting could be held, Johnston proceeded to pour petrol on the flames of controversy by sending out a hastily-prepared circular, in which he stated that 'it is absolutely imperative that you attend the adjourned annual meeting . . . to support the proposals I shall make, or consent to, as representing the majority of the late Council, and the majority of the Members of the Club.' He goes on to say that 'if we are defeated, the Club must collapse' and affirms that the proposals were thrown out at the AGM by 'an opposition . . . mainly composed of a clique of young members . . . touted up by a late Councillor and pledged to vote against the recommendations of the Council. That Councillor had committed a deliberate breach of privilege and good faith by secretly communicating to a small section of the members the private proceedings

of the Council without their knowledge or authority.' This charge was later indignantly denied and Johnston undoubtedly brought about the whole sorry episode partly by his apparent attempt to railroad his proposals through without allowing the members proper time to consider them. As Copeland pointed out, justifiably enough, in a later letter to the *Orkney Herald* (10 May 1893), he, at least, had no prior knowledge of the proposals and it seemed extraordinary to him that members should be expected to discuss such far-reaching and radical changes in the structure of the club without any forewarning. When his motion that the full membership be circulated was defeated he had no option but to vote against them and there were probably others who, like him, found a lot of merit in the new proposals, but yet felt that they could not support them wholeheartedly without a great deal of further thought.

At the adjourned A1-Thing on 20 April, despite, or, perhaps, because of, Johnston's circular, he was defeated in a vote for Lawman by 15 votes to 12. He had earlier tried to institute a discussion of the new constitution by proposing a committee of four (two from each of the opposing camps) to thrash out the whole affair and restore harmony to the club. This was, however, ruled out of order at first as the main purpose of the meeting was to elect officers. These were duly elected but Johnston refused the posts of Vice-President and of Councillor, when offered them. Others, too, of his party refused to serve when given the opportunity. Johnston also spurned the opportunity, when given it after the conclusion of the main business, to bring forward his motion for the appointment of a special committee to try and heal the divisions in the club. Far from endeavouring to effect a reconciliation, he proceeded to enrage the new council even further by means of a tactless letter to Mrs Jessie Saxby, in which he informed her that the club 'had been cleared out of the Weigh House and practically wound up for the session'. The new Lawman, G. A. G. Robertson, was ordered to write to Johnston requesting him not to circulate 'such unfounded reports'. This was at the 27 April Law-Thing (this is now the established spelling in the minute books; the variant form 'Ting' no longer appears). The proceedings of this meeting had to be gone through all over again on 4 May as doubts had been expressed about its legality since notices had not been sent to the Vice-Presidents.

On the surface the club continued to function, with regular meetings being held. Johnston even read a paper himself at the general meeting following the Law-Thing of 4 May, despite his differences with the council. This was on Orkney agriculture and, although he read it, he did not actually compose it, for it was by James Johnston, secretary of the

Orkney Agricultural Society. Behind the scenes too, it is apparent that efforts were being made to douse the flames with something other than petrol, for, at the Thing of 1 June, it was announced that notices would be issued shortly calling a Special General Meeting to consider the present position of the club. This was to be held on 15 June and before it another circular was sent out by Johnston and ten other members, marked both 'Private and Confidential' and 'Special Urgent Summons'. In this, the 'undersigned . . . earnestly' [their italics] hope that 'you will make it convenient to attend'. They go on to say that 'it is important that you be there at 7.45'. The meeting was timed for 8 p.m.—perhaps some preliminary persuasion was being considered by a clique of older members? It seems so. 'A statement will be made showing that unless some alteration takes place in the present position of affairs, the Club must collapse.' This would be a great pity, they opine, as its success during the winter had been very great and it would be a bad thing for those who were interested in Orkney and Shetland and the North generally if so hopeful a venture should be allowed to fail, when its prospects were brightest. They end by an assurance that this is 'no personal question, but one of vital importance to the very existence of the Club, and we therefore *very strongly* [again, their italics] urge your attendance, even at some sacrifice of personal convenience.'

The plaintive note of this circular (in contrast to the rather hectoring tones of Johnston's earlier one) and the obvious desire not to apportion blame or throw stones at other members seem to have had their effect. After a long discussion at the special meeting of 15 June, 'it soon became evident that there was a unanimous desire among members to restore harmony and to establish the club on as wide a basis as possible consistent with its essentially Orkney and Shetland character.' A committee of 11 members was elected, by ballot, whose remit was to consider the rules of the club; to draw up, print and circulate the new rules; and to call another special meeting to consider and confirm the same. It is significant that Johnston was voted on to this committee but Watters was not.

Their deliberations took the rest of the summer and the early part of the autumn, the Special Thing finally being called for 9 November. Saddened, at first, by the news of the death of their first Viking Jarl, John Rae, the members went on happily to discuss the new laws one by one, amend where necessary and finally pass them. Johnston was restored to the post of Lawman and the club received a new sub-title—it was now the Viking Club or Orkney, Shetland and Northern Society. (For the sake of historical completeness, it might be worth mentioning here that the

sub-title was changed in 1902 to Society for Northern Research, with the 'or' being finally omitted in 1904. In 1912 this rather cumbersome title was simplified to Viking Society for Northern Research. At the beginning of its history, it had narrowly avoided being styled the Viking Guild, but that had been rejected because of its association with temperance societies.)

In the revised Law-Book of 9 November 1893, the means by which the club hoped to achieve its objects are listed under eight headings:

1. By holding social gatherings, concerts, re-unions and such other kindred entertainments as may be decided upon.
2. By holding meetings for papers upon subjects connected with Northern history, literature . . . and other matters.
3. By holding exhibitions.
4. By publishing the *Saga-Book*.
5. By encouraging the transcription and publication of original documents.
6. By the formation of a library of books, manuscripts, maps, photographs and drawings.
7. By corresponding and exchanging the *Saga-Book* with other societies.
8. By such other methods as the council may determine from time to time.

These reflect basically the aims of the Society today, as expressed in the latest revision of the Law-Book (1954). Along with the new rules came a new table of names. This has grown enormously from the simple list of 1892, whose 17 definitions have now grown to 70 (see Appendix 1 for the horrid details). The most significant change, of course, is that udal-related terms have been replaced by viking-related ones, such as *Viking*, *Viking-Book* and *Viking-Lag* rather than *Udaller*, *Udal-Book* and *Udal-Right* for Member, List of Members and Membership respectively. There are omissions as well as additions—*Huss-Thing*, *Schynd-Bill*, *Great Foud* and *Stem-Rod* have all gone. *Law-Man* is no longer the Secretary but the President of the Council and Keeper of the Law-Book, the Secretary becoming *Umboths-Man*. Of all these grandiose terms only two, I think, remain today, namely *Saga-Book* as the distinctive title of our journal and *Law-Book* as the book of rules. Johnston later acknowledged (in a letter to Dorothy Whitelock dated 1 September 1942) the help he had received in his struggle for the soul of the society from William Morris, the club's first Jarla-Skald, and others (including Eiríkr Magnússon and Frederick York Powell).



The newly constituted club met for the inaugural meeting of the 1894 session on 12 January that year. I quote the sober account of that meeting from the minute book: 'The First Al-Thing of the Thing-Mote of 1894 was held in the King's Weigh House Rooms . . . at 9 p.m., Professor Cheyne, Jarl, in the Jarl's seat'. (Did I say 'sober'?) Elections were duly made, as now. 'The Jarl then briefly explained the reconstruction of the club as an Orkney, Shetland and Northern Society. The inaugural address on "Some literary and historical aspects of old Northern literature" was delivered by Mr F. York Powell of Christ Church, Oxford'. No less than four people gave votes of thanks; we are happy if we have just one 'volunteer' nowadays.

That was the official account. Unluckily, the press was there, ready to have fun at the expense of this 'new' club posturing under so many bizarre titles. It is not clear whether the account in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of 15 January was inspired by deliberate malice on the part of one of Johnston's opponents or whether it was just another case of a reporter having nothing better to do than poke fun at the expense of something he could neither understand nor appreciate. His account was headed 'VIKINGS DRINK TEA' and begins with a quotation from the club's revised prospectus: 'It behoves every one who is directly or indirectly connected with or interested in the North to give the Viking Club such support as will enable it to take its proper place among the foremost societies in Europe.' He goes on to affirm: 'There is a ring of importance about it which is hardly warranted; in fact to one who has attended but a single meeting . . . the paragraph is simply humorous.' His own first paragraph is simply humorous too, with jokes about the obscure location of the King's Weigh House, which the cabman could find only with the aid of two policemen, and witty remarks about the size and trappings of the room in which the meeting was held.

He then goes on to describe the reception after setting the scene in his opening paragraph. '[It] was held,' he writes, 'by the Jarl, who is also the president of the club and is known in private life as Mr [sic] W. Watson Cheyne. Members and guests were introduced to him by the Law Man, who is also President of the Council or Law-Thing, and who is, in addition, the Things-Both-Man, or Convener. In spite of all these titles, nobody would pick him out of a crowd for a Viking unless he wore a placard on his chest proclaiming the fact . . . As the Vikings entered the room they shook hands with the Jarl and then made a bee-line for the tables at which tea, coffee and cake were to be had. Had they borne any resemblance to the Vikings who sailed the seas . . . there would have been

something incongruous in tea for a beverage; but there was no resemblance whatever and it seemed as if there could not be a fitter drink for most of them than tea.' He describes the foundation and purposes of the club and remarks upon the use of the old terms. 'As the membership of the club contains several ladies', he resumes, 'the Skatt-taker was asked what they were called. "We haven't got an Icelandic term yet", he said. He was asked how he pronounced Viking and he said: "Weaking". Such a pronunciation was, of course, enough to make any admirer of the ancient sea-rovers lose all interest in the Viking Club.' He concludes by saying that York Powell had given the inaugural address and, when asked before he began his address about the female members of the club, replied that they should be called 'Skiald Mayjar' or 'Shield Maidens'. The speaker had confessed that his address was elementary, which, the reporter affirmed, was just as well as the audience consisted of between 70 and 80, a majority of whom were women and children. 'It really seemed rather hard lines', he writes, 'for Mr Powell that he should be dragged down from Oxford to make an address on such a subject to such an audience.'

This splenetic piece prompted two contrasting responses in the *Gazette* of 24 January. 'A Member of the Viking Club' was indignant at the author, stating that 'the fiercest warriors, even savages, drink tea and coffee nowadays', so he felt that members of the club could do so without losing character. He criticises the reporter for being, apparently, more interested in the room and its fittings and the number of people present than in the meeting itself. He points out shrewdly that there were only two children there—a 'Pied Piper', he quips, would find 'his occupation gone there'. He indulges in name-dropping to prove the club's worth and joins in the controversy over the pronunciation of the word 'viking' by claiming that specialist scholars regarded 'veekings' as being the correct one. 'Mr York Powell', he observes cheekily, 'even writes "Wicking", for which wicked deed he will probably not hesitate to answer.'

'An Orcadian', however, reserves his indignation for those who had brought the club into such disrepute, expressing his regret that a society bearing the name of his native county should lay itself open to such a 'well-merited castigation in the London press'. He states that, because of the recent changes in the club, all the councillors elected at the recent AGM had severed their connections with the club and were not 'in any way responsible for the late touting of the society and have no connection whatever with the "Weakings" who drink tea'.

He must have been even more dismayed a few days later had he been able to pick up a copy of *Punch* for 27 January in his dentist's waiting-room. It contained the following anonymous poem:

#### THE SAGA OF THE SHIELD-MAIDEN

If you're Weaking, call me Yarly, skal me Yarly, mother dear!  
For we've started a Norsemen's Club in town—we began with the young  
New Year!

I don't know whether I sound the word in the proper Icelandic way,  
But I'm to be one of the Skiald-maijar—a Shield-maiden, that's to say!

There'll be many a black, black eye, mother, in the club to-morrow night,  
For the Things-bothman and the Law-bothman have together arranged to  
fight;

While the stakes will be held by the Skatt-taker, and the Jarl will join the fray,  
And we Shield-maidens will shriek and whoop in Old Norse as best we may.

If we scratch up a scanty Scanian skill with skald and skal and ski,  
In the foremost place of societies in Europe soon we'll be!  
To-morrow's to be of all the year our first Walhalla-day,  
And I'm to be chief Shield-maiden, and proud Vi-queen of the May!

This poem inspired local bards up in Orkney but I do not intend to quote them as they are not really relevant. Suffice it to say that in *The Orcadian* of 10 March, 'Son of a sea cook' sang on the theme of 'What a pity to see sturdy Vikings drink tea', while, on 24 March, 'Your old friend W. S. E.' used the theme of tea-drinking vikings to extol the temperance virtues of the Independent Order of Good Templars 'Norseman's Home' Lodge, Kirkwall.

Worse was to follow. Northern exiles in London, apparently, felt it incumbent upon themselves to report what was going on down there to their fellow citizens in the Northern Isles, lest they remain in ignorance of the mockery being heaped upon them, by proxy, through the antics of the newly reformed Viking Club. Extracts from the *Pall Mall Gazette* and *Punch* were sent with covering letters expressing real, or spurious, indignation to the editors of the *Orcadian*, *Orkney Herald* and *Shetland News*. *The Orcadian*, to its credit, refused to be drawn into the controversy, saying that it considered it to be unpatriotic to take sides in such a dispute or do anything that would tend to bring discredit upon a club which ought to bring Orcadians and Shetlanders in London closer together.

The other two newspapers had no such qualms however. To be fair to the *Orkney Herald*, it was possibly influenced in taking the course of action that it did by the popularity and prestige of its correspondent. St

Magnus, it seemed, had been so angered by the events in London that he had not only turned in his grave but turned out of it as well to send off an indignant letter to the paper, enclosing the relevant extracts. He further complained that the revised prospectus of the club had been sent out with the names of the six original councillors, who had all resigned, still on it. 'Orcadians and Shetlanders resident in London, proud of the characteristic robust manliness and traditions of the North, are indignant,' he avers, 'that the honoured name of their native county should be trailed in the mire of Cockney sarcasm by the conduct of any organisation however humble or effeminate.' His letter, dated 20 February 1894, was published on 28 February.

Johnston, in his reply of 6 March (published 14 March), retorted that the report was a travesty, enclosing the more sober report of *The Times*, and explained that the councillors had resigned after the prospectus had gone to the printers and it would have been costly to have had it recalled and reprinted—an excuse that St Magnus claimed was 'weak to imbecility'. A new, amended prospectus had been prepared and was to be issued soon. In the meantime, only four members had resigned since January of that year and some seventy new members had been added.

It would be tedious to rehearse the whole of what another ex-councillor described as a 'somewhat trivial and watery correspondence'—the same person, incidentally, who admitted that one of his reasons for resigning was his inability either to spell or pronounce Icelandic, as a result of which he was ridiculed a bit by his English friends. Suffice it to quote a few extracts, which may give some idea of its tone and to indicate the extreme bitterness underlying the whole sorry controversy.

Johnston in reply to St Magnus, 14 March: 'If [he] is . . . so fierce a being as to declare a society which occupies itself with Northern literature, archaeology [etc.] to be an "effeminate" organisation he might perhaps find a more congenial field for his activity among the remnants of the Matabele.'

St Magnus, 28 March: 'The late councillors . . . felt it their bounden duty to rid themselves of the odium of such an unfortunate connection.'

Johnston in reply to St Magnus, 11 April: 'Your saintly correspondent now opens a personal attack upon myself while cowardly lurking himself behind the *nom de plume* of "St Magnus". Would not a more appropriate title be that of the saint's kinsman "Hakon", the traitor and assassin?'

The same in reply to the ex-councillor mentioned above (who signs himself 'Law-right-man', despite his resignation), 4 April: 'The spirit displayed by your correspondents is such as to cause us to be thankful

that a dangerous element has been removed from the club who do not scruple after their resignation to busy themselves in spiteful illiterary anarchisms.' (He had later to apologise for heaping all the ex-councillors under the one umbrella and implying that all their motives and actions were unworthy ones.)

St Magnus, 25 April: 'In trotting out names which are intended to "give tone and character to the club" Mr Johnston ransacks both the living and the dead. Although many of the names are not worth powder and shot, everything is grit that comes to the quern of the Weaking.' Further: 'At the Auld Yule Foy, when giving a musical display of Scanian skill, certain individuals, apparently fascinated by the contour of the cavity whence welled those glorious notes, true to the tradition of their forefathers . . . grinningly aped Darwin's prehistoric man.' Presumably these were effeminate vikings rather than robust and manly udallers?

Johnston ended the correspondence by remarking: 'If your correspondents are members of the club, they can make their representations to the proper quarter; if they are not, they had better mind their own business.' (2 May.)

The correspondent in the *Shetland News* styled himself 'A Norseman' and the correspondence follows the same lines as that in the Orkney paper. The opening letter is a carbon copy of that by 'St Magnus', a circumstance which shows that the leaks probably emanated from a committee of disaffected members, anxious to stir up mud in their native county. Thrust and counter-thrust match each other in both papers—even the obscure crack about the Matabele is retained—but 'Nothing' replaces 'Hakon' as a 'more appropriate nom de plume' as Johnston presumably had no knowledge as to whether 'A Norseman' was related to the arch-traitor Hakon.

Before leaving this correspondence, there is one more letter I should mention. It was published in the *Orkney Herald* of 25 April and is signed 'A Viking'. He states that Johnston, by his conduct, had done more than anyone else to damage the club and bring it into contempt. 'He is also extremely unpopular with my countrymen,' he asserts, 'especially with the younger element . . . After serious and dispassionate consideration, it is my candid opinion that until he is officially got rid of no harmony can be expected nor success attained. It is a pity that he does not grasp the situation, sink petty ambition, act magnanimously and retire.' It is as well for us today that Johnston did not heed this advice, for it was undoubtedly due to his vision and determination that the Society was put on to the course that led it to become an international society of universally recog-

nised excellence, with members in all five continents. It could so easily have remained a purely parochial society, providing social and literary outlets for young Orcadians and Shetlanders exiled in London and thus probably containing its own built-in death wish, for Johnston was undoubtedly right in predicting that a society with so narrow a remit would, sooner or later, run out of fresh members.

Continue it did, however, though not without further troubles, but not this time of so public a nature. The accounts for 1893 had to remain unaudited as the then Treasurer had moved from London to Scotland and had destroyed the vouchers for that year and the old cash books, as he did not have room for them among his luggage. In 1897 the Society was taken to court by the printers of the 1895 *Saga-Book* over an outstanding bill. The printers had exceeded the original estimate by some £20 'without authority' and the Society had withheld that portion of the payment. The printers claimed justification as costs for authors' corrections and for sending the copies to members had proved to be excessive. The Hon. Editor maintained that the so-called 'authors' corrections' were pure misprints. After an inconclusive judgment, the council decided to climb down and pay the outstanding debt, leaving the printers stuck with the costs of the case.

On the literary side, the Society continued to meet and to hear a variety of talks on Northern topics, including even a paper on 'The Scottish regiments' by Major Murray, 'illustrated with music by an orchestra'. These meetings were held once or twice a month from November of one year until May of the next year, and in the first twenty-one years of its existence an impressive list of speakers was maintained. Among those who addressed the Society before the Great War were A. W. Brøgger, Alexander and Sophus Bugge, Eiríkr Magnússon, Harry Fett, Finnur Jónsson, G. T. Flom, Eleanor Hull, W. P. Ker, P. M. C. Kermodé, Allen Mawer, Axel Olrik, Bertha Philpotts, Haakon Schetelig, Gudmund Schütte and A. V. Storm. Until 1909 the meetings were held at the King's Weigh House Rooms, but in 1910 the venue was moved to King's College, in the Strand.

That was the literary side. What of the social? That was represented at first by the 'foys', or concerts. Johnston was a great music lover and had contacts in the world of music, which undoubtedly helped him when he came to draw up the programmes. The inaugural meeting of the Society on 13 October 1892, it will be remembered, was a Herst Foy, at which the inaugural address by Mrs Jessie Saxby was followed by a recital at which Miss Broomfield played a piano solo and Miss Lumsden sang the

'Kerry dance'. The first concert, as such, was the Yule Foy of 16 December that year, and a series of regular concerts was undoubtedly envisaged, including 'Yule foys', 'Auld Yule foys' and 'Voar foys', but, after only a couple of years, they disappear as a regular feature, resurfacing only to commemorate some special event. The last of the regular 'foys' to be held was the Yule Foy of 16 November 1894 when 'a long and elaborate programme', attended by over 200 members and friends, 'was carried out without a hitch'. A concert arranged for 15 February 1895 was planned but was replaced by a 'Saga-thing' at which the poem 'The Normir' was recited, though not to music.

With the suspension of the 'foys', the social side came to be represented by the annual dinner (no funny term for this as it began too late for one to be concocted). The concert tradition, in fact, was continued to an extent in the dinners, as they were customarily accompanied by musical entertainment until the 1930s. It was not until the century had turned that the first annual dinner was held, on 29 April 1901, at the Florence Restaurant, Rupert Street, 'the Jarl-Seat . . . occupied by Mr G. M. Atkinson . . . the opposite high-seat being filled by Mr W. F. Kirby'. The meal was accompanied by 'an excellent musical entertainment', given by three of the guests, under the direction of Alfred Johnston.

The annual dinner now became a regular feature of the Society's activities and has continued to be so until the present day. It was cancelled in 1910 owing to the death of King Edward VII but managed to survive throughout most years of the First World War, not being held in 1915 nor 1916, nor again in 1919. The 1936 dinner was postponed until 1937 and it was shortly to become a casualty of the Second World War, being suspended from 1940 to 1953. Until 1938 it was held in various London restaurants and hotels, the most popular being the Trocadero and Holborn Restaurants and the Hotel Rembrandt. The first dinner to be held at University College was on 20 May 1939 and it is ironic that that was to be the start of the biggest gap in its history. To the best of my knowledge, it has been held there every year since, save for 1988, when the Society was honoured to welcome as its guest the President of Iceland, Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, and the college refectory was unable to cope, in our usual room, with the 120-odd guests who were present. The dinner was moved to the Macmillan Hall, in Senate House, just down the road, where we were splendidly entertained. The President, needless to say, proved to be a most welcome and charming guest of honour. Previous guests of honour have included Lord Grimond (at the 75th anniversary dinner in 1967), Fridtjof Nansen, Edmund Gosse, Sir Paul Vinogradoff, Halldór

Hermannsson, Marjorie Bowen, May Morris, Sir Frank Stenton, Lord Birsay, Sir David Wilson and Magnus Magnusson. Musical entertainment was provided, as I say, at the dinners until 1932. For the most part, this consisted of vocal and instrumental music, though, in 1912 'Old English dances' were performed, and in 1913 the English Folk Dance Society performed sword dances. In 1904 the entertainment included a conjurer and in 1929 the Society went one better when it provided both a conjurer and a ventriloquist. Will we see their like again at future dinners, I wonder?

Although meetings continued to be held with much the same regularity during the Great War as in the pre-war years (varying between five and seven per session), the war did hit the Society hard, as was to be expected. This was reflected not only in the virtual cessation of publication after 1915 but also in a drop in membership. The Society lost 162 members (51 by death) and gained only 33 between 1914 and 1918. Membership was slow to pick up after the war, and a further slump occurred in the late 1920s, but by 1936 Johnston could claim (in a letter to *The Times*) that it was recovering at a growth rate of about 10% per annum. The Society was in trouble with its printers in 1916 to add to its worries. A large debt seems to have been incurred as we find the Secretary undertaking to pay, in that year, a sum of £100 to the printers after the AGM in April, with a further £100 to be paid in October, to prevent proceedings being taken against the Society. That was a very large sum for those days, but no indication is given as to how and why such a big debt was incurred.

The Society had met at King's College for the last time just before the war, in March 1914, after which it moved to the then headquarters of the University of London in the Imperial Institute, South Kensington. One significant legacy of its stay at King's College was the appointment, in 1914, of Jón Stefánsson to teach Icelandic at the college. His remuneration was to be the fees paid by the students—those of King's College being allowed to attend at half-price. This was a small step in the teaching of Scandinavian at London University but a far greater step was soon to be taken. In the Annual Report for 1917, Amy and Alfred Johnston published the following appeal: 'The Senate of the University of London have appointed a Committee for the PROMOTION OF SCANDINAVIAN STUDIES [their capitals], and the Viking Society has been asked to co-operate with the Committee in making the scheme known, and to help to support the Fund for three years. The movement for instituting teaching in the University . . . in the languages, literatures and histories of the Scandinavian Countries is regarded as one of very great



importance; and it is the desire of the University that ultimately the Scandinavian Languages and Literatures shall, as nearly as circumstances permit, be placed on the same footing as other European languages . . . Two-thirds of the amount required have been raised by the Representatives and Members of the three Scandinavian communities resident in this country, and the Viking Society is helping with part of the British third. The Hon. Secretary will be glad to receive remittances from Members who have promised to subscribe for three years, and from others who wish to do so.'

It was planned to appoint a Professor, with three assistants or lecturers. It was felt to be 'of the utmost importance that the lecturers selected should be scholars of standing'. The courses were set up at University College in the session 1918-19 and under the arrangements for the second term of that session we find listed the continuation of a course on Scandinavian History and Literature by W. P. Ker and three new courses, each of seven lectures, on Danish, Norwegian and Swedish Literature by, respectively, Jacob H. Helweg, I. C. Grøndahl and Im. Björkhagen. The Department of Scandinavian Studies, as it later became, celebrated its golden jubilee in 1968 with a series of special lectures and the launch of a successful appeal for a history lectureship. It is not, however, my task to describe the history of the department. Suffice it to say that relationships between it and the Society have always been close. It supplies us with a much-needed secretariat and, by tradition, the head of the department acts as Joint Hon. Secretary of the Society. That post is now held by Michael Barnes, and was held, before that, for many happy and fruitful years, by Peter Foote.

It was during the war, too, that Johnston began negotiating for a proper home for the Society's library. This had been built up steadily over the years through gifts and exchanges, the Society having no money to buy books, and was housed, rather unsatisfactorily, at Johnston's home. The 1907 catalogue lists some 350 items. By 1915 it had grown to 550 volumes and was patently outgrowing its temporary quarters. The obvious location for it was in the University of London Library, then housed at the same location as the Society's headquarters in South Kensington. All seemed set fair when Johnston announced to the Council on 3 March 1915 that 'the University Librarian could receive the books of the Society about April or May'. In a letter to the Librarian, Reginald Page, he outlined a draft agreement, in which the books would have been made available to the students for reading only, and in which the Society undertook to bind any unbound books at their expense before sending

them to the library. The books would remain the property of the Society and could be reclaimed at any time. In reply, the Librarian wrote, on 16 March, that his committee had agreed to accept the deposit of the Society's books (subject to proper insurance coverage), but explained that it would not be possible for the library to receive the books until a new store-room had been constructed, which would release space in the main library for the books.

Whether the new store-room was never constructed or whether the scheme was abandoned when the Society left their South Kensington headquarters for Burlington House in March 1921, consequent upon an increase in rent, I do not know, but the books never went to the University of London Library. In the Annual Report for 1916, we read that 'due notice will be issued as soon as the Library has been removed to the University of London'. This hopeful statement is repeated until the Annual Report for 1921, after which no more is said about the move. However, there was renewed hope in 1927 that a permanent home had been found for the library when it was transferred to Westfield College. The college also became the Society's headquarters then, though it never actually held any meetings there, still retaining its Burlington House base for those. It is to be assumed that the college was too far from central London.

This hope, unluckily, proved to be illusory, as, on 8 June 1931, the council was informed that the college required the room in which the library was housed and the Society was asked to 'move its bookcases on Septbr. 14th and its books as soon after as possible'. Johnston was already in correspondence with the Provost of University College, Allen Mawer, and the result of this was an agreement between the Society and University College, whereby the library was presented to (not deposited with) the college, under certain conditions. The Librarian undertook to house the library, be responsible for binding it and give access to it to members of the Society. The Society, for its part, undertook to hand over all donations and bequests and arrange for all exchange publications to be sent to the Librarian. As part of the agreement, too, the Society was allowed the free use of a room in the college for its meetings. This arrangement has been of the greatest mutual benefit both to the Society and to the college. Under skilful and professional management, encouraged by the obvious interest in and concern for the collection shown by succeeding Librarians, John Wilks, Joseph Scott and Frederick Friend, and despite severe losses in the war, the library has grown in size and stature, until it must now have good cause to be claimed the finest

collection of its kind in the country. The Society met in University College for the first time on 18 June 1931, so, this year (at the time of writing), we should, I suppose, be celebrating the diamond jubilee of that event as a run up to our centenary celebrations.

The Society, as I said, managed to maintain its talks programme during the First World War so there was no problem about resumption after the war, as there was after the Second World War—as we shall discover in due course. The high level of speakers was continued and, in the inter-war years, the Society was addressed by, among others, Margaret Ashdown, Edith Batho, J. A. W. Bennett, Alistair Campbell, R. W. Chambers, Bruce Dickins, Eilert Ekwall, E. V. Gordon, Françoise Henry, T. D. Kendrick, Birger Nerman, E. S. Olszewska, Hugh Smith and Dorothy Whitelock, as well as having repeat performances by many of the distinguished scholars who had addressed it pre-war. While I am name-dropping, it is perhaps relevant to remark that, in the council minutes of 7 December 1926, we read that 'Mr James Joyce of Paris was elected a subscribing member'. He did not subscribe for very long as he is not on the membership list of 1930. In this period, the Society met normally six times a year, from November to April or May. It was not until 1933 that it took the rational step of altering its administrative and financial year from the calendar year (January–December) to one that ran from 1 October one year to 30 September the next. Now, all the meetings in the Society's 'season' fell in the same year and were not split, rather uneasily, between two years.

The publications programme was slow to resume. The first post-war *Saga-Book* appeared in 1920, after which there was a five-year gap until 1925 and then a three-year gap to 1928. Another five-year gap intervened between 1929 and 1934. The *Old-Lore Miscellany*, which had produced regular quarterly parts in both 1914 and 1915, took from 1921 to 1933 to produce its first post-war volume. By the 1930s the Society was obviously entering a financial crisis. Losses in some years had normally been offset by profits in others, but it was hard to recover from losses such as £300 in 1925, £284 in 1926, £219 in 1929 and £141 in 1933–4. Subscription income was lagging behind publications costs and the situation was not helped by the large sums that had to be written off for 'irrecoverable' subscriptions in 1925 and 1926. In 1933 and again in 1935 the Society had to turn down the chance of publishing Lee M. Hollander's translations of Old Norse poems as it did not have sufficient funds to publish its own works. In 1934 the Society's accountants agreed to reduce their fees 'in view

of the state of the funds'. By 1935 the Society was looking for overdraft facilities at the bank, which they were granted—to the sum of £150.

In view of the crisis, it was proposed, in 1936, to issue a 'token' number of the *Saga-Book* and *Old-Lore Miscellany*. Johnston objected strongly to this, maintaining that such an issue would prove a 'scarecrow' to new and prospective members. He made a personal appeal to a few of the old members, which raised £91, and this developed into an official 'Foundation Fund', which was broadcast to members in the Annual Report for 1936–7. It was proposed that this should be completed by 1941, when the Society would have attained its 50th year. Its first aim was 'to ensure [the Society's] continued usefulness', which sounds very sinister as it implies that the Society was on the verge of sinking into a backwater. The other two objects were to issue enlarged publications so as to attract new members, until such time as they became self-financing through the added income thus engendered, and to provide the capital to prepare and print special publications. Unfortunately, it was not long before the Second World War brought an end to all such ambitions and the fund remained frozen at £33. 9s. 0d., and survives today only as a fossilised item on the Society's annual balance sheet.

The first AGM of the war was held in the Rooms of the Royal Scottish Corporation, Fleur-de-Lis Court, Fetter Lane, on 8 December 1939, and, thereafter, from 1940 to 1945, it was held by plebiscite. The last general meeting of the war was held on 17 May 1940. It was curious that the Society's experiences in the Second World War were the reverse of those in the First, for, though all meetings were suspended, yet publication did carry on, with thin numbers of *Saga-Book* being produced from 1940 to 1942 and again in 1945, while parts of *Old-Lore Series* appeared in 1942 and 1943. At the meeting of 8 December 1939, the council appointed the President, Treasurer and Secretary as an executive committee to carry on the routine work of the Society and elections for officers were suspended from session 1941–2. Apart from one meeting in University College in 1941, the council's by now annual meetings were also conducted by plebiscite.

The greatest blow to the Society during the war was probably the virtual destruction of the Scandinavian collection in the library, as mentioned above. Some 100,000 books and pamphlets from the library's stock were destroyed in September 1940 and the Librarian of St Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota, Alf Houkon, in a letter of 27 March 1941 to Alfred Johnston, stated that 'the news of the destruction of your library . . . is more disturbing to me than almost any kind of vandalism.'

Ironically, the German collection was also among those virtually destroyed in the same incident. The Scandinavian collection was slow to rebuild after the war but energetic appeals and the assistance of many friends round the world helped its rebirth. A major factor in this was the acquisition of Snæbjörn Jónsson's library in the 1950s.

The Society, like the country, was slow to recover after the war. The first general meeting was not held until 22 March 1946 (the council had met in University College for its 'Annual General Meeting' on 23 November 1945 when the minutes read were for a meeting held four years previously!). At this meeting, Alistair Campbell delivered his presidential address on 'Saxo and Snorri in Scandinavian historical tradition'. One indication of post-war austerity was the council resolution at its meeting on the same day that 'the sentence in the Society's current prospectus . . . beginning "Tea is served gratis" . . . should be emended in future editions to "When possible tea is served to members and friends at meetings".' Council continued to elect officers until 1950 when the Society's AGMs were resumed (other than those held by plebiscite). It was in this year too that the Society settled down at last to its regular routine of three meetings a year (one held in each term of the academic year) which it has continued ever since.

Johnston was by now an old man, though he continued to attend council meetings until almost the end of his life. The last occasion upon which I can find his name recorded, in the minutes, as among those attending was at the meeting of 23 November 1945. He died on 19 February 1947. The sad news was given to the council on 26 February when it passed a motion of 'deep regret', which was conveyed to his widow by the Joint Hon. Secretary, Gabriel Turville-Petre, informing her that 'an appreciation of Mr Johnston's life and work is to be published by the Society as soon as possible'. The council, further, on 5 December that year, discussed the possibility of setting up a 'suitable monument' to Johnston and 'it was thought that some kind of publication would be a more suitable memorial than a plaque in the cathedral of Kirkwall'. Unluckily, it was the wrong time to be thinking of some kind of publication. Alfred Johnston never got his memorial. The Society itself is his memorial and neither plaque nor publication can surpass that.

Indeed, the Society has continued to attract distinguished scholars, both as members and as speakers, since the last world war. It has welcomed, as speakers at its meetings, Gabriel Turville-Petre, Sir David Wilson, Peter Foote, Sir Randolph Quirk, John Dodgson, Alan S. C. Ross, Ursula Dronke, Nora Chadwick and Michael Barnes, to name but a few

British scholars. From Iceland have come Björn Þorsteinsson, Jónas Kristjánsson, Sigurður Nordal, Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, Jón Steffensen and Kristján Eldjárn; from the Faroes, Christian Matras; from mainland Europe, Ludvig Holm-Olsen, Eyvind Halvorsen, Aslak Liestøl, Olaf Olsen, Hans Bekker-Nielsen, Bo Almqvist and Jan de Vries; from North America, Robert Farrell and George Johnston; from South Africa, John van der Westhuizen. (One who did not come, unluckily, was Haakon Christie, whose plane was delayed by fog so that he was unable to make the meeting in time.) The meetings have normally been held at University College, though the Society attempts to venture outside London, where possible, for its summer meetings. This has meant trips to such pleasant places as Edinburgh, Oxford, Cambridge, Birmingham, Nottingham, Leeds, Durham, Bristol, Reading and York (in 1966, to celebrate the 900th anniversary of the Battle of Stamford Bridge; address by Peter Sawyer, battlefield tour by Alan Binns). In 1975, we had a very pleasant seaside outing down to Brighton, for a meeting at Roedean School, organised by Carol Diffey, where we were very hospitably entertained by the senior girls. This was a rare meeting not in a university; another was that held at the Icelandic Legation in 1954.

The past 25 years have seen a number of other developments. In 1966 a Colloquium of University Teachers of Old Icelandic was instituted, to be held biennially at University College. It is a sad, but inescapable, circumstance that the majority of such teachers are not full-time specialists in the field. University curricula mostly allow for Old Icelandic to be a subsidiary subject only, in Britain normally as part of the English course, and the teachers are, therefore, more likely to have medieval English as their main academic discipline. The purpose of the colloquia was, as it were, to enable them to brush up on their Old Icelandic by giving them the opportunity to hear specialists talk on new developments in the subject, their own opportunities to keep up their reading being limited both by their other commitments and by the lack, very often, of adequate library facilities in what their universities would regard, justifiably in a shaky economic climate, as a minority interest. The scope of the Colloquium has somewhat broadened from its original intentions and it now provides a forum where scholarly debates can be held, usually sparked off by two afternoon papers, often with a particular linking theme. How far this now meets the requirements of those who originally proposed it is open to debate itself. It is, however, undoubtedly a 'good thing'.

In 1968 a Scottish scion society was formed. Discussions had been held informally among participants at the Fifth Viking Congress in Tórshavn in 1965 and the motion was formally put to the Viking Society council that a Scottish branch should be formed by the then President, Alex Taylor, on 25 November 1966. This was welcomed and circulars were sent out to people who might be interested. A preliminary meeting of what was at first vaguely called the 'Northern Studies Group' was held in Edinburgh on 17 February 1967. Further meetings were held during the year and a sub-committee, consisting of Alex Taylor, Margaret Orme and Alan Small, appointed to draw up a proposed constitution for what was by now termed the 'Scottish Society for Northern Studies'. This was adopted at a meeting on 8 March 1968 and the new society gave as its first object the provision of a 'Scottish meeting-place for papers and informal discussions on subjects in various research fields relating to the north and west of Scotland'. It is perhaps salutary to reflect here that, at the 6th Great Al-Thing of 22 April 1898, the Viking Society, albeit duly acknowledging its foundation in the Northern Isles, had unanimously approved the motion that 'while glad to enrol among its members Scots who are in sympathy with its aims or to join with Scottish societies for objects of common interest, it can take no action which would . . . stamp it as an exclusively Scottish society'.

The Scottish Society for Northern Studies functioned at first in close liaison with the Viking Society, with joint membership of both societies being available—the Scottish Society's subscription being deducted from the Viking Society subscription and paid over to its treasurer. This arrangement held good for some years but the Scottish Society is now a vigorous society in its own right and numbers the Viking Society among its members! It publishes an excellent annual journal, *Northern Studies*, and holds an annual conference, 'where Celtic, Scandinavian, Scottish or English cultural influences inter-mingle', as well as seminars and lectures. A number of the conference papers have been published by the Society. Its secretariat, at the time of writing, is at the School of Scottish Studies in the University of Edinburgh.

When the Viking Society acquired a permanent home at University College, Alfred Johnston expressed the opinion that one advantage of the move would lie in 'interesting the young students as prospective members'. The Society has continued to try to encourage student membership. In 1968, a special, lower subscription rate was introduced for students in full-time education under the age of 26. In 1977, three student prizes were inaugurated; one for students of University College London; a second

(the Turville-Petre Prize) for students at Oxford University; and a third (the Margaret Orme Prize) for students at other institutions in the British Isles. The prizes consist of five years' free membership and a choice of publications of the Society to the value of £15. In 1982, a series of student conferences was begun. It will be apparent from my remarks above concerning the Colloquium that students of Old Icelandic can rarely do more than touch the fringe of the subject. The aim of the conferences is to give them some insight into aspects of the subject that their courses cannot reach, and to give them opportunities of contact with students and teachers at other institutions. The conferences are held annually, usually in the Spring Term, and are hosted by a different university or college each year, rather than being permanently located in University College, as the Colloquium is. There are both morning and afternoon sessions, where students can listen to leading scholars discoursing on topics of particular interest to students and join in discussions afterwards. They have proved enormously popular and are always very well attended.

When I wrote my monograph on the first 75 years of the Society's history, I mentioned that a *Ginnungagap* appeared in the records from the early 30s to the early 50s because of a missing minute-book. That turned out to be in the possession of one of the officers of the Society all the time, though I was not told of this until my error had been repeated in the reprint of my piece in *Saga-Book*. The author of the Society's sesquicentenary history—I do not feel that I shall be up to it at the age of 110—will find that there is a genuine small gap in the records between 1980 and 1987. Folk mythology has it that a certain taxi-driver was inspired to go on 'Mastermind' after finding a book on the Vikings left in the back of his cab (I believe he did go on to win the goldfish bowl or whatever it is that the champion earns, but that might have been a different taxi-driver). I am not sure what inspiration would result from the finding of a Viking Society minute-book in the back of a cab. Perhaps it may turn up before 2042?

Something must be said about the Society's publications before I close. I thought it best to deal with these all in one block rather than to intercalate remarks about them as I went along in order to be as comprehensive as possible. My index to vols 1–16 of *Saga-Book*, published in 1967, contains details of publications up to that point and I have supplemented that in Appendix 2. The reader is referred to both those lists for fuller details and for augmentation of what may well seem rather rambling remarks here.



The main publication is, of course, the journal *Saga-Book*, first published in 1895 (for 1892–4), recording originally the transactions of the Society, with some of the papers delivered at meetings. This has been an annual publication, but the volumes have had a varying number of parts, settling down to four per volume with vol. 14. This is most confusing to librarians who suppose it must be a quarterly and fire off premature claims when a quarter goes by without a further number appearing. This confusion will grow greater now, for, with vol. 22, and starting in 1987, the journal has imitated some of the ‘quality’ newspapers and split into two sections, so that there should be 8 numbers per volume from now on. The second section is for ‘Notes and reviews’, containing shorter articles and book reviews, and it is hoped that the separation will enable these latter to come out more promptly than was often possible in the past, particularly when double numbers were produced, which meant a delay of two years between issues. Although *Saga-Book* is normally a miscellany, it has from time to time published monographs as single numbers, which now double as separate publications in their own right. These have included Sir Henry Howorth’s ‘Harald Fairhair and his ancestors’ (IX 1, 1920); W. E. D. Allen’s ‘The poet and the spae-wife’ (XI 3, 1960); R. T. Farrell’s ‘Beowulf, Swedes and Geats’ (XVIII 3, 1972); Alice Selby’s Icelandic journal of 1931, edited by Arnold Taylor (XIX 1, 1974) and Neil S. Price’s ‘The Vikings in Brittany’ (XXII 6, 1989).

In 1909, the transactions, with book reviews and some other material, were transferred to a new *Year Book*. This had a fairly erratic publishing history as it was not long before it was interrupted by the First World War. 24 volumes were published in all, the last appearing in 1932, but vols 6–16, 17–22 and 23–4 were published in combined numbers in 1924, 1931 and 1932 respectively. The Society’s other serial publication was the *Old-Lore Series*, which ran from 1907 to 1946 in 75 numbers. This had, as its aim, ‘to bring together materials for the history of Orkney and Shetland, as well as of the Norse race in the North of Scotland, from all available sources’. It tried to achieve this by running three sub-series within the framework of the main series, with all the subsequent complication of each issue having two separate numbers, both within its own series and within the overall series. *Old-Lore Miscellany* (the title varies but this is the working one) contained articles, reprints, notes and queries; and there were two records series, one covering Orkney and Shetland and the other, Caithness and Sutherland. The series was originally funded by a separate subscription list from that for *Saga-Book*—members could subscribe to the journal or to the series or, indeed, to both. However, in

1932 it was decided to amalgamate the two subscription lists and members now received both publications in return for their money. *Miscellany* ran, in the end, to 10 volumes; *Orkney and Shetland Records* to 3; *Caithness and Sutherland Records* never got beyond its first volume. The Orkney and Shetland records series had its own subseries of *Sasines*, which created even further confusion for the pedantic bibliographer. Thus, vol. 2, pt 6 of the *Records* was both vol. 1, pt 6 of the *Sasines*, no 72 of the *Old-Lore Series*, and, apparently, also pt 6 of vol. 12 of that series; it also had two other parallel titles, in Latin and in Icelandic.

In 1893, the Society began an *Extra Series* of monographs, but this produced only four numbers. It began with a reprint of Jessie Saxby's inaugural address to the Society, mentioned above, together with W. A. Clouston's 'Notes on the folklore of the raven and the owl'. Other volumes were Thorsteinn Erlingsson's 'Ruins of the saga-time'; Knut Stjerna's 'Essays on . . . Beowulf' and Birger Nerman's 'The Poetic Edda in the light of archaeology.' Two volumes in the *Translation Series* were published in 1902 and 1908, an example of the importance that the Society has always attached to making Old Icelandic works available to a wider audience. These were 'The life and death of Kormac the Scald', translated by W. G. Collingwood and Jón Stefánsson; and Olive Bray's translation of the mythological poems from the Poetic Edda. In 1936, the widow of Ernest Payne, a long-time member of the Society, wrote to the council saying that her husband had expressed a wish that she should give some money to the Society 'to print a saga or other literary works for the benefit of members'. It was agreed that the best use for the money would be to issue saga translations and a sub-committee was appointed to draw up a list of suitable texts. Oddly enough, none of its suggestions was ever acted upon. In the end, two saga translations were issued—'The life of Gudmund the Good', translated by Gabriel Turville-Petre and E. S. Olszewska, and 'The story of Rauð and his sons', translated by Joan Turville-Petre. Following the Society's then customary practice of causing the maximum bibliographical confusion, where humanly possible, these two volumes in the *Payne Memorial Series* were later amalgamated with the *Translation Series* to become both vols 1–2 of the former series and vols 3–4 of the latter. Despite my confident statement in the index mentioned above, both these series have now been quietly abandoned.

Probably the most important series published by the Society is the *Text Series*. The council resolved, on 17 November 1950, to inaugurate a scheme under which the Society would 'produce texts of sagas with notes and short glossaries chiefly for the use of students'. This, it was agreed,

would 'help to satisfy a great need in this country'. Accordingly, the Society arranged to purchase saga texts from *Íslendingasagnaútgáfan*, of Reykjavík, for reprinting 'with suitable commentaries in English'. In the event, only two of the texts were used—*Gunnlaugs saga* and *Hervarar saga*—before the scope of the series was broadened to include not only texts but also important monographs, like Dag Strömbäck's *The Conversion of Iceland*, and the collection of reprinted articles by Gabriel Turville-Petre, *Nine Norse studies*. I have listed all the volumes published to date in Appendix 2, though the first three had appeared before my *Saga-Book* index came out and thus can be found there also.

A series of lectures was instituted at University College in 1962, funded by Colonel B. E. Coke in memory of his late wife, Dorothea. These 'Dorothea Coke Memorial Lectures in Northern Studies' were to be given about every 18 months and subsequently published. Their scope was to include 'any subject within the field of Northern Research . . . in the period before the Reformation, but especially having regard to the relations between Scandinavia, Iceland and the British Isles'. Arrangements were made for the published lectures to be distributed to members of the Society as part of their subscriptions, thus replacing the by now defunct *Old-Lore Series* (officially laid to rest by the council on 9 May 1951) as a second free publication. In 1974, the Society itself took over their publication (on behalf of the college) from H. K. Lewis. The first lecture was delivered by G. N. Garmonsway, on Canute and his empire, in 1963; and the most recent was by Alexander Fenton, on the 'taboo' language of fishermen in the Northern Isles, in 1991. A list of the lectures can be found in Appendix 2, although they are not all, strictly speaking, Society publications.

Apart from these serial and series publications, the Society has published a number of individual volumes that do not fall into either category—Division 2 publications, I suppose, as opposed to the Division 1 publications represented by the *Text Series*. I do not propose to pontificate about them here, but I refer the reader instead to the oft-mentioned Appendix 2, where I have listed a selection of them. An important role has been played by the Society in publishing or distributing volumes of the Viking Congress proceedings, starting with the Sixth Congress of 1969. From time to time, too, the Society has arranged to purchase copies of important foreign publications for resale to members at favourable prices.

It will be apparent that the publishing activity of the Society is a definite growth area, with a lot of good reading both in stock and in hand.

(The Society's publications stall is very popular with members at meetings.) If we link this with its other activities—the well-attended meetings, the student conferences and prizes, the Colloquium and, above all, the Annual Dinner—we can see that the Viking Society is entering its second century not with the doddering and uncertain steps of old age, but with the confident and enthusiastic strides of—I will not say 'impetuous'—youth. That this is so is due in no small part to the shades of Alfred Johnston and Gabriel Turville-Petre and to the energetic presence of Peter Foote.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Johnston seems to have been uncertain at first whether to use 'Thing' or 'Ting' as the term for meetings, and both forms are found in the earliest minute-book. I have used the form that appears in the relevant minutes. The old terms were used for the last time in print in the Annual Report for 1901, but they lingered on in the hand-written minutes until the Great Al-thing (Annual General Meeting) of 18 April 1902.

APPENDIX 1

**Table of Names**

(reprinted from the Law-Book with the idiosyncracies of the originals reproduced as closely as possible)

*June 1892*

LAW-BOOK, List of Laws  
UDALLERS, Members  
UDAL-RIGHT, Membership  
UDAL-BOOK, List of Members  
SCHYND-BILL, Certificate of Membership  
JARL, President  
LAW-MAN, Honorary Secretary  
GREAT FOUÐ, Honorary Financial Secretary  
RANCEL-MAN, Auditor  
LAWRIGHTMAN, Councillor  
THING, Members Meeting  
AL-THING, Annual General Meeting  
LAW-THING, Council  
LAW-THING-MEN, Members of Council or Office-bearers  
HUSS-THING, Committee of Management (appointed by the Council)  
THING-STEAD, Place of Meeting  
STEM-ROD, a Symbol or Notice of Meeting.

*9 November 1893*

AR-MEN, Stewards  
AL-THING, an Ordinary General Meeting  
AL-THING-MEN, Members entitled to attend a General Meeting  
EIGN-WARDS, Trustees of the Club Property  
FOY or FAGNATHR, Festival or Social Gathering  
FAGNATHR-THING, Committee on Social Matters  
FRÆTHI-MASTERS, Honorary Corresponding Members  
FRÆTHI-MEN, Honorary Fellows  
GOFGIR-MEN, Honorary Members  
GREAT AL-THING, Annual General Meeting  
HERATH, a District  
HERATH UMBOTHS-MEN, Honorary District Secretaries  
JARL, President  
JARLA-MEN, Vice-Presidents  
JARLA-SKALD, Poet to the President  
JARLDOM, Presidency  
LAW-BOOK, Book of Laws  
LAW-LORIST, Honorary Solicitor

- LAW-MAN, President of the Council and Keeper of the Law Book  
 LAW-RIGHT-MEN, Councillors  
 LAW-SAGA, Presidency of Council  
 LAW-THING, The Council  
 LAW-THING-BOOK, Minute Book of Council  
 LAW-THING-MEN, Members of Council  
 LAW-THING-SAGA, Annual Report of Council  
 LAW-THING-SEAT, Council Chair  
 LAW-THING-WORK, Proceedings of Council  
 RANSELL-MEN, Honorary Auditors  
 SAGA-BOOK, Proceedings  
 SAGA-MAN, a Fellow who Subscribes for the Proceedings  
 SAGA-MASTER, Hon. Editor of the Proceedings and other Publications  
 SAGA-SKATT, Subscription for the Proceedings  
 SAGA-SKATT-KIST, Literary Fund  
 SAGA-THING, Literary Meeting  
 SKALD, Poet  
 SKATT, Subscription  
 SKATT-BOOK, Subscription List  
 SKATT-FALL, Failure to pay Subscription for Two Years  
 SKATT-FREE, Free of Subscription  
 SKATT-FREE VIKINGS, Non-Subscribing Members  
 SKATT-MASTER, Honorary Financial Secretary  
 SKATT-KIST, The Treasury  
 SKATT-TAKER, Honorary Treasurer  
 SKATT VIKINGS, Subscribing Members  
 THING, a Meeting of the Club (Ordinary, Special or Annual)  
 THINGAN, a Debate  
 THING-BOOK, Minute Book of Meetings of the Club  
 THING-MEN, Fellows  
 THING-MOTE, The Session  
 THINGS-BOTH, Summons calling a Meeting  
 THINGS-BOTH-MAN, Convener of the Club  
 THING-SEAT, the Chair at Meetings  
 THING-SEAT-MAN, Chairman  
 THING-SKATT, Subscription of Fellows  
 THING-STEAD, Place of Meeting  
 THING-SWAIN, Attendant at Meetings  
 THING-WORK, Programme of Session  
 UMBOTH, an Office or Commission  
 UMBOTHS-ATKVÆTHI, Proxy  
 UMBOTHS-MAN, Honorary Secretary  
 UMBOTHS-VIKING, an Officer of the Club  
 UMBOTHS-VIKING-BOOK, Official List  
 VEBOND, the Boundaries of the Place of Meeting  
 VIKING, a Member

VIKING-BOOK, Register of Members  
 VIKING-BRIEF, Certificate of Membership  
 VIKING-EIGN, Property of the Club  
 VIKING-JARL, Honorary President  
 VIKING-LAG, Membership  
 VIKING-SKALD, Poet to the Club.

## APPENDIX 2

### Viking Society Publications

For details of *Saga-Book*, *Year Book*, *Old-Lore Series*, *Extra Series*, *Translation Series* and *Payne Memorial Series*, see my index to *Saga-Book* 1–16, pp. 68–72.

### Text Series

1. Gunnlaugs saga ormsstungu. With introduction, notes and glossary by Peter G. Foote and Randolph Quirk. 1953. (Repr. 1974, etc.)
2. Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks. With notes and glossary by G. Turville-Petre. Introduction by Christopher Tolkien. 1956.
3. Einar Ól. Sveinsson: Dating the Icelandic sagas. 1958.
4. Two Icelandic stories: Hreiðars þáttur, Orms þáttur. Edited by Anthony Faulkes. [1967.] (Repr. 1978.)
5. Gabriel Turville-Petre: Nine Norse studies. 1972.
6. Dag Strömbäck: The conversion of Iceland. 1975.
7. Hávamál. Edited by David A. H. Evans. 1986. (Glossary and index. Compiled by Anthony Faulkes. 1987.)
8. Diana Whaley: *Heimskringla*. An introduction. 1991.

### Dorothea Coke Memorial Lectures

(Published lectures only. Date of lecture—speaker and subject—date of publication.)

1963. G. N. Garmonsway: Canute and his empire. 1964\*.  
 1965. Sven B. F. Jansson: Swedish Vikings in England: the evidence of the rune stones. 1966\*.  
 1966. Gabriel Turville-Petre: Haraldr the Hard-Ruler and his poets. 1968\*.  
 1969. Dag Strömbäck: The Epiphany in runic art: the Dynna and Sika stones. 1970\*.  
 1970. Alistair Campbell: Skaldic verse and Anglo-Saxon history. 1971\*.  
 1972. Brita Malmer: King Canute's coinage in the Northern countries. 1974.  
 1973. Folke Ström: *Níð*, *ergi* and Old Norse moral attitudes. 1974.  
 1976. H. R. Loyn: The Vikings in Wales. [1977.]  
 1980. Ursula Dronke: The role of sexual themes in *Njáls saga*. 1981.  
 1982. John Kousgård Sørensen: Patronymics in Denmark and England. 1983.  
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## THE SPIRIT OF 1892: SAGAS, SAGA-STEADS AND VICTORIAN PHILOLOGY

BY ANDREW WAWN

The foundation of the Viking Club and its *Saga-Book* in 1892 provided a timely national focus and forum for the scholarly energies of many late Victorian enthusiasts of (in Bishop Thomas Percy's phrase) 'Northern antiquities'. It never seemed likely that the gloomy prophecy of one new but apparently soon disillusioned member (Mabel Barmby) in a letter to the Cambridge librarian Eiríkur Magnússon would be fulfilled:

We are very sorry, though not at all surprised, that you don't feel equal to the Viking Club—it is a moribund sort of affair, I fear—and would only be a constant worry to you—So long as the *Saga Book* only appears once a year, and is so deadly dull, there is not much hope for the Club, I should imagine.  
(Lbs 2186 4to, 12 February 1899)

There was in fact every hope for the club and its 'deadly dull' journal in a land where and at a time when the ancient North and Old Norse had come to exercise so powerful an imaginative hold on so many intelligent minds: through travel to Iceland, from developments in philological understanding, from the interpenetration of literary, place-name and archaeological studies, through intricate codicological and editorial work, through translation, adaptation and fictional re-creation for adults and (no less a priority) for children, and through the vivid witness of pencil, paint-brush and (latterly) camera. From the permanence of print to the passing stimulus of the public lecture, from private library to prestigious learned society, eager devotees of Viking culture sought to deepen their understanding of the Norse origins of their local communities and their nation. These Scandinavian roots were felt by most people to be culturally precious and judged by some to be politically potent.

Such labours served to link through correspondence the great Icelandic philologists based in Britain, notably Eiríkur Magnússon and Guðbrandur Vigfússon, with those tireless and no doubt occasionally tiresome Norse enthusiasts—every one a Minna Troil—whose letters arrived daily from all over the British Isles. They wrote from the Shetlands, from the Channel Islands and from the Isle of Man; from London, Liverpool and Lampeter. There was Arthur Laurenson from Lerwick, the organiser of a weekly group reading *Hávamál*, with the new, long awaited, and acrimoniously produced Vigfússon–Dasent edition of *Orkneyinga saga*

next on their list; he writes to lament that the one group member with a copy of the 1874 Cleasby–Vigfússon *Icelandic-English Dictionary* has just emigrated to New Zealand (Bodleian MS Eng. Misc. d.131, letter to Guðbrandur Vigfússon [hereafter GV in citations], 1888). There was Ernest Savage from Douglas, an eager runologist reporting and seeking guidance about local inscriptions, and enlisting support against planned changes in the ancient format of the Tynwald (Bodleian MS Eng. Misc. d.131, 14 extant letters to GV, 1886-9). A Mr Slater wrote from Plymouth, praising the Dictionary and enthusing over his recent purchase of the three-volume Vigfússon and Unger edition of *Flateyjarbók* (Bodleian MS Eng. Misc. d.131, letter to GV, [n.d.] 1884). George Stocks wrote from Barrow in Furness, seeking information about the possible Norse derivation of the name of his home town (Lbs 2189a 4to, letter to Eiríkur Magnússon [hereafter EM in citations], 10 November 1892). Not that the intellectual traffic was all one way: the learned Icelanders gained almost as much as they gave through the tireless burrowing and local lore of their widely scattered, but often well-informed amateur colleagues. Such help may to an extent have compensated Guðbrandur and Eiríkur for their daily dealings with a lunatic (or at best wearisome) fringe of correspondents, of whom George Silk was typical. He sought Vigfússon's advice about writing an opera on Viking themes (Bodleian MS Eng. Misc. d.131, letter to GV, 24 November 1888). The Icelandic was invited to suggest a composer 'fond of the sea' who might be willing to set Silk's embarrassing libretto on 'the spirit of Palnatoki and the Jomsborg Vikings'. Bayreuth had its Wagner, and Britain was to have its Silk. Happily it was soon also to have its Elgar, whose Viking oratorio *King Olaf* (based on verses by Longfellow) received its first performance in Hanley in 1896 (Redwood 1982, 14–18). When not pestered about music, Vigfússon could find himself pestered about rocks; he was asked to organise regular supplies of both Icelandic lava and Iceland spar for British customers—the lava was proving efficacious for horses' teeth (Bodleian MS Eng. Misc. d.131, letter from Garth Wilkinson, [n.d.] 1885), and the Iceland spar was good for making spectacle lenses (Lbs 2189a, 4to, letter from S. G. Stokes, 22 September 1886).

At no time during the nineteenth century were these Norse enthusiasms more vigorously pursued than in the last two decades. The articles in the early issues of *Saga-Book*—'I want our first Saga Book to contain really first class papers by eminent scholars' (Lbs 2186 4to, Amy Johnstone to EM, 8 December 1893)—are merely the tip of a philological and antiquarian iceberg in late-Victorian Britain which can be glimpsed as

revealingly in the private correspondence of the leading practitioners as in their formal publications, as we learn of the projects which faltered, and we glimpse well-intentioned reach frequently exceeding the grasp of philology or finance. A glance at volumes in one of the Old Norse text translation series of the time, the Northern Library, provides a convenient initial toehold on this iceberg of activity. Four widely differing volumes of translated texts appeared in the 1890s: *Ambáles Saga* (1898; edited and translated by Israel Gollancz), *The Tale of Thronð of Gate, commonly called Færeyinga saga* (1896; translated by Frederick York Powell), *The Saga of King Olaf Tryggwason* (1895) and *Sverrissaga: The Saga of King Sverri* (1899). The two last-named translations were the work of a Cambridge-educated Lancastrian, Rev. John Sephton, who from 1866 until 1889 was Headmaster of Liverpool Collegiate School, and from 1896 to 1910 Reader in Icelandic at the University College of Liverpool; in 1895 he had enrolled as a member of the Viking Club. At a time when the social and economic geography of Britain had not yet completed its lamentable lurch to London and the South, provincial scholars and antiquarians were in many ways the backbone of Victorian philology and hence of the Viking Club, with Liverpool a strikingly active centre, particularly in relation to Old Norse.<sup>1</sup>

The Merseyside region could already boast of a noble and wide-ranging tradition of Icelandic contacts long before Sephton's influential contribution in the 1890s. Both John Thomas Stanley and Henry Holland, prominent Enlightenment travellers to Iceland, were natives of Cheshire (Wawn 1981; 1987; 1989), and knew well that in the early nineteenth century (Napoleonic disruptions apart) cargoes from Iceland—whale oil, eider down, fox and swan skins, woollen mittens and stockings, dried cod and salmon—were a familiar sight on the crowded quays of Liverpool and in the shipping columns of the local *Mercury* (Wawn 1985, 130–1). Such trade was itself in no small measure due to the efforts of a Liverpool-born commercial agent, James Robb, known personally to both Stanley and Holland, who settled, married and traded successfully in Reykjavík. The site of the Robb family business in the Icelandic capital is to this day occupied by a store called 'Liverpool'.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century another Liverpoolian Icelandophile, John Sephton, was exhibiting many of the scholarly requirements for successful work in Icelandic studies: single-minded enthusiasm, ownership of rare and valuable Icelandic books, and keen participation in what was a thriving local antiquarian tradition befitting an area rich in Viking-Age place-names and material remains—anything from

Viking Age silver (the Cuerdale hoard) to cross-fragments. Sephton also enjoyed the material help and encouragement of well placed political and philological friends (politics and philology so often went together in Victorian Britain), and the scholarly support of a learned Iclander. Sephton's Icelandic library, part of which is now preserved in the Sidney Jones Library, University of Liverpool, includes precious early editions: the Hauksbók and Skarðsárbók versions of *Landnámabók* and Einar Eyjólfsson's translation of Arngrímur Jónsson's *Gronlandia*, all printed in Skálholt in 1688; at least one of the celebrated Icelandic Enlightenment works issued by Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag in Copenhagen, Oddur Jónsson Hjaltalín's *Íslensk grasafræði* (1830), and examples of the latest Copenhagen scholarship, notably the 1869 Werlauff, Westergaard, Konráð Gíslason edition of the AM 674A 4to text of the *Elucidarius*. We find Sephton's clerical eye drawn towards the prayerful and the meditative: fine copies of the 1584 and 1644 Hólar *Guðbrandsbiblíá* and *Þorláksbiblíá*, and of Bishop Guðbrandur's *Huggunar bæklingur* (1600), early Skálholt texts (1692, 1693) of Hallgrímur Pétursson's *Sið Gudrækelegar vmþeinkingar* and *Dagleg idkun af øllum drottens dagsverkum* [i.e. *Diarium Christianum*], and a fine copy, stamped and with brass clasps and bosses, of the 1716 Hólar edition of seven sermons by Bishop Jón Þorkelsson Vídalín of Skálholt. But we also find the Liverpool clergyman not averse to the more secular exoticisms of Verelius's 1666 Upsala edition of *Herrauðs och Bosa saga*. Possession of another early Skálholt text, *Saga þess haloflega herra Olafs Tryggvasonar Noregs kongs* (1689), no doubt influenced Sephton's choice of this saga for the first of his two Northern Library translations.

Clearly, then, a provincially-based prospective translator could accumulate a valuable collection of Icelandic primary texts; but from whom could such translators seek much-needed authoritative help and encouragement with the ancient Icelandic language in which those texts were written? The answer for most readers after 1874 was the Cleasby-Vigfússon *Dictionary*. In Sephton's case, an additional answer was Guðbrandur Vigfússon himself, via frequent correspondence and occasional visits in the decade up to the Iclander's death in 1889. The two men, with Sephton (born in the year of Queen Victoria's accession) the younger by ten years, became firm friends and collaborators. Thus on 25 August 1880 Vigfússon writes to congratulate the Liverpoolian scholar on his translation of *Eiríks saga rauða* (Sephton 1880; he had used the Icelandic text in Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Powell 1879); it had been delivered earlier in the year (12 January) as a paper at a meeting of the

Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society, sharing the evening with a presentation on 'Incandescent Carbon Electric Lamps'. Vigfússon was very encouraging:

[I am] much pleased with the freshness (and also the accuracy but that is a matter of course) of your rendering. Former translations are apt to be too stiff and wooden. (Sidney Jones Library, University of Liverpool [hereafter SJL], Sephton MS 3.33)

By Boxing Day of the same year exciting plans were afoot. A former pupil of Guðbrandur's, almost certainly Charles Sprague Smith (see Bodleian Eng. Misc. d.131, Smith to GV, 20 June 1880), was now teaching at Columbia College, New York, and was keen to 'get up a class' in Old Norse; and Guðbrandur had suggested that Sephton's translation would be an ideal text for the group. Several copies were duly dispatched to New York with the Icelander's blessing; 'I have no doubt they will one day bear fruit' (SJL, Sephton MS 3.33, GV to Sephton, 20 April 1882).<sup>2</sup> Guðbrandur visited Liverpool periodically, sometimes en route to and from the Carlyles in Dumfries (Cowan 1979), or Captain F. W. L. Thomas in Edinburgh, or, in the autumn of 1883, as one stop on a Northern tour which included visits to the Isle of Man and to West Hartlepool to see 'my friend Mr Bligh Peacock, a merchant and scholar, who knows the Northern Languages, Icelandic inclusive' (SJL, Sephton MS 3.33, GV to Sephton, 29 October 1883), and who had been the Icelander's first English acquaintance on his arrival from Copenhagen in 1864.

There were merchants and scholars aplenty in late-Victorian Liverpool, too; a visit to Merseyside at the end of the nineteenth century was a visit to one of the great ports of the British Empire, where the magnificent architecture of the waterfront told its own tale of civic self-confidence founded on buoyant commercial success. Vigfússon recalls dining at Sephton's Huskisson Street house with Sir James Picton, parliamentarian, philologist (Picton 1864; 1865; 1868; 1869) and a powerful supporter of Sephton and of Icelandic studies on Merseyside:

[Picton is] a fine man, and deserving of respect for having literary interests at all in Liverpool, where all the world rotates around bales of Cotton. (SJL, Sephton MS 3.33, GV to Sephton, 8 January 1886)

This seems, momentarily, an unfortunate echo of the kind of distaste for 'trade' that Vigfússon may have encountered amongst the scholars and gentlemen 'út í Öxnafurðu, í Englisaxa hliðskjálfi', to borrow Matthías Jochumsson's overgenerous description (quoted Benedikz, in McTurk

and Wawn 1989, 11) of the institution around (rather than in) which Guðbrandur scratched the most meagre of livings, supplemented by the private charity of G. W. Kitchin, Bartholomew Price, Max Müller and the occasionally rather grudging Dean Liddell of Christ Church ('as long as he has money, he does nothing and muddles it away', Bodleian MS Eng. Misc. c.112, letter to Müller, 23 June 1879). Yet it was precisely that trade, those same 'bales of cotton' and the prosperity they produced, which had helped to secure the establishment of the new University College of Liverpool in 1882, and which in turn was to fund the Faculty of Arts which was formally opened in 1896, complete with its newly appointed Reader in Icelandic. It was probably the first occasion in Britain (and certainly not the last) when commercial funding and a Readership in Icelandic were to be linked.

In more sensible vein, Vigfússon's 13 October 1887 letter to Sephton (S JL, Sephton MS 3.33) anticipates eagerly another visit to Merseyside: he wants again to visit the Isle of Man, there to examine the site of the ancient Tynwald; he also looks forward to visiting the Tynwald 'near you' (Thingwall in Cheshire), and even to examining the giant Wirral sandstone slab, too large even to be a *Grettistak*, on and over which generations of children (including the present writer in his youth) have clambered and carved their names, viz. Thors Stone on Caldý Hill near Thurston. This huge boulder was eventually to be the object of an article in *Saga-Book* (2, Part 2, 1898, 141-7) by W. G. Collingwood, the Viking Club's 'Heraths-Umboths-man' for Cumberland and Westmoreland but still with fond and clear memories of his native Merseyside. Small wonder, with a profusion of such Norse-sounding names all along the shores of the Dee and Mersey rivers, that Sephton himself should have written extensively (Sephton 1903; 1904; 1913) on local place-names and dialect, as his mentor Sir James Picton had done before him. In such learned philological company, Vigfússon's northern visits inevitably enabled him to learn as well as teach and encourage—and visit his Rodney Street eye specialist. For Sephton, in between his mentor's visits, there was fresh reading to be done:

When I get ten minutes to spare, which is not often enough, I fly to the Flatey book: I am just beginning the *Jómsvíkinga þáttur*, so I shall probably finish the work when I near Sir James [Picton's] age. (Letter to GV, Christmas Eve 1887)

Or again:

I am still working very slowly through the first vol. of the Flatey bok., amusing myself with the Wickings of Jom. (Bodleian MS Eng. Misc. d.131, letter to GV, 22 March 1888)

Even when personal tragedy (the death of a son in 1882) led to desolating depression, Sephton's spirits were lifted by thoughts of the forthcoming *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* which would, he hoped, 'bring me new life' (Bodleian MS Eng. Misc. d.131, letter to GV, 21 April 1882). It was no idle wish. Vigfússon had sought to console Sephton by recalling the experience of his friend Sir Henry Howorth of Manchester, lawyer, MP and philologist, who 'took to the Norse [as] a labour of love in spare hours' (SJL, Sephton MS 3.33, GV to Sephton, 20 April 1882). Travelling in Ireland, Howorth had seen his own young son fall to his death from a train; he had later told York Powell that 'it would have killed me but for my having Norse studies to resort to' (ibid.).

Sephton's dealings with Vigfússon thus secured for the Merseyside scholar a powerful backer for as long as Guðbrandur lived—'surely the Icelandic is not without a representative in Liverpool as long as you live and breathe' (SJL, Sephton MS 3.33, 8 January 1886)—and also provided powerful intellectual impetus after the Icelandic lexicographer died (Frederick York Powell's biographer Oliver Elton, himself a University of Liverpool academic, notes (1906, I, vi) that it was Sephton who painstakingly 'put in order' the Vigfússon papers now on deposit in the Bodleian Library, notably those used in this present essay, Bodleian MS Eng. Misc. c.112, d.131; in the early 1890s Sephton also painstakingly copied out a selection of Guðbrandur's Icelandic letters (SJL, Sephton MS 3.33; originals in Bodleian MS Icel. d.1), partly no doubt out of affectionate piety but also perhaps as a good way of improving his Icelandic). Sephton also gained influential contacts amongst Vigfússon's Oxford friends; the Icelander once brought the embryonic *Origines Islandicae* to Liverpool to show the eager Sephton (SJL, Sephton MS 3.33, GV to Sephton, 13 October 1887), and it was Vigfússon's collaborator, Frederick York Powell, who was partly instrumental in promoting the Northern Library series in the 1890s. It was, in turn, Sephton's successful first volume in the series which, along with a well-timed series of lectures and published papers in Liverpool (Sephton 1887, 1892, 1894), certainly helped to pave the way for his appointment to the Icelandic Readership the following year, with York Powell and Eiríkur Magnússon amongst his referees (Lbs 2187b 4to, letter to EM from E. Jenks of Liverpool, 13 June 1895).

Sephton's assiduity as a lecturer highlights a further admirable characteristic which the Liverpoolian scholar shared with many another Victorian enthusiast of ancient Viking culture. There are examples aplenty, throughout the country, of learned men eagerly seeking to share their learning

with fellow scholars *and* wherever possible with the broader community, through lectures and (when appropriate) lantern slides. In this work Icelanders were well to the fore: Jón Hjaltalín in Edinburgh (with his lectures reviewed in journals in Berlin, Leipzig and Vienna: Bodleian MS Icel. d.1, EM to GV, 25 May 1871), in Newcastle-upon-Tyne (three lectures at the Literary and Philosophical Society in 1870: Watson 1897), and in Birmingham and Manchester during 1871 (Bodleian MS Icel. d.1, EM to GV, letters dated 23 September 1870, 23 May 1871, 23 October 1871); Eiríkur Magnússon at the same Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society during the winter after Jón's visit, and also at the working men's club in Wisbech (Lbs 2189a 4to, 19 February 1876: a lecture on Iceland, with Mrs Magnússon requested to appear in national costume). The admirable example set by the Icelanders was followed by the British Icelandophiles such as York Powell and Sephton. What Francis Bacon had once said of muck, 'no good unless it be spread', was certainly held to apply to knowledge of Scandinavian antiquity. Thus, York Powell lectured at Heanor in August 1889, despite the dispiriting tone of the invitation from J. H. Brooksbank:

The apostles of sweetness and light forget that there is probably more rude ignorance and darkness in these country places than in the towns they spend so much time on—have pity—we really are benighted. (Bodleian MS. Eng. Misc. d.131)

Sephton developed a formidable reputation as a proselytiser. By the time he became a member of the Viking Club in 1895, he was already long established as a leading figure in the Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool. Amongst his papers to that society, subsequently published in their *Proceedings*, were readings from his translations of *Eiríks saga rauða* (1880), and of *Friðþjófs saga hins frækna* (1894), the latter immensely popular in the nineteenth century in the wake of Tegnér's poem, along with discussions of 'The religion of the Eddas and Sagas' (1892), 'Runic remains' (1896; discussion of Ruthwell Cross and Manx runes), and 'What the Sagas say of Greenland' (1898; including extensive translations from *Flóamanna saga*). Sephton's written style is scholarly yet not without colour, particularly when he seeks to align his Norse enthusiasms either with his clergyman's faith:

It [Norse paganism] . . . served its day and generation, and when its work was done, it died away in the presence of a purer faith and gentler influence of Christianity, as the light of a twinkling star fades away in the blaze of the rising sun. (1892, 126)

or with the history of Liverpool:



He [Earl Hakon the Bad] certainly upheld the social institution of slavery, and was not averse to the slave-trade any more than were his descendants in Wirral and West Derby down to the present century. (1892, 125)

Moreover, the Scandinavian grapevine on Merseyside sometimes spread the word about Sephton's successes as a lecturer well beyond the packed halls of Liverpool, as Vigfússon's 29 March 1887 letter to Sephton reveals:

I have to congratulate you on the lecture on Thor. I have a report from one of your hearers, a Norwegian Mr Sundt, who called on me last month, and now wrote me a letter from Liverpool, where he is staying at the great Chemical Laboratory [in Brownlow Street]. (SJL, Sephton MS 3.33)

Vigfússon readily appreciated the benefit of not spending all his time in the claustrophobic company of fellow philologists; Sundt had proved to be

an intelligent and charming fellow . . . I was much struck with his intelligent converse and manners, a relief and even contrast after the Philologists I am getting tired of—they are such dry sticks. (Ibid.)

Sephton (SJL, Sephton MS, letter to GV, 30 March 1887) confirms the success of the lecture: 'a great success . . . overwhelmed with congratulations . . . as fine an audience as Liverpool could furnish', and notes that the text, based 'from beginning to end' on 'nothing but the *Corpus [Poeticum Boreale]*' is now with the printer, complete with his metrical paraphrase of *Drymskviða*, eventually judged by Vigfússon to 'read . . . very well'.

The briefest glance at letters written to Guðbrandur Vigfússon, Eiríkur Magnússon and Matthías Jochumsson at this time reveals indeed that there were others in or around Sephton's Merseyside with whom the University's new Reader in Icelandic could usefully have been in touch. There was L. B. Haddock who had sent a £25 donation to Matthías for Akureyri famine relief in 1882 (Lbs 2808 4to). There was Alfred Holt, the shipping magnate and Liverpool University benefactor, who had written to Matthías in the wake of what had clearly been an exhilarating visit to Iceland in 1880 (Lbs 2808 4to, letter dated 13 June 1881). There was Gladys Alexander of Birkenhead who, mentioning a mutual friend 'Mr. E[dward] Rae of Liverpool [in fact Birkenhead]', writes to Eiríkur asking whether as 'an average girl of nineteen' she could 'teach [herself] Icelandic, and if so, what Grammar and books to begin with' (Lbs 2186 4to)—in this respect, with the availability of Vigfússon and Powell's admirably versatile *Icelandic Prose Reader* (1879), and Henry Sweet's

more basic *Old Icelandic Primer* (1886; see Wawn 1990), late nineteenth-century learners were at least as well catered for as their late twentieth-century successors. There was also, as we have noted, Sir Henry Howorth of Manchester; and there was Beatrice Clay, a Chester schoolmistress, with W. W. Skeat's daughter Ethel as a colleague. In the fashion of the times created by Beatrice Barmby (1900), Beatrice Clay had written a play based on a saga, inevitably *Friðbjófs saga* (Lbs 2186 4to, 27 April 1911), and published (1907) an adaptation for schoolgirls of extracts from *Njáls saga*, shorn of some violence but with the homemaking role of the saga women greatly enhanced:<sup>3</sup>

It may seem to you profane to tamper with sagas, but it seems to me such a pity that children should grow up knowing nothing of this wonderful literature. (Lbs 2186 4to, 3 October 1904)

Sagas were 'fascinating', texts were unobtainable in Chester, and were 'England . . . as enlightened as Finland in its treatment of my profession, I would take a year's holiday for study' of Old Norse literature (*ibid.*, 3 April 1909).

Such a 'year's holiday for study' could usefully have been spent at the University in Liverpool after Sephton's 1896 appointment to the Icelandic Readership. Prior to that, if there was 'no-one to represent Icelandic' (Bodleian MS Eng. Misc. d.131, Sephton to GV, 6 January 1886) in Merseyside's new University College, there was certainly a representative at the neighbouring Victoria University of Manchester, as Eiríkur Magnússon was to learn in detail when asked for a reference by young Manchester graduate Fred Harley. Having worked in Berlin under Zupitza and also at Göttingen, Harley was now applying for a post in a Canadian University. Harley revealingly outlines the Manchester syllabus as organised by the formidable Professor Toller: Anglo-Saxon, Early English, Gothic, Old and Modern Icelandic, Old and Modern German, Old French, Teutonic Philology, Old Saxon:

in addition we are forced to go through a three year course of Literature . . . though the literature does not find place in the examination which is purely linguistic and philological. (Lbs 2187a 4to, 25 April 1888)

Such a syllabus, and its underpinning philosophy, the fruits of Grimm's Law in action, is (claims Harley) unknown in Canada; he therefore requests from Eiríkur an authoritative statement 'pointing out how indispensable a scientific training in the English language and cognate dialects is in a Professor of English'. One wonders how Beatrice Clay's enthusiasm would have survived this philological bombardment.

Another native of Merseyside, though by 1892 a resident of the Lake District, was more fortunate than the dedicated Chester schoolmistress in the amount of leisure time which he was able to devote during the 1890s to imaginative engagement with Iceland and its sagas. The way in which W. G. Collingwood developed his close links with Icelandic literature is paradigmatic of much late Victorian enthusiasm for the ancient North. He first read those sagas then available in published translation; he then sought through place-name scholarship and through his own fictions to trace and to recreate the Viking roots of his own Northern England. This led inevitably to Collingwood's 'pilgrimage' (his carefully chosen term) to Iceland, in the company of the learned Jón Stefánsson, which was followed swiftly by his lavish published account of the journey, complete with reproductions of some of his magnificent water colour paintings of the 'saga-steads' (Collingwood and Stefánsson 1899, Haraldur Hannesson 1988). Finally in 1902, by this time a major figure in the Viking Club (he had joined in 1894), and having developed a serviceable competence in Old Norse, Collingwood arranged for the publication of his translation, the first volume of a projected Viking Club saga translation series (an occasional series if ever there was one), of the saga associated with one recently visited 'stead', the home of Kormakr the skald at Melur overlooking Miðfjörður, 'on the Meols, as the gravelly shore banks would be called on the coast of Lancashire' (Collingwood and Stefánsson 1899, 152). Collingwood clearly relished the place-name link between the Wirral hamlet of Meols, close to his own birthplace, and its Icelandic equivalent.

At all times, in all its variety, Collingwood's published work, like that of Sabine Baring-Gould also in the 1890s (and discussed below), is informed by a sense of Viking person and place sufficiently vivid and unapologetic to bewilder those scholars of a later age who have been seduced by the self-indulgent aridities of 'modern literary theory'. For Victorian philologists of the 1890s love of Iceland was never a substitute for scholarship; rather was it a spur:

We went out to see the very places where events so familiar in books occurred in reality; and we found that the belief was true. For every touch of human interest in the sagas—pastoral, romantic or sublime—there was, and still remains, a landscape setting no less sweet, or strange, or stern. (Collingwood and Stefánsson 1899, v)

Though W. G. Lock's spirit remained resolutely earthbound ('The Saga-student . . . had better content himself with reading . . . the phenomenon of the Thingfield [Þingvellir] . . . has not an interesting feature', Lock

1882, 70), for Iceland travellers of the decade such as Rider Haggard, Mrs Disney Leith, W. P. Ker (Tilden 1918, 229–38) and Collingwood (and not forgetting the rambling Dr Phené), sumptuous scenery was no mere seductive background to the noble sentiments of saga; the one grew essentially out of the other:

Tenderness and passion of a sort may be found wherever human life can be lived; but the intense tenderness and the intense passion of the sagas could only be developed among scenery which, whether the actors felt it or not, reacted upon their sentiment. (Collingwood and Stefánsson 1899, v)

Or again:

The modern reader, out of Iceland, is left wholly at a loss when he tries to *stage* these dramas, to *visualize* the actions and events. (Ibid.)

Pondering the place-names of his Lake District home with a novelist's imagination, Collingwood could discern echoes of a vivid Viking past, and thus contrive to be not wholly 'out of Iceland'. Though his 1895 tale *Thorstein of the Mere* is the more substantial work, with its rite of passage celebration of the giant-fostered, sea-roving hero, it is in his briefer 1896 novel that Collingwood's atavistic, Viking-centred values can be more readily glimpsed. At one level, *The Bondswoman* is a slight tale built on the domestic tensions between Oddi, a Viking settler in North West England, and his wife Groa, following the introduction into the household by Oddi of a newly-purchased Saxon bondswoman Deorwyn. Eyebrows are raised in the community (the story is surprisingly daring for Coniston in the 1890s, at a time when Ibsen was still raising many an eyebrow in London) as Oddi is soon torn between the civilities of family loyalty and the instincts of a free-roving Viking. The domestic conflicts are set against broader questions of national identity, as the community is attacked by an army of harrying Scots. Oddi perishes in the fight, but young Rolf, son of the spæ-wife Finna, survives to rescue the steadfast Deorwyn and eventually to win over her previously withheld affection. Despite their Viking origins, Oddi and his people are very much settlers not raiders, *heimafolk* not *heimsfolk*. Collingwood's version of an omniscient and reliable narrator, in prose heightened by markedly biblical echoes, is at pains to explain the attitudes of the community now led by the young hero Rolf. In doing so the author gives unmistakable expression to the politicised nature of much late Victorian identification with Viking antiquity:

The dalesmen, in the time of our story, were Vikings no longer. They had settled down to the land. By it they meant to live, and on it they looked to die;

not in battle or in raid, by far-away shores or in unknown cities, but here at home in the pleasant north country.

And in this mind they were at once better men, and worse, than their fathers before them. Better for the reign of Thor was over, the bearserk [*sic*] days of rapine and massacre. Better, for there should be none happier nor cleaner souled than he who ploughs his own acres, or feeds his own sheep, in the midst of a peaceful land of hills and dales, among green pastures and beside still waters. But worse they were, because they had lost old virtues, and had not yet put on the new. They were no longer riders of the foam, the free-handed ring scatterers, reckless of life and fearless of death. Nor were they yet what their children came to be—the sturdy squires and canny statesmen of the North, dwelling in thrift and industry, and sending out their sons to roam the world, and to rise in it by sheer force of worth and wisdom. (Collingwood 1896, 100–1)

Such passages serve to legitimise and celebrate Victorian certainties and (almost) to mask Victorian doubts. The real hero of the story is arguably neither the stalwart Rolf nor the stumbling Oddi. Rather it is the industrious and thrifty 1890s Dalesman of Northern England in general and the Lake District in particular; the hero is the implied local reader, in whom deep-seated but now metamorphosed Viking virtues—boldness, enterprise, hard work and thrift—find telling modern expression. It had been just such transformed Viking qualities which had shaped and secured the British Empire for over a hundred years. How familiar such thoughts would have seemed to Victorian England's greatest Icelandicist Sir George Webbe Dasent whose death in 1896 coincided with the first publication of *The Bondwoman*. His view of the ancient Vikings is bracingly uncomplicated:

[They possessed] an element of progress, a dash and energy wedded to an endurance and perseverance which no other European race possessed . . . Everywhere . . . in western and central Europe, where there was traffic to be driven or plunder to be got, where a keel would float or an anchor hold, where winds blew and billows rolled, these dauntless rovers showed their fair, but terrible features. (Dasent 1858, 166, 176)

Such a perception dissolved easily into Dasent's triumphalist Darwinian view of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British colonists:

They [the Vikings] were like England in the nineteenth century: fifty years before all the rest of the world with her manufactories and firms—and twenty years before them with her railways. They [the Vikings] were foremost in the race of civilisation and progress; well started before all the rest had thought of running. No wonder therefore that both won. (Dasent 1873, I 247)

These are bold claims yet they are made to seem coyly understated when set beside the 'pardonable vanity' of I. A. Blackwell:

And when we turn our attention to a small island on the north western coast of Europe, we behold a nation, formed by the genial blending of Saxon and Scandinavian tribes, arrived at a height of commercial prosperity and maritime greatness hitherto unparalleled. Ay, 'tis a pardonable vanity to record the fact; England, matchless in the mechanical arts, irresistible in arms, sweeping from the surface of the ocean the fleets of every rival nation that dares dispute her maritime supremacy, is now in possession of that heritage, whose succession we have traced through cognate races, and will, we trust, long retain it by virtue of the law which appears to have regulated its transmission: that it should be held for the time being, by the most energetic tribe of the race to which it had devolved, by the tribe that physiological and psychological qualities rendered the most adapted to make use of it for the development of humanity. (Percy 1859, 44–5)

The confident identification of continuities across the millennium between the 'genial tribes' of Vikings and Saxons and the loyal subjects of Queen Victoria was as much a feature of Collingwood's literary analysis of sagas as of his own fictional narratives. Thus in his introduction to *The Life and Death of Cormac the Skald* (1902), Collingwood claims that Kormakr's verses resemble the *lausavísur* of 'Lakeland dalesfolk . . . before the school board and cheap magazines came in' (7), or again that in their 'corrupt and puzzling form' the verses are 'not at all unlike' those made by 'an old English country man—say one of the eighteenth century sea-captains, who farmed at home and fought abroad' (5). As for the English of his translation, it may be 'neither that of the journalist nor the historical novelist' but it remains

to many of us familiar . . . it perfectly matches this old Norse, being indeed its direct descendant, and surviving among the children of the Vikings in northern England. If the saga could be turned into the talk of an old-fashioned peasant of Yorkshire or Cumberland, it would be precisely represented, even to tricks of phrase and manner, with many an ancient word retained and reproduced. (22)

It is no coincidence that *Cormac* was published at Ulverston in the Lake District; and it is noteworthy also that Titus Wilson, the Kendal printer of Collingwood's two novels, was later to become the printer of *Saga-Book*: in the early days Wilson may not have been 'an accurate printer . . . needs careful proof reading' (Lbs 2886 4to, Collingwood to EM, 5 October 1897), but he was properly based in what was for Collingwood the ancestral Viking heartland of Northern England.

Indeed in the wake of his visit to Iceland in 1897, there was a sense in which Collingwood felt that the Lake District was now more Icelandic in spirit if not in scenery than Iceland itself. He was not the first eager British Icelandophile for whom travelling hopefully to Iceland was better

than the shock and partial disappointment of arriving (Wawn 1989). After visiting Iceland in 1890 and 1891, Frederick Howell saw much amongst the feckless and lethargic natives which he deemed 'dreadful' (Howell 1893, 108), but in his *Icelandic Pictures* the suggested remedies are briskly in accord with what might be expected from a work published by the Religious Tract Society: better drains, cleaner dairies, 'application of the principles of cooperation to the conduct of trade', 'the extinction of the liquor traffic' and, above all, 'a genuine national turning unto Him from whom all blessings flow' (108). Variations on these themes go back via Sir Richard Burton (1875) and Eiríkur Magnússon's Quaker mentor Isaac Sharpe to the peppery Ebenezer Henderson (1818). Collingwood was not so sure about the combined efficacy of free trade and the temperance tambourine. Aware of a Cumbrian dialect version—*gleg is a guest's eye*—of the Icelandic proverb (Lbs 2186 4to, letter to EM, [n.d.] October 1897), Collingwood wrote two letters to Eiríkur in which he gives scowling expression to much that his own clear eye had observed during his Iceland travels, albeit that such irritations were to go unmentioned in the 1899 published account:

If you had been with me for 3 months among the Icelanders as they are today: listening and looking on: endeavouring to sympathise with the difficulties and to enter into the ideals—and yet knowing what a peasant people have done . . . in Switzerland, and fully aware of the conditions under which similar life is lived in the north of England:—If you had lately, and with a fresh eye, seen for yourself town and country . . . you would feel that the land is indeed a land of Gotham, and wholly irreclaimable by any preaching or teaching. (Lbs 2186 4to, 5 September 1897)

The bitter disillusion of the foreign armchair romantic could scarcely be more bleakly expressed. Scorning their great literary past, Icelanders read only 'tidbits', and write verses about Vikings 'with whom they have less in common than we with Red Indians', and about 'beauties of nature which not a soul in the island perceives enough to sketch or photograph'. Collingwood hates the passivity, the 'conceited ignorance at every criticism or suggestion' which he had too often encountered:

I come away with such a feeling of disheartenment that I can only hold my peace. It isn't only vermin and Danes and such like: it's everybody and everything. Of course I know the historical reasons of this degeneracy: but apology for it doesn't cure it. And I don't think any writing will cure it . . . I hope my pictures will not be without use to Iceland in their little way; greater things being left to stronger people. (Lbs 2186 4to, 8 September 1897)

Post-Darwinian England had long had to cope with the spectre of its own potential degeneracy, even as it celebrated its imperial power. Such fear

helps perhaps to explain the violence of Collingwood's reaction when confronting degeneracy in his previously idealised Iceland. It may also explain why the same Victorians who delighted in saga images of Viking glory, were also drawn to the gloom (as many regarded it) of Old Norse religion as exhibited in the Eddas; the myths, in Dasent's words, 'carried with [them] that melancholy presentiment of dissolution which has come to be so characteristic of modern life' (Dasent 1903, lxxi). In Matthew Arnold's *Balder Dead*, with the sentiments of his *Dover Beach* now set to Eddic music, we find in effect a prototypical Tennysonian 'Idylls of the Gods', full of unease and melancholy as, behind the 'land of dreams', we glimpse the 'darkling plain' which 'hath really neither joy, nor love nor light | Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain'. The spectre of Iceland's 'darkling plain' clearly haunted Collingwood in the 1890s. In an interview with Einar Kvaran before returning from Iceland, Collingwood laments the neglect of the historical remains at Skálholt, the fatalistic indifference with which the loss of medieval manuscripts and artefacts is accepted, and the failure to exploit the *ferðamannastraumur* by building better hotels in Reykjavík, or even by simply providing a boat at Þingvellir (Haraldur Hannesson 1988, 136). The subtext of his remarks was that the Lord only helps those who help themselves. Others, whilst accepting the substance of Collingwood's first-hand verdict on the condition of Iceland, were made of sterner stuff when it came to remedies; this was certainly true of the spirited Beatrice Barmby, author of the remarkable three-act saga-based drama *Gísli Súrsson*.<sup>4</sup> Commenting spiritedly on Collingwood's dispiriting pessimism, she refuses to accept the proposition that 'no writing' will 'cure' the observed degeneracy:

All nations have passed through such times of degradation—and no revolution has ever come about without having its way prepared by writing or preaching . . . What wouldn't I give to be a strong man and able to do something for Iceland! (Lbs 2186 4to, undated letter to EM)

If 'degenerate' late nineteenth-century Iceland itself could fall *í gleymsku og dá*, it comes as no surprise that Collingwood and others were anxious to preserve the essential Viking spirit in and around his Lake District home. If 'writing and preaching' could not 'cure' modern Iceland, they could help to protect the cultural roots of modern Cumberland. One way of doing so was by supporting through subscription the publications of Rev. Thomas Ellwood, Vicar of Torver. These included his two translations *The Landnama Book of Iceland as it illustrates the Dialect, Place Names, Folk Lore and Antiquities of Cumberland, Westmoreland and North Lancashire* (1894), and *The Book of the Settlement of Iceland* (1898),



and his glossary *Lakeland and Iceland: being a Glossary of Words in the Dialect of Cumbria, Westmoreland and North Lancashire which seem allied to or identical with the Icelandic or Norse* (1895). The genesis of all these works is revealing. G. W. Kitchin, by 1894 Dean of Durham but earlier one of Guðbrandur Vigfússon's more loyal supporters in Oxford, had been parish priest at Brantwood near Coniston in the early 1870s, and had there spent much time correcting the proofs of the 1874 Cleasby–Vigfússon *Dictionary*. He had shown Ellwood a number of strange words and suggested that his colleague might investigate the links between the Old Norse language and contemporary Cumberland dialect; for such work it was, he suggested, a case of now or never, with so many 'customs and vocables' dying out, and with Ellwood, a native who had never lived outside the area, an unusually authoritative witness (Ellwood 1894, ii and iv).

Earlier in the century the translations of J. G. Lockhart, Sir Walter Scott's son-in-law, had introduced the linguistic ideas of Friedrich Schlegel to Enlightenment Britain. In one memorable passage, the dedicated cultivation of native philology is singled out for special emphasis:

The care of the national language I consider as at all times a sacred trust and a most important privilege of the higher orders of society. Every man of education should make it the object of his unceasing concern, to preserve his language pure and entire, to speak it, as far as in his power, in all its beauty and perfection . . . A nation which allows her language to go to ruin, is parting with the last of her intellectual independence, and testifies her willingness to cease to exist. (Schlegel 1818, II 57–8)

'Care of the national language' for George Dasent in the middle of the century certainly no longer meant subservience to 'the twin tyrants [Latin and Greek] who ruled all the dialects of the world with a pedant's rod' (Dasent 1903, xviii). It rather involved close attention to languages newly legitimised by Rask and the Grimms. Learning Old Norse, for instance, was held to be

of immense advantage not only in tracing the rise of words and idioms, but still more in clearing up many dark points in our early history. (Dasent 1843, vii)

It also involved the systematic recording and etymological examination of native dialect and place-names, work which often led straight back to Old Norse. So it was with Ellwood's publications. There were more than 130 subscribers for both the 1894 and 1898 works, over ninety per cent of whom were Lake District locals, including John Ruskin, for whom Collingwood acted as secretary and biographer. More distant subscribers

included Collingwood's Icelandic travelling companion Jón Stefánsson, G. W. Kitchin, and Eiríkur Magnússon who had helped with and despaired of Ellwood's hopelessly insecure command of the ancient language. None of this loyal group of Ellwood's supporters wished to see either the 'vocables' or the values of the Viking North-West of England 'cease to exist', whilst Ellwood himself took up the challenge with the relish of an avid philologist and in the tone of a proud Victorian. His Preface to the 1898 *Landnámabók* translation speaks of an

attempt to render, however imperfectly, that work from Icelandic, a language spoken by only about 60,000 or 70,000 people, all told, into English, spoken as it is by a kindred people, a race numbering over one hundred millions, whose maritime enterprize followed by settlement and colonization derived apparently from the Norsemen, have given them the dominion of a great part of the earth.

'Dominion of a great part of the earth', 'customs and vocables' dying out, triumphalism and dissolution; in the 1890s the pursuit of Old Norse in England was ever driven by pride in the one and fear of the other. It is not clear that Norse studies are driven by an equivalent earnestness a hundred years later.

If motives for study have changed over a century, so too has the canon of Old Norse texts studied. Indeed comparing the sagas read, translated, and enjoyed by the Victorians with an equivalent late twentieth-century list would surely confirm that the modern canon has shrivelled strikingly. Amongst the works to which Collingwood makes breezy reference in his *Pilgrimage to the Saga-steads* are not just *Brennu-Njáls saga*, *Eyrbyggja saga*, *Kormaks saga*, *Víga Glúms saga* and *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða* ('the charm of the saga is in its prettily told descriptions of pastoral life in those heathen days, realizing every detail as brightly as any modern novel': Collingwood and Stefánsson 1899, 176), but also *Heiðarvíga saga*, *Harðar saga ok Hólmverja*, *Vatnsdæla saga* ('one of the Icelandic stories which still wait for a translation into English', *ibid.*, 159; the wait continued until 1944), and *Finnboga saga ramma* (we still await the publication of an English translation). Some fifteen years earlier it had seemed perfectly natural for John Coles to include in his *Summer Travelling in Iceland: being the Narrative of Two Journeys across the Island* (1882) literal (after a fashion) translations of three sagas including *Þórðar saga hreðu*: this remains the only English translation of this intriguing work. W. P. Ker, recalling his journey to Iceland in 1895, writes knowingly (Tilden 1918, 233) of Skorradalur; he had visited it, and read about it not just in Collingwood's *Pilgrimage to the Saga-steads*,

but also in *Harðar saga ok Hólmverja*. Early in the new century E. E. Speight (writing from his improbable home address, Nidaros, Upper Norwood—his colleague Albany Major's Croydon house was called Bifröst) could tell Eiríkur Magnússon that he had finished preparing a translation of *Flóamanna saga*:

I have simply worked with the Dicty and found that my speed increased rapidly as I went on. I have not made use of Sephton's [1898] translation of the Greenland portion of the saga—but on looking at it I find that I have made some mistakes. (Lbs 2189a 4to, 13 November 1903)

Undeterred, fresh plans are afoot: *Eiríks saga rauða*, *Fóstbræðra saga* (he debates whether it would be better to do all or part of the saga); he is thinking of translating 'all the matter relating to Greenland and Vinland—*Flateyjarbók* and *Konungs Skuggsjá*—and issue it in one volume'; and then '*Bjarnar Hitdala Kappa Saga* sounds tempting, and I have *Vatsdala* in view too'. Nor are these projects mere armchair whims; a missionary zeal and hard-headed commercial sense are clearly discernible:

I am determined to do my share in the future in bringing Northern matters before the British public, and I am hopeful of spending a good part of my life in the north, where I can learn . . . [Icelandic and Faroese] at first hand. I wish we could induce someone to lay down sufficient funds for us to produce a cheap uniform edition of popular translations of the Sagas . . . as cheap as Sigurður Kristjánsson's editions [in Reykjavík]. I suppose there are quite 50 volumes which might be counted worthy of inclusion. If we did say 50 copies of each—160pp. each, I could produce the lot for £1000 if there were not many notes in small print. It is almost worth asking Sir Henry Tate and the government also for a grant. Many men have got Civil List pensions for far less important work.

Publication of the developing canon of saga texts in translation could certainly be a problem. Local subscription and enterprising local printers had served Collingwood and Ellwood well ('I found various publishers shy of Iceland . . . so I got a local man to venture part of the risk', Lbs 2186 4to, Collingwood to EM, 24 October 1898), but London publishers sometimes confronted the provincial supplicant with greater scepticism, as in G. A. Hight's battle with the fundamentally supportive but invariably crotchety J. M. Dent ('notorious as a grumbler . . . a cunning old sinner', Lbs 2189a 4to, Hight to EM, 21 February 1911, 17 October 1911) to secure publication of his translation of *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*. Old Icelandic texts, for one thing, had to compete with Old English ones. Hight may have been convinced that 'the Volsunga S[aga is] one of the noblest stories ever told, and incomparably superior to Beowulf',

but Dent, who in 1899 had published Muriel Press's translation of *Laxdœla saga*, was ten years later momentarily at least placing a higher priority on publishing *Beowulf*, together with *The Wanderer* and some Anglo-Saxon Riddles. In the event Hight gave his *Grettir* to Dent for the trifling sum of £20 in gratitude for the publisher's willingness to publish Eiríkur Magnússon's translation of Runeberg's Ossianic drama *King Fialar* after the turn of the century. Commercial caution notwithstanding, no publisher could doubt that significant sections of the 'British public' were ready to welcome any and all publications of Icelandic material. Charles Sayce's enthusiasm, as expressed to Eiríkur in a letter on 30 January 1887, is representative of much late Victorian opinion:

I casually took up Morris's 'Sigurd the Volsung' the other night about 8 o'clock just after dinner, not having read it but always having meant to. It so 'got possession of' me in the reading that I did not stop from my labours until 7 o'clock next morning when I finished the whole epic from beginning to end in one sitting of eleven hours! It is the grandest book—as new books go nowadays—that I have read for many many months. As a work of art it is one of the *most* perfect that I have ever read. (Lbs 2189a 4to)

Whilst Speight manipulated Dent as best he could, William Morris certainly had little difficulty in attracting publishers, and his six-volume Saga Library series, produced in collaboration with Eiríkur Magnússon between 1891 and 1905, was immensely influential in establishing the saga canon in authoritative translations which served to supplement the limited range of published translations made available earlier in the century, notably by Samuel Laing (*Heimskringla, or, Chronicle of the Kings of Norway*, 1844; revised edition, 1889), Edmund Head (*The Story of Víga Glum*, 1866), and George Dasent (*The Story of Burnt Njal*, 1861, see Wawn 1991; *The Story of Gisli the Outlaw*, 1866). The contents of the first two Saga Library volumes alone challenge the relative narrowness of late twentieth century tastes in family saga: Volume I *Bandamanna saga, Hænsa-Þóris saga, Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*; Volume II *Eyrbyggja saga, Heiðarvíga saga*. So do the contents of the earlier Magnússon-Morris volume *Three Northern Love Stories* (1875): *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu, Víglundar saga* and *Friðþjófs saga hins frækna*. It is true that this latter volume did not meet with universally favourable reviews initially. Edmund Gosse, generally an influential proselytiser of Icelandic as well as Scandinavian literature in the late nineteenth-century British periodical press, displayed some coolness towards the efforts of Morris and Magnússon in *The Academy*, with his judgement vigorously supported by the ascetic Guðbrandur Vigfússon in a letter to his young English *lærisveinn*:

I am glad that you think not high of the sentimental moonshine love of Viglundar saga. I am sick of love stories, and think it to carry owls to Athens to translate foreign love stories into English. They ought to be—in fact are—an English export, not an import article. But Wiglund is besides a poor affair. (Bredsdorff 1960, 305)

There seems discernible here more than a hint of the burgeoning personal and professional antagonism between Victorian Britain's two pivotally influential Icelandic scholars which dogged their dealings for nearly a generation: Guðbrandur the Western Icelander against Eiríkur the Austfirðingur; Oxford against Cambridge; the crusty bachelor against the expansive family man; conservative against radical in disputes over the style of translation of the Bible into Icelandic; and eventually cynic against believer in disputes over the true extent of the 'Iceland famine' of 1882 (Stefán Einarsson 1933, *passim*; also Harris 1978–81, Ellison 1986–9). Yet Gosse's cool reception of *Three Northern Love Stories* was certainly a minority view. A volume could scarcely fail which included a translation of nineteenth-century Europe's favourite Old Norse tale *Frithjófs saga*, everywhere popular whether in pure saga form, or in *rímur*, or in any one of a dozen and more other English translations of Esaias Tegnér's 1825 paraphrastic verse epic *Frithiofs saga* published during the nineteenth century. Amongst those appearing in the final decade were the reprint of the seminal 1839 George Stephens version in the third edition of Rasmus Anderson's *Viking Tales of the North* (1889), the 1892 third edition of the version by T. A. E. and Martha A. Lyon Holcomb, and Sephton's 1894 'Frithiof the Fearless'. If ever there was a saga and a story which has suffered grievous neglect in the last hundred years it is this poignant, powerful, and (as understood in the nineteenth century) subtly politicised tale of life and love in Norway's Sognefjord.

Comparable neglect had been the fate of *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings* until the appearance of Alan Boucher's 1986 translation in the enterprising Iceland Review saga translation series. The genesis and fate of the Morris–Magnússon 1891 translation of the saga illuminates much about the world of Scandinavian letters in Britain at that time: the length of the gestation period, the scholars involved, the series in which it was first published, and the use to which it was put in subsequent popularising publications. To begin with, Morris himself thought very highly of the saga of Howard the Halt (as he called it) and seems to have relished assembling a group of defiantly anti-heroic texts for the first volume of the Saga Library, focussing predominantly on the canniness of age rather than the glamour of youth:

[*Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*] is worthy to be put by the side of the inimitable Gunnlaug story for its dramatic force and directness of narration; in consequence, probably, of its having been re-made in later times, it is more of a story and less of a chronicle than many of the sagas; and the subject-matter of it, the triumph of an old and seemingly worn out man over his powerful enemies, has something peculiarly interesting in it, and is fresh in these days, when the fortune of a young couple in love with each other is, in spite of all disguises, almost the invariable theme of a tale. (Morris and Magnússon 1891–1905, I, xxiii)

Secondly, it should be noted that though this translated version of the saga appeared in 1891, Eiríkur had worked on another version twenty-five years earlier in the company of the splendidly splenetic George Powell, his mentor from the time of Magnússon's earliest days in Britain from 1862 onwards. Eiríkur became Powell's scholarly guide in the Icelandic language, and *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings* became the focus of their first scholarly collaboration. There were reading classes: an undated letter (apparently from c.1865) announces that the Welshman has a bad foot and cannot come to town, and requests that Eiríkur join him at his home 'bringing *Harvarðr's saga* with you' (Lbs 2188a 4to). Powell attempts to limit the inconvenience for Eiríkur; himself a vegetarian, a century before this became *de rigueur* for the politically correct academic, Powell makes in the circumstances a nobly self-sacrificial offer: 'I could give you a chop at 1 o'clock'. The rest of the schedule is indicative of real dedication: 'a cup of tea at 5 or 6 . . . we might then spend the day in going through part of the saga together . . . The time saved by this way of going through the saga will be immense'.

Progress was encouraging. Powell took steps to ensure that Eiríkur was kept afloat financially in the days before he was appointed to the University library in Cambridge, a position he was to owe to the heavy support of, amongst others, the Iceland explorer and later Physician to Queen Victoria Sir Henry Holland, and Alexander Beresford-Hope, MP for Cambridge, who was yet another of Westminster's enthusiastic saga readers. Enclosing a cheque, Powell could scarcely have been more encouraging:

If it will not suffice . . . to keep the wolf from the door, let me know, and the sponge shall have another squeeze. (Lbs 2188a 4to, letter to EM, 1 January 1869)

By July in the same year Powell's letters discuss forthcoming publication, and he forwards a final draft version of the saga verses, which, as ever, had proved a sore trial to a Victorian translator out of sympathy (as most of them were<sup>5</sup>) with the spiky complexities of skaldic poetry:

Here are the verses, clad in such garb as my poor wardrobe affords. They are not, it must be confessed, of an improving character, and I could wish—with all due respect to Havard, for whom I have an almost filial affection—that, when that ancient warrior lifted up his voice and sang, he had chosen ditties a little further removed from absolute twaddle . . . I have kept up as closely as possible the metaphorical style—and what metaphors! I have by me, for comparison, the greater portion of the manuscript, and have found it of no little use, in wading through this bog of despond. (Lbs 2188a 4to, letter to EM, [n.d.] July 1869)

By 12 April 1870 a note of urgency has crept into the brisk pragmatism of Powell's instructions:

We must, by all means—and that right speedily—get Havard off our hands and consciences, and with this in view, I enclose a cheque for twenty pounds, of which please acknowledge receipt. Set to work, I beg of you, on the introduction, which need, I should think, in a work intended for general perusal, scarcely be developed to any great length. An elaborate spray as to chronology would add to the value and interest of so touching and beautiful a story in the eyes of but few of its readers. It is however for *you* to judge on this point. (Lbs 2188a 4to, letter to EM)

There is talk of illustrations being prepared (Dasent's lavish volumes, the proud work of supportive publishers Edmonston and Douglas, had set a very high standard in this respect) and of a projected print run of five hundred copies. Yet, for whatever reason, the Powell–Magnússon translation appears never to have been published under their joint names (Thomas 1953–7, 118, 129). Eiríkur could well, however, have retained the manuscript and he certainly retained the ambition to publish this or at least some English version of the saga. Thus it seems likely that, in 1891 when casting around with William Morris for material for their Saga Library, the idea (if not the Powell version) of *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings* was resurrected. The Powell–Magnússon translation of *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings* was certainly not the only late-Victorian saga translation to remain unpublished; the same fate was shared by York Powell's versions of *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* and *Gull-Þóris saga* (Elton 1906, I 31: the latter saga still awaits its first published English translation) and Thomas Carlyle's translation of *Færeyinga saga* (Cowan 1979, 174–5). Both the York Powell translations may derive from the period around 1868, when he was eighteen and heavily under the influence of Dasent's version of *Njáls saga* (Elton 1906, I 11); at this time he prepared his *Færeyinga saga* version, even though it remained unpublished until the 1896 Northern Library volume, complete with dedication to an old Sandgate fisherman friend of his youth.

Parts of the 1891 *Saga of Howard the Halt* enjoyed a further life at the turn of the century. From a 14 August 1899 letter written to Eiríkur by E. E. Speight (Lbs 2190 4to), it is clear that there were plans afoot for a selection of saga stories in translation specially designed for schools:

Our book is simply a venture; we [Speight and Albany Major] wish to get the Saga Stories into English Schools, to bring down a little of the Northern atmosphere to the children—and it is almost sure to be at the expense of our pockets.

The problem was not so much one of money, however, but of copyright permissions. Eiríkur had evidently agreed to the recycling of material from the 1891 *Howard the Halt* text, as had John Sephton in respect of a section from his *Saga of King Olaf Tryggwason* translation, but the Saga Library publisher, Bernard Quaritch, had not been so forthcoming, offering a maximum of a single three-page extract from each of the volumes in the series. Nor had the executors of the newly deceased George Dasent proved any more accommodating; John Dasent had informed the editor that a reissue of *The Story of Burnt Njal* was in the offing (it was eventually republished by Dent in his Everyman Library series in 1911); he would not allow any quotations, thus involving the hard-pressed Speight and Major in the additional labour of translating afresh thirty pages of the saga. Their book was in type save for these extracts when Eiríkur was asked 'whether you think it would be safe to go on printing in the believe [*sic*] that the Morris executors will agree'. Happily publication of *Stories from the Northern Sagas* did go ahead speedily the same year, building on the generally favourable reception of Major's earlier *Sagas and Songs of the Norsemen* (1894), albeit this volume was judged 'a mass of ineptitude' by the *Manchester Guardian* (advertisement inside front cover, *Saga Book* 3, Part 3, 1904). The enterprising *Stories from the Northern Sagas* offers extracts from sixteen sagas (reflecting the breadth of the 1879 Vigfússon and Powell *Reader*), with illustrations by Collingwood and a preface by York Powell (the 'Christchurch humbug', as Henry Sweet had uncharitably called him years before, Lbs 2189a 4to, letter to EM, 11 July 1881). The book proved sufficiently successful to justify a second and enlarged edition six years later. It seems a pity that something similar is not available today. The evident success of the volume certainly paved the way for Rev. W. C. Green, in 1893 the translator of *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*, to produce his more cavalier *Translations from the Icelandic* (1908), with the large-scale 'simplifications and amplifications' justified (he claims) by perceived inadequacies of saga style:



[Its] frugality freezes the soul . . . their starkness shocks me . . . Terseness may be dramatic . . . but in narrative it may check instead of provoke the imagination. (x-xi)

He is unworried by accusations of vulgarisation. Saga narrative, like all great art,

makes demands upon its readers. It hands over the key, but if the lock is stiff, it will not give you oil for the words . . . Oil for the words is all I pretend to here. (xii)

Two further works with 'well-oiled locks' appeared during the early 1890s and represent important alternative late-Victorian responses to the lure of saga narrative. Firstly there was *Grettir the Outlaw: a Story of Iceland* (1890; all page references below are to this edition), a cheerful paraphrastic reworking by the Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould of the stirring events of his own favourite saga. The work had evolved in a suitably 'Freeprose' manner: oral tale-telling on Sunday afternoon rambles with his Hurstpierpoint School charges during the 1850s, followed by a visit to Iceland whose principal object appears to have been the dedicated retracing of every step of Grettir's outlaw years. The inevitable travel book *Iceland: its Scenes and Sagas* (1863), unusually elaborate in form and full of always sharp and sometimes dewy-eyed observation, was published on his return, at the same time as the Sunday tale-telling was resumed. When spellbound pupils became housebound parents, they urged Baring-Gould (1890, vi) to, as it were, convert 'Freeprose' into 'Bookprose', by publishing his Grettir tale for their own children. In doing so, the West country clergyman provided a heady brew of colourful personal observation and conscientious historical explanation, of richly evocative landscape description and lively dialogue, with the author ever mindful of the need deftly to reconcile soaring ancient fancy with sober modern fact, as with his explanations of Glámr (a predatory madman who haunted the region, 148) or of Grettir's legendary casting of the giant stone at Bjarg:

Nowadays folk in Iceland do not understand these odd stones perched in queer places, which were deposited by the ancient glaciers, and they call them Grettir-taks or Grettir's-heaves. So the farmer at Biarg told me that the curious stone at the end of the furrow in the bed of rock on the top of the hill was a Grettir-tak; it had been rubbed along the rock and left where it stands by Grettir. But I knew better. I knew that it was put there by an ancient glacier ages before Grettir was born, and before Iceland was discovered by the Norsemen. I have no doubt that in Grettir's time this stone was said to have been put there by some troll. Afterwards, when people ceased to believe in trolls, they said it was put there by Grettir. (121)

It was only by seeking to rationalise the grosser improbabilities of saga narrative that the faith which most late Victorians sought to place in its underlying historicity could be protected. Elsewhere, in the undertow of robust sentimentousness, there is as much of Baden-Powell as there is of Baring-Gould. Victorian public schoolboy readers are offered role models for the endurance of pain: Onund 'never blinked nor uttered a cry' (22) whilst becoming Treefoot. They were doubtless happy to be reassured that suffering brought out the 'higher and nobler' elements in them ('it is so with all who have any good in them . . . if by early discipline it is not manifested, then it is brought out by the rough usage of misfortune in after life', 24). Let the wreckage of Grettir's life, Auden's 'doomed tough kept witty by disaster', be a seamark to them all:

a headstrong, wilful fellow and bitterly had he to pay in after life for this youthful wilfulness and obstinacy. It was these qualities, untamed in him, that wrecked his whole life, and it may be said brought ruin and extinction on his family. (24)

As with Thomas Ellwood (above) care is taken to place the violence of saga life in an appropriately modern and imperial cultural context:

It seems to us in these civilized times very horrible this continual slaying that took place in Iceland; but we must remember that, as already seen, there were in those days not a single policeman, soldier, or officer of justice in the island . . . colonists lived much as do the first settlers now in a new colony which is not under the crown. (194-5)

At a more doggedly domestic level, the importance of personal hygiene is stressed ('In former times the Icelanders were very particular about bathing and were a clean people. At present they never bathe at all', 228). It need hardly be added that for schoolboys of the 1890s the role of the farmer's daughter (*ÍF* 7, ch. 75) in Grettir's sexual development, gallantly if euphemistically retained by Magnússon and Morris in their 1869 version, is chastely modified beyond recognition. In its colourful presentation of a land and literature which its author idolised, Baring-Gould's *Grettir the Outlaw* is seductive yet (perhaps surprisingly) sensible; it rarely condescends and never cheapens; its liveliness is controlled by its learning.<sup>6</sup> No wonder that it enjoyed great popularity and exerted significant influence: one of its ardent youthful readers became Britain's most celebrated twentieth-century Icelandicist.

*Eric Brighteyes*, H. Rider Haggard's 1891 novel of Iceland, did not lack for admiring readers either; adults (the Prince of Wales, Empress Frederick of Germany, Rudyard Kipling, and Andrew Lang amongst them: see Haggard 1926, II 4-6; also 1974, iii-iv) as well as children,

both at the turn of the century and for a generation and more afterwards.<sup>7</sup> To many it must have seemed a great improvement on Dasent's laborious 1875 *Vikings of the Baltic* version of *Jómsvíkinga saga*, and it ought to have seemed preferable to the pedestrian didacticism of R. M. Ballantyne's *Erling the Bold: a Tale of the Norse Sea-Kings* (1869), albeit eight editions up to 1880 tell their own tale of that novel's popularity. If Baring-Gould's *Grettir* was based on a saga, Rider Haggard's eponymous hero is the purest fiction. Like Baring-Gould, Haggard had travelled in Iceland (during June 1888) complete with letters of introduction from Eiríkur Magnússon (Lbs 2187b 4to, Haggard to EM, 12 June 1888). At Hlíðarendi his diary records the excitement of 'writing this on the site of Gunnar's hall, which I can distinctly trace'. So, too, 'saga in hand' at Bergþórshvöll:

He who digs beneath the surface of the lonely mound that looks across plain and sea to Westman Isles may still find traces of the burning, and see what appears to be the black sand with which the hands of Bergthora and her women strewed the earthen floor some nine hundred years ago, and even the greasy and clotted remains of the whey that they threw upon the flame to quench it. (Haggard 1974, viii)

At Thingvellir it did not take him long to sound the note which Icelandic readers might have associated with Jónas Hallgrímsson, and English readers with the elegiac awe of Tennyson's *Idylls*:

Every sod, every rock, every square foot of Axe River, is eloquent of the deeds and deaths of great men. Where are they all now? The raven croaks over where they were, the whimbrel's wild note echoes against the mountains, and that is the only answer given. (Haggard 1926, I 285)

Midnight salmon fishing was (and is still) an integral part of the experience and Haggard's response passes the test of sensibility:

Never shall I forget the impression it produced on me. The mighty black mountains, the solitude, the song of the river, and the whistling flight of the wild duck—by which the silence alone was broken—and, over all, that low unearthly light just strong enough to show my fly upon the water and the boiling rises of the salmon. (I 287)

Before, during and after his trip, Haggard read the sagas avidly: 'outside of the Bible and Homer there exists . . . no literature more truly interesting', not the least of their merits being (as the Victorians longed to believe) that 'they are records of actual facts' (I 288), and on his return home, indeed just three days after almost drowning in a catastrophic storm in the Pentland Firth, he was at work on the opening pages of *Eric Brighteyes*. It was not long before Haggard found himself drawing creatively on another vivid Iceland memory, his visit to Gullfoss:

A most splendid sight. The yellow river, after tumbling down a cliff, bends a little to the right and leaps in two mighty waterfalls, across which a rainbow streams, into a chasm a hundred feet deep, leaving a bare space of cliff between. From the deep of this chasm the spray boils up like steam, a glorious thing to see. (Haggard 1926, I 286)

The Golden Falls, strangely ignored by the stream of nineteenth-century painters attracted to nearby Geysir, certainly makes its literary mark by representing a crucial stage in the turbulent rite of passage endured by the novel's youthful hero, as he strives by his actions to answer what was, for Collingwood's master Ruskin, the crucial and cruel heroic question. His words are quoted admiringly by Carlyle:

'Who is best man?' . . . the Fates forgive much,—forgive the wildest, fiercest, cruellest experiments,—if fairly made for the determination of that. (Carlyle 1875, 201)

In its 'spherical benevolence' and 'universal indulgence', Liberalism (urged Ruskin) had lost sight of basic distinction between 'worth and unworth' (Carlyle 1875, 201). Eager to find the 'best man' for his beautiful daughter Gudroda, and suspicious of the socially inferior Eric, the formidable chieftain Asmund devises the ultimate 'impossible task' as a test: Eric is to make his way to the Christmas feast at Middalhof by a seemingly impossible descent through the thunderous waters of the falls; no other route is permitted. Eric achieves this feat; reaching the Sheep-saddle rock (the 'bare space of cliff') at the top which creates two 'mighty waterfalls' out of one, he struggles down behind the torrent to Wolf's Fang crag, jutting out half way down, and then takes his chance of plunging into the 'hundred feet deep' boiling chasm below whilst Asmund watches in benign disbelief, attributing the 'rainbow' to the gods' efforts to unite the young lovers.

Triumphant in this feat, many more trials and 'cruellest experiments' lie ahead for the dauntless but ultimately doomed Eric: a wrestling match with a rival suitor who is no believer in Queensberry rules; the unwelcome attentions of the seductive Swanhild, half-sister to Gudroda, and malign daughter of a malevolent Finnish witch, who in her jealousy seeks by mischief, magic, and murderous assault to separate the two lovers and poison their love (Andrew Lang told the author 'I don't think much of the boy who can lay it [the novel] down till it is finished; women of course can't be expected to care for it', Tilden 1918, II 4); the hostility of Gudroda's jealous brother Bjorn; a three-year exile from Iceland; treacherous Viking companions. Accompanied through most of his travails by Skallagrim, a berserk with a heart of gold and a drinking problem, Eric's

happiness seems assured when he arrives back in Iceland just in time to prevent Gudroda's unhappy marriage to an unloved rival. The hero marries Gudroda only to find the court overrun by enemies on his wedding night, whilst Skallagrim, supposedly on guard but learning again that 'ale is another man' (particularly in massive overdoses), fails in his stupor to sound the alarm. Amongst the victims of the ensuing massacre is the new bride. Eric takes to the hills in grief with the insatiable Swanhild still in vain but determined pursuit. He is hunted relentlessly, and defends himself *vel ok drengilega* before his unflinching final confrontation with death.

There may be some characteristic saga motifs which Haggard does not employ in the novel, but it is difficult to think which they are. The novel is a remarkable illustration of just how inward a knowledge of Icelandic sagas could be developed in 1890 by an alert and perceptive Victorian reader who was in no real sense a professional philologist. No attention is drawn by footnotes to the weight of reading which clearly lies behind the novel, but few members of the Viking Club in 1892 would have needed to be told. All would have recognised the overall shape of the novel as another 'Northern love story', with all that that could imply: interlacings of predictive dreams and curses and their fulfilment, the interplay of the wholly natural and the elaborately supernatural, the stream of fatalism, the feuding and vengeance, the wondrous sword Whitefire (a combination of Greyflank and Excalibur; again the shadow of Tennyson colours much of the mood of the novel's final pages<sup>8</sup>), the portentous verses, the bloodcurdling oaths, the lovers' vows and recognition tokens (split coins, locks of hair), the love potions, Eric's fear of the dark, Skarphedin's axe (from *Njála*) and his comic misogyny (from Beorn the Welshman in Dasent's *The Vikings of the Baltic* (1875), a pallid but interesting novelistic recreation of *Jómsvíkinga saga*), the chattering beggarwomen, the shapeshifting Swanhild, the demonic witch Groa, the Viking sea-battle, final defeat in a lonely lava defile following a vision of the Fatal Sisters in that region of death (straight from the 'Darraðarljóð' in *Brennu-Njáls saga*) whence no traveller save Óðinn returns. The motif of foreign travel (in this instance to the British Isles) offered Haggard the opportunity to write about Viking-Age Orkney, a subject of great interest to many Victorians: witness the immense popularity of Sir Walter Scott's Orcadian novel *The Pirate* (1821; this splendid work is now bafflingly neglected), and the publication of two translations of *Orkneyinga saga*—by Jón Hjaltalín and Gilbert Goudie (1873), and by Sir George (as he became in 1876) Webbe Dasent (Vigfússon and Dasent

1887–94), this latter version long delayed by the Englishman's tiresome prevarication (Knowles 1963, 119–23). Moreover, Haggard succeeded in matching the manner of his novel to its matter. His novel is written in a remarkably convincing modern version of saga prose, whose taut and nervous syntax swims artfully against the tide of colloquial expectation, and employs diction which fully exploits the Norse element in the English language without becoming its slave. The narrative is deftly dusted over with alliteration, not least in the flyting exchanges, and it carries a heavy freight of unusually well-crafted proverbiousness.

Yet, for all its apparently instinctive feel for the authenticity of ancient style and substance, it is not difficult to see Rider Haggard's novel as very distinctly a late Victorian work. For all the dash and daring of its golden-haired exemplary hero, *Eric Brighteyes* is a romance in a tragic mode, ultimately governed by a pervasive Tennysonian melancholy. There emerges during the novel a sense of potential splendour unachieved and actual splendour undermined by ultimately unappeasable forces of destruction—fate, Finnish magic, and female wiles. I believe it is reasonable to suggest that in Eric's staunchness in life and stoicism in death the reader is confronted with an unsignalled but discernible icon for an age in which buccaneering empire building would have to give way (might even already be giving way) to the gentlemanly management of imperial decline. The shape and substance of the novel as a whole seems to mimic the unease and insecurity of the age.

This insecurity was nowhere better mirrored than in the shifting tides of nineteenth-century philology, particularly as it impacted on questions of national and racial identity. The cultivation of Old Norse found itself at the heart of these deliberations. In his own 'Introduction' to the novel's first edition, Haggard's own priorities are clearly stated:

The author will be gratified should he succeed in exciting interest in the troubled lives of our Norse forefathers, and still more so if his difficult experiment brings readers to the Sagas—to the prose epics *of our own race* [my italics]. (1891, x)

Haggard's association of Old Icelandic culture with 'our forefathers' and 'our own race' (with his possibly Danish surname these links were doubtless personal as well as national: Hanks and Hodges 1988, 233) is of crucial importance for understanding that Victorian cultivation of Viking culture in the 1890s and earlier could often reflect so much more than mere genteel armchair antiquarianism.

Old Norse studies in Britain had been intellectually legitimised in the early nineteenth century when the implications of the comparative

philological work of Rasmus Rask and the Grimms were absorbed, and Germanic languages (ancient and modern, dialectal as well as standard, spoken as well as written) felt able to hold their heads up in the now fraternal and no longer magisterial presence of Latin and Greek. Such matters were a prominent feature of local Literary and Philosophical Society papers throughout the nineteenth century (see, for example, Picton 1864; Geldart 1875). The Anglo-Saxon and Norse origins of the English language became the subject of detailed investigation. By the middle of the century English was fulfilling Jakob Grimm's prophecy and becoming a world language, in the same way as Britain had become a world power. Indeed the revelations of the New Philology appeared to underpin the basis of that power. As understood and politicised by mid-century writers, the revelations of the Grimms about Sanskrit had shown that whatever common Asiatic origin the tribes of the world (and their mythologies) might have shared, the crucial division must be made between those who had migrated West and those who had trekked East. In Dasent's bluff construction (1903, xxv–xxvii), the Western branch had been tough, enduring and energetic people who 'went out and *did*', whilst the Easterners, careless of the practical life and immersed in speculation, 'sat down . . . and *thought*'. By the mid-nineteenth century in India, when the two branches of that common tribe were judged to have come together again, it was no longer as equals but as colonial master and mutinous but defeated servant:

The Highlander, who drives his bayonet through the heart of a high-caste Sepoy mutineer [in the 1856 Indian Mutiny], little knows that his pale features and sandy hair, and that dusky face with its raven locks both come from a common ancestor in Central Asia many, many centuries ago. (xxviii)

It seemed a Darwinian triumph, both political and linguistic, of the racially fitter—of 'our own race', in Haggard's words. Mid-century enthusiasts of Old Norse were in the vanguard of those celebrating with I. A. Blackwell that

the Saxon . . . now rule[s] with uncontrolled sway over that antique land, whence the heritage he so gloriously holds was originally transmitted to him, and should there impart to his Hindustanic brethren a civilization whose germs had been planted by their common ancestors. (Percy 1859, 45)

Victorian philology had revealed as never before the extent of Saxon and Viking influence on the English language, and the triumphalist strain in Victorian philologists such as Blackwell, Dasent and Frederick Metcalfe had unhesitatingly attributed current imperial grandeur to the emboldening effects of Viking blood still coursing through British veins; England

owed 'her pluck, her dash and her freedom' to Scandinavia (Metcalf 1861, 70). The clarification of linguistic roots offered reassurance of cultural roots, both in Britain and, it may be noted in passing, in the United States at exactly the same time.

But there was also a negative side. As English became an imperial world language, it started, in the eyes of purists, to suffer the fate of an earlier imperial language, Latin; the more widely it was used, the more it became corrupted. The imperial was ever the enemy of the national. The most telling measure of that 'corruption', and the shock with which it was greeted, was the first volume (1888) of the *Oxford English Dictionary* compiled on descriptive rather than prescriptive grounds, as modern scientific philology required. One reviewer in 1889 dismissed the contents as 'a mass of sewerage' (Dowling 1986, 96). The new unpoliticised scientific philologists were unconcerned; they had never wished to assert any Darwinian triumph of the linguistically fittest, but were content rather to record the evolution of the linguistically latest. Others were less sanguine, and the flurry of renewed interest in Old Norse in the 1880s and 1890s may reflect an instinctive wish to re-emphasise, sometimes slightly frantically, the linguistic roots of 'our own race'. And in times of political and social tension, many will have responded to Dasent's vigorous reassertion of robust Viking cultural values, agrarian or nautical rather than urban, active rather than reflective, meritocratic rather than aristocratic. The degenerate landed aristocratic enfeeblement of the present offered little comfort:

We do not, now-a-days, stop to inquire if the infant be deformed or a cripple. With us an old house will stand as well upon a crooked as upon a straight support. But in Iceland, in the tenth century, as in all the branches of that great family, it was only healthy children that were allowed to live. The deformed, as a burden to themselves, their friends and to society, were consigned to destruction by exposure to the mercy of the elements . . . for incapacity that age had no mercy. No 'tenth transmitter of a foolish face' would then have been tolerated merely because one of his ancestors, generations back, had been a man of merit. (Dasent 1858, 211-12)

Set in this context, Eric Brighteyes becomes an exemplary late-Victorian hero. Placed in a world remote from town and trade, not favoured by birth and ancestral inheritance, his achievements and high repute are his alone. The familiar motif of the hero's famous sword helps to establish this; the noblest conflict had always involved hand-held weapons, with the hand an extension and emanation of the heart, a measure of the individual's 'brain, will and feeling' (Dasent 1873, I 3). A famous sword could be inherited, but it imposed burdensome obligations on each new owner. As



the Tennysonian cult of Excalibur had reminded Victorian England, the question was not so much whether the sword was good enough for the hero, but whether the hero was good enough for the sword. The 'cunning invention' (Dasent 1858, 174) of Victorian military technology could convert cowardice into courage; no such deception was possible for a Viking. It was only by the act of lifting, holding and wielding a weapon like Eric Brighteyes' Whitefire (or Onund's Fireheart, or Gísli's Greyflank: Baring-Gould 1894, Barmby 1900), not by the throwing of spears or stones, that new and deserved fame could be won.

Dasent's *The Vikings of the Baltic* (1875), following the narrative line of *Jómsvíkinga saga*, ends on a schizophrenic note. The degenerate Jómsborg vikings are destroyed, but the young hero Vagn wields his sword boldly and survives his life-threatening adventures, in the company of the crotchety but steadfast Beorn. In Vagn's survival and subsequent marriage lies the hope and expectation of future renown. He would become no 'tenth transmitter of a foolish face'. Neither, though more tragically, would Eric Brighteyes. If in the upward curve of Eric's early fortunes can be glimpsed Victorian optimism, there is no mistaking the equally powerful pessimism in the 'new wed, new dead' (Haggard 1891, 171) tragedy of Eric's wedding night, and in his own subsequent demise: there would be no face, foolish or otherwise, transmitted by the dead hero, there were sadly to be no 'branches' of his own potentially 'great family'. In this stunted growth, and in the ambivalence and duality of the novel as a whole can be discerned the anxiety of the age. Newman Howard, defending the form of his statuesque melodrama *Kiartan the Icelander* (1902), laments that '[nowadays] pseudo-realism is in demand which consists not in vital and universal truth, but in the use of idioms, episodes and issues of the passing hour' (Howard 1913, viii).<sup>9</sup> In its unportentous way *Eric Brighteyes* addresses universal questions, but it also gives expression to concerns which are neither 'for all time' nor mere 'issues of the passing hour'; they are however very much issues 'of an age'—the Victorian age of the 1890s.

A last word on the last Victorian decade. In his Preface to the revised Speight-Major *Stories from the Northern Sagas*, York Powell declared that 'beyond the sagas and the Eddic poems, there is nothing of first importance in Icelandic, and little really worth spending time over' (xv). Happily the writings of Frederick Howell (1893) and Mrs Disney Leith (1897) amongst others show that not all Victorians closed their eyes so tightly to the efforts of modern Icelandic poets to respond tellingly to Iceland's exemplary past and dispirited present. Howell seasons his

narrative with quotations from Grímur Thomsen, Matthías Jochumsson, Bjarni Thorarensen and Hannes Hafstein. Similarly in Mrs Leith's translation (1897, 172) of unacknowledged lines from Jónas Hallgrímsson's *Gunnarshólmi*, where the Icelandic poet paraphrases and ponders Gunnar's famous *fögr er hlíðin* speech, the Viking and Victorian ages stand face to face:

But Gunnar turns his face towards the land:  
No fear the righteous hero's soul dismays,  
Though fierce the threatenings of the hostile band.

'Ne'er saw I yet the earth's increase so fair!  
The cattle spread them o'er the field to graze,  
Against pale cornfields roses redden there.

Here will I spend the number of my days,  
Yea, all that God shall send me. Fare thou well,  
Brother and friend!' Thus Gunnars saga says.

It is a proper tribute to the spirit of the 1890s that an eager British traveller to Iceland not only knew the most famous saga's most famous scene, but knew also the most famous Icelandic romantic poet's memorable response to it. It is just as characteristic of the decade that the traveller then becomes the translator anxious to share her excitement with fellow enthusiasts. In going that extra philological mile in pursuit of their own and their nation's Viking past, the Victorians set an admirable example for later times. It was they who had the will and showed the way.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> A spot check of the Proceedings of the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society 1880–1900 with comparable published papers from the Literary and Philosophical Societies of Leeds, Leicester, and Glasgow, the Manchester Literary Club, the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and the Royal Society of Literature shows a widespread interest in philological questions, and in Iceland and its literature in particular (Laurenson 1882; Embleton 1887; Simpson 1891; Mavor 1891; Bryce 1891); it is clear, however, that such interest was unusually prominent in Liverpool (see below, papers by Picton and Sephton).

<sup>2</sup> See Smith 1889; 1890; 1891; 1892 for such Icelandic 'fruits' as there were.

<sup>3</sup> I am very grateful to Jón Karl Helgason for drawing this adaptation to my attention.

<sup>4</sup> Published posthumously in 1900, translated into Icelandic by Matthías Jochumsson the following year. This latter version was used as a teaching text by W. P. Ker (Lbs 2808 4to, Mabel Barnby to Matthías Jochumsson, 17 May 1907), whilst the original text was performed by the Viking Club in January 1903 (Lbs 2808 4to, 13 January 1903), lavishly praised in an article in the *University of Liverpool Magazine* (Lbs 2808 4to, 16 November 1903), and became the forerunner of several dramatised saga adaptations by Hall Caine and Newman Howard

which sought to reassert 'those old chivalries, pieties, and magnanimities wherein rest the sweetness and stability of life' (Howard 1913, viii).

<sup>5</sup> 'I do not wonder I could never translate the Skaldic verses—it seems as if the words had been shaken up in a bag and then picked out and arranged according—not to their sense—but to their sound. It puzzles me to guess how you could make sense out of them. I should have supposed that the verses had been polished up by some interloper until all the precious metal had been rubbed off and small thanks will Einar Skulason—if it were him—get for his trouble—your detection of the cheat, and attempted restoration deserve all praise', Bodleian MS Eng. Misc. d.131, F. W. L. Thomas (an old sea-captain from the Shetlands who had helped GV with sea-faring terms in the *Dictionary*) to GV, 20 April 1882, a letter of thanks for the gift of a copy of *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*. Thomas's antiquarian enthusiasms also found expression in his *Account of some of the Celtic Antiquities of Orkney, including the Stones of Stenness, Tumuli, Picts-Houses, etc* (London, 1851).

<sup>6</sup> I am very grateful to Dr B. S. Benedikz for drawing my attention to Baring-Gould's novel *The Icelander's Sword, or The Story of Oraefadal*, a bridal-quest romance full of boisterous muscular Christianity. Though not published until 1894, the Preface indicates that much of its material was developed in the late 1850s as an adventure tale for boys. A lengthy passage in the middle of the novel (probably added during the author's pre-publication revisions) gives forthright expression to Baring-Gould's impatience with late Victorian decadence. He fears that novels themselves may be part of the problem :

Every nation in its childhood began to play with edged tools, but none with greater boldness than the Scandinavians. Whether these stormy passions have wholly spent themselves or are brooding still over our horizon, it is not for the author to say; whether the ferocity in our nature has at all showed itself of late among our countrymen—whether, for instance, our gilded leopards have contented themselves with catching mice, or, again, whether the love of excitement, which nowadays quenches itself in a novel, instead of driving men to deeds of heroism, be more wholesome than its first development—are points which must be left for the reader to determine. (Baring-Gould 1894, 106)

The wintry violence and vernal freshness of medieval society are contrasted with the autumnal rankness and decay of late nineteenth-century values:

If the features of mediaeval society be looked at with naked eye, and not through nineteenth-century spectacles, marvellous reality and truth will be seen, such as is not common in these times. The Middle Ages were times presenting violent contrasts. With blood-smirched hands, in the place of blazing homesteads, notable deeds of mercy, self-devotion, or valour were performed. Then brightness was dashed into darkness. If there were keen winds and chill showers, the buds of many flowers burst open in the May of Civilisation; and those leaflets which appeared were full of the life of warm gales and soft dews. Now we have lost the frost and winds, and rejoice in our autumn, with its smell of corruption, and its leaves pulled from the branches and strewed for us to trample on, or to scrape together or anatomize. (107)

Baring-Gould is indignant that the native hue of British resolution has allowed itself to be sicklied o'er with the pale cast of modern indifference:

The Middle Ages were times of honesty and earnestness. What was to be done, good or evil, was done with all man's might; and from the actions, even though of blood, bright sparks of courage and true-heartedness were elicited. Perhaps we may have gained prudence and justice, but we may have lost the equally cardinal virtues, temperance and fortitude. The present age is one of indifference, and the men of this generation lie under an evenly-graduated sky of grey, wrapt in themselves alone. There was great freshness and reality in the old days, with their long stalking shadows and bright kindling gleams of sun. (108)

<sup>7</sup> A new Icelandic translation by Guðni Kolbeinsson has been published to mark the centenary of the novel's first appearance: *Eiríkur fráneygi* (Reykjavík, 1991).

<sup>8</sup> Two brief instances indicate something of the Victorian fondness for using Tennyson as a reference point for relating their Norse enthusiasms. Firstly, Dasent (1873, II 247) writes about the retinue of King Magnús the Good of Norway: 'in Sighvat Skald he had his Merlin, in Sweyn he found the traitor Mordred. Harold was his Lancelot, but the Guinevere whom the great warrior sought to win was none other than that fair land of Norway; though unlike the guilty queen she was true to her liege lord, and only gave herself up with a sigh to her wooer when death had cut asunder the tie which bound her to her first love'. Secondly, and a significant coincidence at least, in 1888 H. Halliday Sparling edited a collection of extracts from Morris's translation of *Völsunga saga*; the publisher was Walter Scott [sic] of London, and the volume appeared in the Camelot Series.

<sup>9</sup> Howard's play clearly drew on Muriel Press's 1899 translation of *Laxdæla saga*. Robert Proctor's 1903 version of the same saga soon followed. Proctor's Norse enthusiasms were entirely typical of the time: based at the British Museum, he became a friend of William Morris, and later a trustee of his will; before the *Laxdæla* translation Proctor presented a copy of his privately published 1902 translation 'A Tale of the Weapon Firthers' as a wedding present to the Cambridge University Librarian Francis Jenkinson, a colleague of Eiríkur Magnússon (See *DNB*, Second Supplement, III 140-1). Proctor died in 1903, whilst on a walking tour in Austria.

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## A RAMBLE IN ICELAND.

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A SERIES of delightful journeys which it had been my pleasant experience to make with some old and valued friends, for many consecutive years, to various parts of the Old and New World, led to the events related in the following account.

A friendship of now nearly fifty years, from its initiation at Alma Mater, was no slight bond in uniting tastes, interests, pursuits, and higher feelings than those resulting from any ordinary matters of interest. My friends had not then travelled much, and as Europe was well known to me, I was able, when certain localities were reached, to plan excursions, and to seize opportunities which a favourable moment, or our presence in this or that vicinity, permitted. Our journeys had an appetizing effect, and instead of satisfying produced a desire for longer wanderings, and a more extended insight into the wonders and beauties of nature. With sufficient difference of pursuit to avoid sameness, there were many points in common in our tastes, so that we easily adapted ourselves to each other's plans. To me this had a doubly agreeable effect, as for many years it enabled me to re-inspect places and matters of interest with which previous acquaintance had left a desire for further knowledge, and as my earlier visits had been often made alone, the addition of agreeable companions, and the pleasure of being able to act *cicerone*, now made the whole more enjoyable.

But I was startled out of all this self-complacency one day by a proposition to visit a place I had never had within the range of my even intended expeditions. My old Cambridge friend was a professor of geology, and the wider the field of his research became, the wider he wanted to extend it. So a journey to the North Cape was determined on. As our other companion was his wife, whose health was much

benefited by sea-voyages, it became a custom with us, when the usual tourists' routes and the objects of more general interest had been visited, either to part and meet again at Christmas in each other's homes to recall our adventures ; or make arrangements to meet later on in the year at some well-known place, and again take up our journey, after I had done some rough by-ways a little too much for the lady's strength ; or sometimes, where there was a risk, taking it myself without allowing either of my friends to share the danger.

For example, on one occasion we had another geological professor with us, and a rather warm dispute arose between the two as to whether serpentine was to be found on the Matterhorn. It seemed likely to end as it had begun, in mere words. So I started off before daylight and made a partial ascent alone. I felt sure that no specimen would be found on the route of ascent tourists' usually took, or serpentine would have been, ere that a known fact whereas the supposition of its existence was only arrived at from certain suggestive features. I had climbed till midday, when, weary and hungry, I sat down to dispatch a meal of biscuits, the only refreshment I had taken with me.

The intense grandeur of the severe surroundings, in a part of the mountain never visited by those usually making the ascent, repaid me for what I had already set down as a fruitless expedition, when, to my surprise, I caught sight, lying near me, of a fine specimen of what I was seeking. Instantly hunger was forgotten, and in my satisfaction I arrayed myself all over with edelweiss. Then I made the descent, and arrived in time for a late supper at Zermatt. On another occasion, in Norway, when we arrived at a place which seemed to me to have some historical associations, from the result of enquiries I had made, I heard of some supposed archæological remains far up in the region of distant mountain glaciers, to be reached only by a difficult path of many hours' ascent ; so I left my friends at midnight, and started off with a guide to the heights. Again successful, I, on my return ; found my friend sketching, his wife deep in the mysteries of Norwegian cookery, and the horses very thankful for a day's rest.

I am not going to tell you about the North Cape, but this

preamble is simply to give you an insight into the conditions under which I visited Iceland, for our expedition to the North Cape having been most successful, my friends' appetites grew by what they fed on, and the next journey was fixed to be to Iceland.

Arrangements were accordingly made for comfortable berths, with Mr. Slimon, of Leith, in whose hands the whole traffic between North Britain and Iceland seemed to be, and we started from Granton in his comfortable steamer *Camoëns*, arriving at Reykjavik after a singularly impressive voyage. As we went northward we noted the increase of length in each day as we had done in our previous journeys in the northern seas, and the wide difference between the rugged rock-bound coast of Norway, and the snow-covered and softened outlines of the Icelandic Jökulls. The atmospheric changes were also unusually productive of effects; and the whole of the scenes presented such new features in our experience as made the voyage full of unexpected charms and novelties.

Much has been written and said on clouds assuming various shapes and conforming their outlines to those of mountains near them. The mountains are colder than the wind-borne humidity, and colder also in proportion to their bulk; hence where the largest mass of rock is, there the largest of the cumuli will form. Whether it was that we were highly favoured, or whether our inexperience of the island made a wonder to us of what was a usual effect, I cannot say, but the configuration of the cumuli was so grandly picturesque that it seemed to us that all the old Scandinavian gods were assembled to watch the new comers on their route to the great parliament-place, Thingvallir, where the old faith was given up and in its stead the Christian faith established. While the sensations were therefore novel, we ourselves were determined to be pleased, nay, enchanted, with everything.

During the passage, debates often arose in our little party as to the probable objects of this or that passenger in making the journey. The ordinary kill-time tourist was identified at once, only to be avoided. But one could also detect the artist, whether professional or amateur, by his frequent application to his sketching-book; the more earnest tourist,

by his bundle of handbooks and maps ; the fisherman by his occasional inspection of rods and flies ; and the fowler by his gun-cases.

One thing, however, struck me as singular. With the exception of one person, a young fellow of fine physique, but somewhat forbidding manner, who, however, united the possession of books and maps with a large assortment of tackle, and therefore looked as if he meant business, no one else had made any preparations for an inland tour. No one else out of our party, for I, being an old traveller in the desert and in desert places, had arranged with the owners to supply me with tinned provisions for two months for myself and pony men.

The weather being fine, these provisions were on deck near my baggage, and a tarpaulin was at hand for cover in case of rain. But near them was a smaller assortment, and the two lots bore duly the names of their respective owners.

As it was prudent to keep a superintending eye over these valuables, lest the crew might take a fancy to some of them, I and the young Titan, who was very proud of his well-formed frame, occasionally met, and scowled at each other—why, I don't quite know, but it became chronic.

I got a little piqued at this, and tried to force him one day to join in breaking the ice. He was looking over his rods and tackle, and walking up to him, I said, "You are a fisherman, then?" A scowl and a look of annihilation, which said plainly, "You can see that, can't you?" was the uncondescending rejoinder, which was the whole of that day's conversation. Next day I tried again. Going up to our two packages of provisions when he was near, I remarked, "You and I seem the only two sensible people on board. I wonder how the others will fare when they get in the country?" "Are you going with the rabble?" he observed. "No, I always travel alone." "You seem truthful too, considering you have two companions, and one of them a lady." "Yes, but my friends only come for the sea-voyage, while I go into the interior." "Well, as to your being sensible, I see no particular signs of it. Where are your rods?" "I am not a fisherman." Alas! he turned aside with a look of contempt.

The third day I tried again. "I see you have plenty of books and maps, but, from a book I have, I have worked out

the principal fishing rivers, with an account of the fish they are noted for." He looked doubtfully at the account I had written out, and then, comparing it with some data of his own, really said, "Thank you."

The fourth day I tried again. "Some of the best rivers are in my route; we are both provided with provisions, so need be under no obligation; we both evidently wish to avoid the tourists—can we go together?" Had the old god Thor struck his hammer on the anvil of Vulcan, a more expressive sound could hardly have issued from it. A thundering "No" with a sort of detonized terminal, put, as I supposed, an end to our intercourse. But two days after our arrival at Reykjavik, he came to my room in the hotel and said he had engaged an eight-oared gig to go along the coast, and if I liked to share it with him I could.

I had not, so far, planned any course, my friends coming from the steamer to see me each day, and we in this way examined the neighbourhood of the capital, and I had made some early excursions to "doomrings" and old "hofs" at a distance. But I closed with the offer at once. The time was come for the steamer to continue her course northward, and with as little baggage as possible, we, like two Vikings, set out for our coasting tour with eight stout oarsmen for our locomotives—we were out night and day while we occupied the boat.

I found myself in a difficulty before leaving that was quite new to my experience. Never travelling with more cash than the wants of any journey demanded, I had always waited till my return to, or arrival at, a terminal town or city to change circular notes, and so discharge my attendants. I was cautioned before leaving England that no paper money would be of use, not even bank-notes. I therefore took gold. But to travel through a rough country with a mass of gold coin being undesirable, I enquired for the bank. There was no bank in the capital; and my only plan was, I found, to leave my English money in the hands of a small merchant, who, without counting it, threw the bag into a drawer and wished me God speed. The gold would have been of no use on the road, as there was not a place where a sovereign could be changed; so I took from the merchant silver, also in bags, without counting it, for expenses on the way.

Though the nights were not cold at sea in the boat, they were damp—and spray, dew, and moisture fairly saturated the woollen clothes I wore. There was no tarpaulin to act as a cover, and I looked out anxiously for the sun in the morning to dry up the dampness of the night. But the young Titan, who I found was a Galen of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, had a system of animal heat which would more justly indicate his relation to the Cyclops than the Titans, and economized his coats by folding them and placing them under him, and so keeping them dry. There was no place for a reclining attitude, as our baggage and boxes of provisions set that aside, and the sitting posture night and day became very wearying.

A farmer's daughter had asked the rowers to solicit a seat for her, as we were to pass a place where she lived. The medico was much more civil to the natives than to the passengers from Granton, and asking if I had any objection, the young woman was placed behind us in the stern of the boat and perhaps got some rest. We were delighted at noon the next day to find that she was nearing her home, and we made the rowers moor the boat and all got out on a rock, where the relatives of the young woman would call for her, and we had a dinner on the rock, exercising our stiffened limbs in the meantime.

Another night and day, then another night, and the next morning we put into a creek—it could not be honoured with the name of fiord. There was no feature of interest in the place, till finally a house was seen as the boat rounded a point, and it was moored. We turned in without eating, and slept all day and through the night, waking the next morning with appetites that, had we not provided ourselves with food, it would have been difficult to satisfy. The rowers were also glad of a rest.

We had had enough of coasting, and being now far from any route of tourists, determined to make our starting point from the little creek.

The owner of the house farmed his own land, spoke a little English, and was good-natured enough. He had ponies in use on his farm, but demurred at letting them out, as the hay had not been secured, and there being no carts, the ponies are used as carriers.

His charges being reasonable, we were easily able to supplement them, so that the wavering of his mind was arrested. Not anxious to have another thundering "No" from my companion, I let him have the pick of everything, as being of greater weight and length of leg than myself, and, when he was fairly equipped, I explained, to the dismay of the worthy farmer, that we were quite independent of each other, and that I also must have a guide, sumpter ponies, and a change of riding ponies. The poor man, up to this time, thought he was keeping men and ponies back for his hay and farm purposes, but, seeing my companion ride off, and that my case was hopeless without help, he provided the beast, of burden, but explained that his remaining solitary servant was no guide, never having been from home, but that he was a good boy, and understood a little English. I put him at his ease at once by saying that my books and maps would guide me, and that if the new boy would only follow my directions, I should be content.

The poor lad was also dismayed when he was told that I and my companion might separate, and the whose responsibility of my cavalcade would devolve on him ; but I encouraged him by saying he would see the world, and that I would give him no trouble if he would mind the ponies and follow my directions. I foresaw that if my new companion found a good fishing place he would not leave it, and that I must then move off alone, so I determined that he should start separately at first, and keep his men and cattle to himself, This, as will be seen presently, became a most important matter.

As travelling in Iceland is rough, fatiguing, and often slow, we will let the ponies have a run, and return again to the farm house and surroundings at Hvitarvöllum.

The house was nearly new, but it had been built near to an old one now used for a pony-stable and barn. And the old house had a history. It had been erected on a former wooden structure said to have been the remains of a Norwegian Viking's house, who made this his seater or summer residence on his visits from Norway. The position left him the range of the western ocean, where he no doubt found a hunting field for cetacea to supply oil for his craft, ropes, &c. The worthy farmer had heard of archæology, for there was

a museum at Reykjavik, to which he had sent some finds, but the localities of these, which were to me still more interesting than the finds themselves, had been carefully preserved, and cooking-places in the ground, still full of charcoal, showed where probably blubber had been reduced to oil. Or, they may have been, as will be seen further on, remains of the fires to prove possession of an estate in very early times, subsequently so utilised. Rude fibulæ and quasi buttons were found, pins of fish-bone, and sundry articles of no great interest beyond the rareness of finds of this sort in Iceland.

But this was not all. My attention was drawn to a most curious mound not far from the house, and my enquiries produced very interesting answers. There was a legend of a female Viking who roved the seas and brought her captured treasures here, and secreted them at this mound.

The mound was very symmetrical in form, with a top sloping away on each side like the bottom of a large boat, sloping from the keel.

Its appearance was so bewitching that I fancied I had another Viking's ship mound like that discovered at Sandy Fiord. This was not so. The owner did not wish it to be molested, and yet it was too important to turn from. As the mound was externally of earth I procured an iron rod pointed at one end and pierced the earth in regular lines and at equal distances. The result was, that the rock, which was reached at an almost uniform depth, was nearly the exact form of the mound, but less in size by the thickness of the soil. The rock, whether naturally or artificially shaped, clearly resembled an inverted boat; it appeared to be *in situ* and it seemed to have been covered with earth intentionally. It is quite possible that it contained a cavity, perhaps an artificial one, in which rich booty was deposited for security, as the worthy Viking lady to whom the tradition referred had the credit, or discredit, of bringing home gold and silver as the result of her marauding expeditions.

There were other features of interest in connection with the mound. These were either an avenue—that is, two lines—of stones, or, as it seemed to me from their alternate positions of distance from the larger rock, instead of the positions being of equal distance, which in the case of an



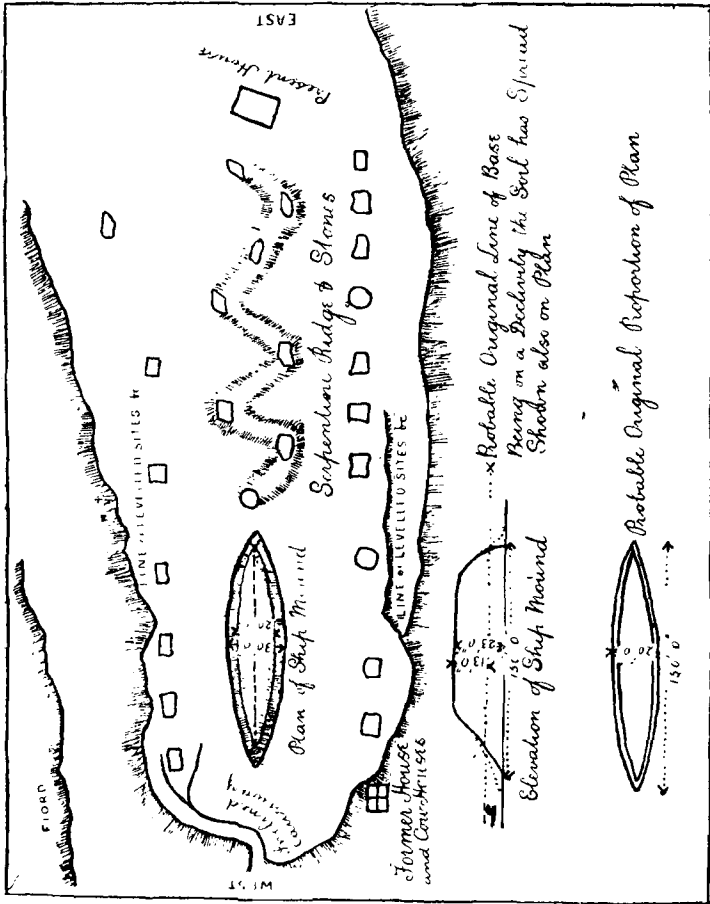
avenue I assume they would be, they appeared rather to represent the sinuations of a causeway, such as I have found in several parts of Scotland, and forming as these did a serpentine approach to the larger mound. The causeway may have been removed for the value of the soil, though not, I was assured, within the memory of the present owner, who, moreover, without any information of other similar arrangements, had been sufficiently impressed with the singular positions of these stones not to permit them to be used in the construction of his new house—an example that might well be followed by proprietors in Great Britain.

There is yet another way in which the stones may have been originally placed. I found just such an avenue in Scotland as shown on the diagram, and they may have either been such an avenue, or have bounded or surmounted a serpentine continuation of the mound, like that in Scotland.

At one time I was under the impression that they had acted as rude and uncarved bauta stones ; but taking the tradition into account, I am disposed to think that the serpentine was the original form of a continuation of the mound, which, with the mythological aspect of the serpent in Scandinavian pagan ideas, may have been a place of worship or of sacrifice and so have gained an ideal protection against marauders for the asserted wealth the Lady Viking accumulated.

As in those days of the early pagan settlers, each chief man or woman, took possession of land at will, and established his or her followers into a community, and as the chief also established a pagan place of worship to his or her special deity, which was rendered sacred and inalienable by fires placed, on taking possession, at distances, so as to include the newly possessed area, and as the altar or temple was rendered sacred by a deposit of earth from the former place of worship of the settler in Norway—a system that was adopted also in early Christian times by procuring earth from Jerusalem to form the Campo Santo, of Pisa, and other places in Italy—and as the traditions of this mound are given as 1000 years ago—and as proved by the finds in bronze, must have been very ancient, it is not improbable that it is one of the oldest remains in Iceland, and may have been dedicated to Jormungander, the Midgard Serpent deity, as protector of the Lady Viking's ship and treasure. The more

so as that serpent was the guardian of the seas, and it was probably after it that the Vikings called their vessels serpents, and the small ones snakes. In which case the protection of the dreaded serpent deity would be more effectual than that of an army. In London and all our ports, this old superstition



is still perpetuated ; the bottle of wine thrown by a lady in christening a new vessel being a retention of the libation in the former Scandinavian dedication to, and invoking of, the great Serpent of the deep they believed in.

This last view is strongly supported from the fact that

the whole area round the mound and the sinuous stones, has been levelled; and these curious objects appear to have been the central features in a primitive village; two regular lines of foundations of early dwellings enclosing them, as it were, in a long street, the lines of which are equidistant from the mound and stones on each side, and evidences of a raised earthwork are distinct in the course of the stones and there only. The soil, if arranged as I have suggested, would be very valuable, on removal, for the garden purposes, which in that isolated spot must have been a great sustainer of the more modern household.

But it is time that we rejoin the ponies. We will suppose our ride has brought us to Reykholt, a place savouring, however, of the presence of tourists, for remembrance of the great Saga writer, Snórri Sturluson. Here also is a mound, but though I fancy not examined, it is at least known to be where the writer's house was, so we will wander further afield.

My young Thor was getting sharp at archæology, and seemed to think there was something in the world besides fishing rods; he gave me every help at some very interesting excavations later on, though indications had already occurred which made it clear we could not long continue to travel together.

Taking a cross route over the mountains to Lundr; on the way, the son of Thunder was in difficulties. He beckoned me to come to him, and then confided to me, that, though in England a horse was only a horse, yet that a pony in Iceland was a thing he had not contemplated. In short, he could neither sit nor walk. Virtue has its own reward. Had I not let him have the best of everything at starting, and had it been known that we were quite independent of each other, he would have got the farmer's pet saddle, which he had made for his own use. A wretched thing had been reserved for me, but when it was found that I also was a paymaster, it was admitted that my mount was not good enough, and a new well-padded and very easy saddle was arranged for me. Seeing the difference, I dismounted my companion, and strapping a thick woollen plaid over his saddle, changed his position, and gave him a soft easy seat, when again he seemed willing to admit that there were more things in the world than fishing rods.

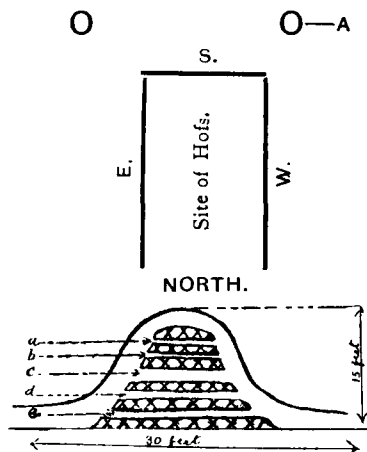
He was out to a neighbouring stream before daylight next morning, and returned with some fine trout for breakfast, and an announcement that there was another mound. After which I began my survey. My willing guide was apt also, and remembering the ship mound at his native farm, at once comprehended me when I pointed to the unmistakable tumulus near the church. The clergyman, at whose house we had slept, was summoned, and gave permission to dig. The mound was a very symmetrical one, and evidently formed with great care. At three feet below the surface clear signs of cremation became visible, which continued to a depth of five feet more in strata, separated in each case by a deep stratum of earth, forming in all fifteen feet.

This was not a kitchen midden, of which I found several in my journeys, but a most carefully made tumulus, and the bones of sheep and oxen in all stages of burning were so uniformly arranged, that each layer seemed the counterpart of the preceding one; they were not heaped pell mell, but in every case were in the centre of the mound, which had grown up at apparently long intervals by fresh additions. I did not come to any speedy conclusion, though the mound, from the care in its formation, and each of the strata producing the same result, was exactly like what I should have thought to be a mount of sacrifice.

The clergyman was quite surprised and much interested, and after careful examination, he took me to another mound of similar external appearance and wished me to examine that. I and young Thor and my young man, for he was really not a guide, did not wait for a second request. This mound also was in exact layers, with bones of oxen and sheep in similar stages of cremation, laid and arranged amongst the charred wood in the centre, and a considerable interval of time was shown by accumulated earth between each of the strata.

I now expressed the opinion that there must be other remains of antiquity near at hand. The clergyman admitted that we were near a "hof," or former temple of the pre-Christian period, the site of which he showed me, and, upon making careful measurements, these two mounds were found to be in true positions to the south-east, and south-west angles of the site of the "hof," external to it, and at some

distance; but in positions that would agree with the points of the sun rising and setting, perhaps about the third and ninth months in the year, or our Lady Day and Michaelmas; though I did not make minute calculations on these points as to the latitude which would indicate the sun's position at changes of the equinox. But the different positions, together with the bones of the oxen and sheep, recalled strongly to the clergyman and myself the sacrifices of the oxen and the rams of Balak on *different* sites.



SECTION OF TUMULUS A.

Widths of earthen deposits:—*a* 8 inches; *b* 6 inches; *c* 24 inches; *d* 18 inches; *e* 12 inches. External and upper deposit three feet. Intervals of bones varying from 9 inches to 14 inches in thickness.

Burton states that it is believed that Baalistic sacrifices are still made in secluded parts of the Orkneys; and I find a recent record of such rites in a secluded glen in Scotland. Near some of the old "hofs" I examined were tumbled heaps of bones and charred wood, evidently disturbed by searchers, which, but for the care with which I found these tumuli had been made, I should have taken for kitchen middens, but which I now recognize to have been altars to Baal, a most remarkable example of which I unearthed on the great serpentine mound at Skelmorlie on the Clyde.

My impression at first was, that the intervals of time indicated by the intervening strata of earth were the result of

periodical sacrifices of perhaps every seven or other number of years. But on carefully measuring the varying breadths of the earthen strata at the sections I made, I found them so widely different in thickness, that I concluded the sacrifices were made on the death and succession of a chief or priest.

In the records referring to the early settlers in Iceland the chiefs are said to have acted as the priests of the temples which they made for their own retainers, who had to pay a tax, of course in kind, to maintain the worship—a position bringing into prominence the Oriental position of priest and king, for these chiefs had absolute power of life and death and therefore were kings.

I can well imagine that these sacrifices were voluntary offerings by the new rulers on the ceremonies of installation, and that, with like Oriental customs, the slaughtered animals were, as in the hecatombs of the Greeks, the provisions for popular feasts.

After we parted I opened other tumuli further east with most satisfactory results and finds. There is no time for description, but I exhibit some very interesting objects exhumed from them.

It was with a feeling of regret that I had to announce to my skilful pupil in archæology that we must part. Once known and allowing for a few eccentricities—no greater, I daresay, than my own—he was an agreeable companion, versed in botany, and aiding me in the osteology of the mounds. He provided nice breakfasts and luncheons with his rod, and was not above consulting me about his difficulties and the sorrows incident to Icelandic ponies. Though, through a want of experience, he was so lavish with his provisions to his men, that the expedition would have been counted by days, instead of by weeks or months, had we continued together.

As I failed to impress him with the necessity for economy, I one morning, when his rod had produced no breakfast, either of trout or salmon, laid my compass on the top of an empty tin, lately devoted to curried rabbit (for there were neither chairs nor tables even in the houses of the clergy) and asked him to select any one point to which he did *not* intend to direct his steps, explaining that, so far as I was concerned, the whole world was before him, except that one

point which I would take myself. In this way, our intercourse, which had otherwise become mutually satisfactory, came to an end, and the young God of Thunder passed away, and I, Odin, or Wuotan like, had to go on my peregrinations alone. Weeks after, on my reaching Thingvellir from the east, I found that my prognostications had proved correct, for within four days of our parting he was there on his return to Reykjavik, his provisions having given out. So that the worthy farmer got his men and ponies in time to, garner his hay after all.

I now plunged into the thick of the fight. Mountain, morass, hill and valley, were traversed, as though I had been led by the Walkyries. My boy asked the way each morning to a place of rest for the night, which I carefully noted on my maps, and took the bearings of with my compass, enquiring if there were dangerous passes on the road, to avoid retracing my steps. But the track was soon lost, no living being, not even a dog, appeared, but all the rivers I came to were fordable. Sometimes a ford had been indicated before starting. So, as the crow flies, as nearly as I could, on my return journey I made for the cabin or homestead to be reached before darkness set in, and as the daylight was much extended this was sometimes late, but of accommodation there was generally little beyond a roof and the contents of tin canisters I had brought with me.

Fortune now again befriended me. The farmer had reserved a spirited little pony for my personal use, and apologised for the other, which, though not a baggage pony, was heavily built in comparison with the elegant little creature he mounted me on. It is imperative to take more than one riding animal, on the score of daily fatigue alone, to say nothing of accident. I named the first "Cut the Wind," and the other "Blunderbuss." But Blunderbuss on the upshot turned out the most useful, for as my mode of travel often took us over swampy places, the delicate little creature I started on would have been engulfed with his rider, whereas the other, though heavier, was broad in chest and body, and on account of his great strength, was able to bear me safely through.

I now revelled in the wonders of Icelandic scenery quite out of tourists' tracks; not that I would depreciate the

wonders to be seen on the ordinary routes. Had I had a regular guide, I should have seen nothing but what these afforded ; now all these came in afterwards. My boy was delighted, his fortune would be made, he could now act as a guide to the less known places, and I had all his help.

There was great advantage in all this. The only places of reception were the houses of the pastors, but even in these two visitors were, I found while with my companion, demurred at. There was but one unfurnished room of reception to sleep and eat in, with sometimes a bench to sit on or a flap of wood against the wall raised for a table. The extra men for the ponies and baggage were, however, not liked. Of course hay for the beasts was paid for, but the stock of this was often not great. As there are no servants, beyond your own, and the pastor's wife brings your coffee and sees to your comfort, a single traveller giving no trouble, and having the means of satisfying his own wants, is most welcome.

But other points there are even beyond this. A feeling of delicacy arises in having a lady doing as it were menial offices for you. These clergymen and their wives are the only upper class away from the towns, the others, whether proprietors or not, are mere peasants, though often very intelligent. The clergy have the bearing of gentlemen, and their wives of ladies. In the secluded parts I visited had there been a word of truth in the allegations against their sobriety I must have seen evidences.

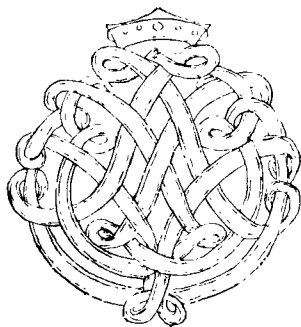
As coffee does not agree with me, I always, when travelling, carry tea, made up into small packets of a quarter of a pound each. I could not resist the coffee made in Iceland, it surpasses that of any other country ; it is their one sole luxury. The air and exercise made me think I could now take it, so my tea was not used. There is, of course, some payment to be made for your roof, and the kindness offered you. This is never asked for, but your guide gives you the idea of how much, which, even then, is not paid into the hand, but left in some prominent part of the room you have occupied. But I hit on a most agreeable mode of parting. The guide, no doubt, indicates that you have left cash for discharge from obligation to which no reference is made. And when at parting I presented my hostess, as, from taking coffee, I was able to do, with a packet of English tea, the expressions of appreciation were unbounded.



Moreover, I obtained a double advantage. Once the barriers of restraint were gone, in many cases, my boy, who was a favourite, told me that the lady was so obliged that she hoped I would return that way. If I said no, I was asked if I had any other object in coming to the country besides travel, or if there was anything they could get for me of Icelandic interest. And on my asking in return what could be got, I was repeatedly shown gold and silver heirlooms of the family, from which I was asked to select a souvenir.

It was with difficulty I could force a return by payment, as it was said it was a return for my attention. But, knowing the very low income of the clergy, I always managed to effect this in one way or another, and thus obtained articles the family would not otherwise have parted from, some of which I show you.

This fine jewelry, much of it very antique, and no doubt correctly described as having been brought with the first immigrants from Norway, is now treasured all the more from the fact that on the tourist routes it has been nearly all bought up, either by visitors or for the museums at Reykjavik, Stockholm, or Christiania, and is now jealously



ENTWINED KNOTWORK IN SILVER PLATES.

Secreted beneath the saddle flaps, and in the linings of saddles, which latter were richly decorated with bronze margins in *repoussé* relief, showing contests with animals, &c.

secreted. The horse trappings must also have been valuable for these coroneted silver decorations, representing the Scandinavian Dragon Knot, which I took from under the flaps of some old Icelandic saddles, which I was also similarly favoured with, were apparently secreted magical protectors,

being strongly rivetted in their hidden places. These, with a host of wooden articles, which I stowed in my now fast emptying panniers, attracted the attention of an agent of the museum at Reykjavik, who asking to see them offered me a round sum for them. But I could not sell what the kind-heartedness of my hosts, who sometimes dropped a tear as they handed me their treasured relics, had so feelingly put into my hands. And on enquiry I found that to have done so would have been to court the knowledge of the act, and the anathemas of people who had opened their hearts to me.

The snowclad Jökulls of Iceland contrast so much with the angularity of the Swiss Alpine scenery that to any one used to the latter the effect is surprising. But in the interior where the heights of basaltic lavas are not so lofty, and are not snow-covered in the *summer*, the level plateaux often terminate in vertical precipices producing terrific effects. These are simply indescribable, for to describe there must be pre-knowledge, or at least comparison.

The only mode of giving you my sensations on beholding the wondrous interior of Iceland is to describe it as like the photographs of the moon's surface, except that the ebullitions of lava are so vivid, that, surrounded as they are, in some cases, by the steam of boiling springs, they appear to be still seething, and it is impossible, till actual test is applied, to believe that they are cold and hard. The configurations of the cooled lava are so different to the pentagonal forms of our basalt of the Giant's Causeway, and Fingal's Cave that I was induced to bring a variety of these forms over with me from Iceland.

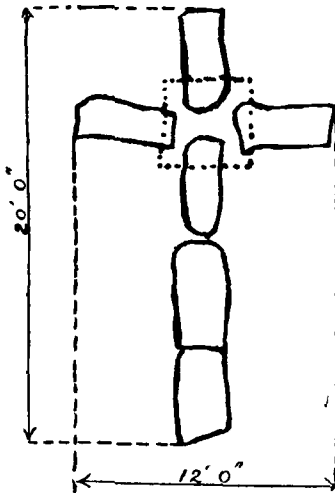
In humid or showery weather, the mountains assume transparent spectral appearances, as though the scene was a necromantic vision.

I may also mention that my good pony Blunderbuss acted so well, and I believe saved my life in passing morasses on more than one occasion, that, in parting with my boy at Reykjavik, I purchased the pony and the saddle, which made riding him easy; brought them, with the blocks of lava, over to England; put the pony in clover for the rest of his life; where, with his native lava, he occupies my ground. He was renamed Reykjavik, but the servants, being unable to pronounce the word, reduced it to Rucke-

back, whence a diminutive was evolved, and he is now called Rickles.


Returning southwards from the vicinity of the Lang and Hofs Jökulls, I proceeded down to Hekla and made the ascent. I took a guide from a farm, but he would go no further than the ponies could mount. My poor boy's dismay was terrible when I told him he must come to the summit, although I had myself never ascended. He tried strongly to dissuade me, but without success; so each swinging a small tin of provisions over his shoulder, we went up—after seeing the three ponies tied head and tail together, in the form of a triangle, so that it was impossible for them to move away.

The climbing was no very hard task, but the cold was intense, and it was only by going into the warmth of the crater that we could get strength enough in our fingers to



LAVA CROSS.

Rude cross formed by seven blocks of lava, carefully laid in a horizontal position, on plain west of the Lake of Thingvellir.

The seventh block, shown by  dotted lines, is superimposed at the junction of the arms and shaft.

The position of this cross, about a mile west of Thingvellir, is remarkable, as orientating the place where Christianity was publicly adopted, and the idols abandoned. There being no reliable monoliths at hand accounts for the horizontal position, and it may either have been a place of resort for the new Christians till churches were built; or a place of secret meeting and fraternity for those who introduced the new faith prior to the public acceptance of it. Its form and position approximate to the horizontal cross formed by upright stones at Callernish, in the Isle of Lewis.

open our provision cans ; when that was done the contents rapidly disappeared. And after placing my card in the glass bottle preserved in the cairn on the highest point, we were quite ready to warm ourselves by a rapid descent. The boy's face was now all radiant with joy at what he had achieved. The great waterfalls, called *fosses*, were, of course, seen ; but all of *that* you may find in guide books.

The geysers were visited on our return, and behaved very well at the moment of my arrival, though some unfortunates had been waiting three days for their action. Then the tourist's route was followed to Thingvallir ; and the story recalled of the Althing, and the change to Christianity—and after a visit to Krisuvik, to some friends who were engineering the sulphur pits, Reykjavik was again returned to.

Here I had to stay, as I expected, and rather hoped, for some time, on account of the kindness of the people, the natural wonders of the country and the still greater wonder how people could choose to live on its sterile wastes. Certainly, nothing but the greatest love for freedom of mind and body could have induced the first emigrants from Norway to have adopted it as their future country. It showed an almost unexampled case of a large portion of a people self-expatriated like the Pilgrim Fathers, and, like the latter, also retaining unblemished honour and amity with mankind. All these considerations made me want to know more of them, and in their capital I determined to work out the problem. I had, as I hoped, just lost the steamboat, so I had some clear weeks before me.

After discharging my boy and the ponies, all save the purchased Blunderbuss, I called at the University and was received by a classical professor. To him I explained that I wanted to know something of the pre-Christian people of Iceland, and enquired what literary assistance I could find in the University. He asked if I read Norske. I did not, and he shook his head. " I was English ? " " Yes." We spoke in French. He said he would do his best to help me, but he did not speak English.

This made it rather difficult, but a compact was made. I was to go to read with him each morning, and he undertook to give me an insight into pagan times, manners, and faith ; but he could only do this in French or Latin, and

would only do it on my rendering it back in English, which he understood, but did not speak.

I enquired as to the fees, but he said it would be mutual, as he was very desirous of learning to speak English.

This was carried through, and though, of course, I did not become a Norse scholar, I learnt the fundamental parts of the language, and, what I wanted most, the pagan ways and doings.

A curious incident occurred. When I spoke of what little *Norske* I knew, I referred to the lexicon generally found in the larger libraries. He was very angry, saying, "That book has spoilt our beautiful language. It is very well if you want Danish." I had reason to prove this at the Bodleian Library some time afterwards. I was working up Scandinavian names near Oxford, and called there for Norwegian lexicons. The usual authority was produced. I don't want a Dane's book, I said, but the Norwegian books. Several *hønd bóks* were brought me. I looked out the names in each: in the handbooks the meanings were full, poetical, and pungent; in the popular authority the *Norsk* meanings did not appear.

After several weeks of close study I went into the library one day with the professor, and my eye fell on an English translation of a book we had been reading. "I might have saved you the trouble, professor," I said: "here is a translation." "You think so," rejoined he. "Write down in English one or two of the passages I gave you from the *Norske*." He examined them. "That will do. Now refer to the same passages in the translation."

"Well, what can you make of them?" "Nothing." "Nor can anybody else."

On consulting a young Danish resident at Reykjavik as to what books I could get to continue my reading, and he having examined the native handbooks I had procured, he said, "You must give up those if I am to advise you. We want to get rid of that old fashioned language."

But I stuck to them, for they are real.

I need hardly say the gold which I had left in charge of the merchant was found to be as safe as if it had been counted and a receipt given for it. In short, the bag had

never been opened, and I had to repay back from it the value of my silver.

I cannot conclude without stating that I had the good fortune to be requested to open the great tumulus which Hakon raised over his defeated warriors at Largs, on the Clyde, after repeated refusals by the possessor to the Society of Antiquaries of Edinburgh. But the interest raised by my works and excavations on the estates of the Duke of Argyll, the Marquis of Lothian, the Earl of Glasgow, and other large proprietors, was such that in this case the owner solicited my examination of the mound, a full account of which appeared in the *Times*, the *Scotsman*, and all the Northern papers; photographs of the mound are on the walls, with those of the animal formed mounds discovered by me in Asia and Europe, of one of which the serpentine form at Hvitarvöllum seems to be the skeleton.

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THE NORSE LAY OF WAYLAND  
(“ VØLUNDARKVIÐA ”),  
AND ITS RELATION TO ENGLISH TRADITION.

BY PROFESSOR SOPHUS BUGGE.

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IN the second half of the thirteenth century, an Icelander copied from a then old collection of parchments, the oldest poems he knew (the names of the authors of which are not given) about the gods and heroes of the heathen North. In this vellum, now known as the Elder Edda, we find, as the first of the poems about the heroes of our prehistoric times, the Song of the Smith Vølund. This wonderful hero was known to the Anglo-Saxons by the name of Weland; the Germans called him Wieland (Weland, Velent), and the French, Galans. I will not investigate here the origin of the legend or myth concerning him; I will merely say that, in my opinion, in this legend, mythical tales which were common among Germanic peoples from the earliest ages, tales about supernatural beings clever at working in smithies and about women who flew in swans' attire, are blended with Latin myths dealing especially with Vulcan, Dædalus, and Theseus (who in the “ Mythograph. Vatican.,” ii., 127, is confused with Dædalus). These stories were, even in the early Middle Ages, and most likely also later, carried to the Germanic peoples, and were by them transformed and fused with their own stories. Neither will I here attempt to show the origin of the name of this hero,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I write *Weland* without attempting to decide the quantity of the vowel in the first syllable. This name cannot be explained by the old Norse

which up till now has not been traced clearly; but in the following treatise I shall try to show *where*, and *at what time*, the poem on Vølund, found in the Elder Edda, was written, as well as on what model it was based.

## I.

The "Vølundarkviða" is introduced by a piece of prose which explains to us the persons who appear in the poem. Two short pieces of prose are also found in the body of the poem, which itself is written in the oldest Northern metre, consisting of alliterative pairs of lines. The contents of this poem, in which we find the freshness, but also the coldness, of the nature of the far North, are briefly this:—Three maidens come flying from the South, and stop to rest at the brink of a lake.<sup>1</sup> There they are found by three brothers, who, according to the prose prologue, are the sons of the King of the Finns. Ølrún becomes the bride of Egil, Slagfinn takes Hlathgunn to wife, and Vølund her sister Hervør. For eight years the maidens live together with the brothers, but in the ninth year they fly away, clad in swans' feathers. Egil and

word *vél*—skill, craft, cunning—for this form *vél* is not found in Anglo-Saxon. The old Norse *vél* (fem.) is the same word as Anglo-Saxon *wil* (neut.)—wile, trick. The smith, in old Norse, is called *Vølundr*. The vowel in the first syllable is here short; *cf.*, for example, the poem "Lilja," 92. The French *Walander*, *Galans*, shows that, as early as the tenth century, the name was pronounced with the *ø* or *a* of the first syllable short.

An old Norse form *Vølundr*, with a long *ø*, has, in my opinion, never existed. Such a form is in direct opposition to Norse phonetic laws of the year 900 or thereabouts, as at that time it would have become *ølundr*. Neither can it be proved, by reference to the metre, that the first syllable is long in the Norse name. The lines *háls Vølundar, kván Vølundar*, are built up as are, for example, *litt megandi, margs vitandi*. The line *fyr Vølundr* is built up as the lines *ok ünandi* ("Sig.," xvi. 5), and *vegundum* ("Guðr." ii., 4-8). I quote the Edda from my edition, Christiania, 1867.

<sup>1</sup> *á sævarströnd*. This expression by itself can denote both the "seashore" and the "brink of a lake." The author of the prose prologue has given it the latter meaning, and gives the name of the lake as Wolf-lake (Úlfsjár). In the poem of "Friedrich von Schwaben," the three maidens bathe in a spring.



Slagfinn set out to look for their wives, but Vølund remains at home in Wolf-dale. He expects his bride to return, and fashions costly rings for her. It comes to the ears of King Níthuth that Vølund is alone with his treasures; with his men he goes to Wolf-dale, binds Vølund while he is asleep, steals his treasures, and takes him away captive. After this, Níthuth wore a wonderful sword that Vølund had made for himself, and gave his daughter Bøthvild a costly ring which Vølund had made for his love. The wicked wife of Níthuth sees that Vølund is meditating revenge, and, taking her advice, Níthuth hamstring Vølund, and he is put to work at his forge on a small island, where none but the King can come to him. Here Vølund still plots revenge, and successfully. He murders the two young sons of the King, who go to see him all unbeknown to their father. He makes drinking vessels for Níthuth of their skulls, and ornaments of their eyes and teeth for the Queen and Bøthvild. He shames the King's daughter, who comes to him without her father's knowledge, and finally he flies away, after having revealed all to Níthuth. The poem does not tell us how he gets the means to fly.

The language of the poem, its poetical expression and relation to several poems written by Norwegians, show us clearly enough that, in the form in which we have it, it is written by a man whose mother tongue was Norwegian. But in order to decide in which Norwegian district the poet was born and grew up, I will first consider the statement in the prose prologue that Vølund and his two brothers were the sons of a King of the Finns. On this point tradition in other countries is silent. This is therefore, in all probability, a Northern addition, which occurs, not only in the prose prologue, as most of the German investigators seem to think, but also in the poem. In the first place, this must be concluded from the fact that one brother is called Slagfinn (Slagfiðr), not only in the prologue, but in the poem. This name does not occur, as do the names Vølund and Egil, in the legend anywhere but

in the North, and we may therefore conclude that it was the invention of a Northern poet. It is true that German and Dutch scientists (Kögel, Jiriczek, Sijmons) have maintained that the name *Slagfiðr* is a German, and not a Northern name, and they have explained it as coming from the old High German, *slagifeðhera* (Schwungfeder). Even were this the correct explanation, it was not therefore necessary for the name to be German, as *slagfjeder* is also a Northern word. But I conclude that this explanation is false, for these reasons:—

(1.) *Slagfiðr* is not represented in the “*Vølundarkviða*” as winged or experienced in the art of flying; had he been able to fly he would naturally, when pursuing his bride, have made use of the art; instead of which he set out on his *ski* (*skreið*).

(2.) No other Germanic tale knows anything about a brother of *Vølund* being able to fly.

(3.) Not even *Vølund* (*Weland*, *Wieland*) is represented in the “*Vølundarkviða*,” or in any other Germanic tale, as being from birth or by nature winged or able to fly. It is only modern learning which, wrongly and unsupported by any ancient proofs, has credited him with these attributes.

*Slagfiðr* is in reality a regular nominative, of which the accusative form is *Slagfinn*. That the Icelanders in the Middle Ages understood this is proved by the fact that the name, in the *Arnarnagnæan MS.*, is written *Slagfinnr*.

This name, therefore, which the poem has given to one of *Vølund*'s brothers, states that he was a *Finn*. As the verb *slá* (to strike) can be used especially in the sense of “to strike with a hammer,” “to forge,” the name *Slagfiðr* denotes “The forging Finn.” This fits in well with the saying in an old French poem that *Galand*'s (*i.e.*, *Vølund*'s) two brothers were also mighty smiths. It also fits in well with *Vølund*'s speech in the “*Vølundarkviða*,” in which he says that all the three brothers, when they lived together, had costly things of gold. In Norwegian Sagas

the Finns are mentioned often as being clever weapon-forgers.

The fact that the poet observes of each of Vølund's brothers that he *skreið* (*i.e.*, ran on *ski*) also supports the idea that he considered them to be the sons of a chief of the Finns. For this was considered a characteristic of the Finns (or Lapps), who therefore, in very ancient times, were called *Skriðfinnar*.

Our poet has made Vølund's beloved embrace his *white* neck; but he may very well have imagined Vølund (though a son of the King of the Finns) white and fair. It is not necessary for Vølund to be of pure Finnish blood. The author of the poem was, therefore, a man who knew the Finns (*i.e.*, Lapps), at least by hearsay, and knew them as runners on *skis* and forgers of weapons, and also as hunters, for Vølund and his brothers are represented as mighty hunters. Even this tends to prove that the author of the poem was a Norwegian, born and brought up in the north of Norway; but it does not quite preclude other possibilities, as, for example, that he may have been an Icelander. I shall therefore produce other arguments to locate the home of the author with greater certainty.

There were several reasons why the Norwegian who composed the Lay of Vølund and his brothers should have laid the scene in the land of the Finns. In the first place, Vølund is called, in the Norse poem, "King of the Elves." In my opinion, this title has been accorded him outside the North—in England.<sup>1</sup> It assumes the original Germanic idea of forging elves, but it has most likely some foundation in the saying that Vulcan is Lord of the Cyclops; Norwegians mixed up their ideas on elves practised in the art of forging, with their ideas on Finns; "finn" is, like "elf" (*álfr*), the name of a dwarf. It was, therefore, natural that a Norwegian poet should make Vølund, Elf King, King also of the Finns. It must be

<sup>1</sup> Cf., on *alusc smið* . . . þe wes thaten wygar, who is said to have made Arthur's cuirass ("Layamon's Brut," Madden's edition, ii, 463).

noticed especially that in the tradition, Egil, Vølund's brother, was known as a marvellous archer and a mighty hunter. This, together with other things, may have given rise to the fact that the Norwegian poet made Vølund and his brothers come in contact with the Finns, who made their living out of hunting wild animals on *skis* with bow and arrow. The mythical personages, Ull and Skathi, are also ski-runners, hunters, and archers, and Skathi is located in the most northern district of Norway, Hålogaland. Side by side with what I have pointed out, may be mentioned that, even in an Old English poem, Weland is made to suffer in a "wintry cold" place. But I wish especially to draw attention to the following:—The South German poem, "Friedrich von Schwaben," of the fourteenth century, tells us that this hero, under the name of Wieland, sees three doves come flying to a well, where they intend to bathe. When they touch the ground, they are transformed into maidens. They jump into the water, leaving their clothes on the bank. Wieland steals these, and thus wins one of the maidens, Angelburg. This shows that the legend of Vølund, or Wieland, as it was known outside the North, also has made maidens in birds' feathers (either of doves or swans) come flying; they leave their feather-coats by a well, or at the brink of a lake, where Vølund (Wieland) also finds the one feather-coat.

The Norwegian lay begins by saying that through Mirkwood (the dark wood) three maids from the South came flying, and they rested on the brink of a lake. One of them had the wings of a swan. And in the prose we are told that the maidens had laid their feather coats beside them. Here I find a sufficient reason for the laying by the Norwegian of the scene of his tale in the land of the Finns. The poet did so because he knew the singing swan spent its summer in the interior of the countries of the Finns or Lapps, where it built its gigantic nest on the brink of the lonely lakes. In my opinion, the poet, in all probability, knew this himself,

for he was evidently so impressed thereby that he decided to lay the scene of his poem by one of these lakes. I think the poet lived in Hálogaland, Norway's most northern district. He wandered by the shores of the lonely inland lakes, where the swans abode through the short summer, and where the Finns ran on *ski* when the snow lay on the ground. The vivid and fresh descriptions of scenery in the poem all support this theory. The lake, on whose shores the swans sit to rest, lies in Wolf-dale, and is called in the prose prologue *Ulfsjór* (Wolf-lake). The brothers leave their home on *ski* when the swans have flown away. Vølund, who stays at home, is occupied with forging, and lives by the chase. He comes home with a brown she-bear which he has shot, roasts the flesh by the fire, skins the animal, and lays himself down to sleep on its hide. This *allies* exceedingly well with the life in those Northern parts, where the Finns lived by the chase (as is told in the "Historia Norvegiæ," found in Scotland), and where there were innumerable wild animals, especially bears and wolves. The Icelandic scientist, Björn Olsen, who defends the opinion that the Eddá lays are written by Icelanders, quotes various Icelandic poems to prove that forest bears were known to the inhabitants of that country, though not found in their forests, that they knew they were hunted, and had a heavy hide which was good to sit on, and that their flesh was good to eat.<sup>1</sup> But I consider it impermissible thus to pick a poetical picture to pieces. It must be viewed in its entirety, as the poet has presented it to us. And this picture an Icelander who had not lived in Hálogaland could not have created. It has taken its shape in the mind of the man who himself lived in Finnmarken's forests, by the still lakes of the land of the Finns.

When Vølund wants to roast the bear flesh, he lights a fire—

<sup>1</sup> In the treatise "Hvar eru Eddukvæðin til orðin?" in *Timarit*, 15th year (1894), p. 53.

*ár brann hríst  
øll þar fura.<sup>1</sup>*

(Soon a whole fir tree blazed,  
Kindled by the fagots of birch.)

So he puts a whole fir tree on the fire when he roasts a whole bear. He lights the fire with fagots, presumably of the birch; the forests in the interior of Finnmarken still consist of birch and fir. Thus I consider I have proved that the Norwegian Lay of Vølund was composed by a Norwegian, who dwelt in Hálogaland, and who had intercourse with Finns in the interior.

## II.

I will now investigate the source whence the poet obtained the legend. Vølund is not a man evolved by the fancy of a Norwegian poet, for the stories of this person Vølund, Weland, Wieland, or Galans, were, as I said before, spread over the various countries of the North, over Germany (especially the north-west), England, and France. It has been universally acknowledged, and rightly so, that the tales, as related by the various peoples, tally to such a degree as to make it impossible for them to have been preserved independently of one another from a time so obscure and far off that it cannot be traced. On the contrary, we must presume that the legend of this wonderful smith has been transmitted, most likely in poetry, from one people to another. It is universally acknowledged that the *‘Vølundarkviða’* was composed about the year 900. This conclusion has been arrived at on account of the poetical peculiarities of the lay, as well as those of the language. And I have shown above that

<sup>1</sup> The MS. has, *allþur fura*. Finnur Jónsson has altered this to *allþurro fúrr*. This is, in my opinion, incorrect, for we are then forced to consider the following lines—

*viðr enn vindþurri  
fyr Vølundi—*

as not genuine, in spite of the fact that they seem genuine enough. Besides, *fura* is, from its meaning, just the word we should expect in this place.

the poem was composed by a Norwegian from Hálogaland. To find from which foreign race the Lay of Vølund, as known to the poet, was brought to the Norwegians, we must seek to ascertain with which of the races possessing at that time a knowledge of the legend of the wonderful smith the Norwegians (especially those of the northern part of Norway) had intercourse, and with whom they had previously been in contact; we must also strive to ascertain from whom they received their moral and intellectual impulses. Evidence which may be obtained from England regarding this legend has therefore the highest importance for our purpose.

In the Exeter Book, which was probably written early in the eleventh century, is found a short Anglo-Saxon poem, a lyrical epic, which has been called "Déor's Lament," or "The Singer's Solace." This is divided into stanzas, and has a refrain. This poem, evidently much older than the Exeter Book, mentions that Weland lived in solitary exile, bore hardships and sorrows, was confined in a pit teeming with serpents during the depth of the winter. To these woes were added those resulting from Niðhad hamstringing him.<sup>1</sup> Beadohild sorrowed less over the death of her brothers than over her own

<sup>1</sup> *Weland him be wurman wræces cunnade. Be wurman* must mean "with the worms." Weland was therefore cast by Niðhâd into a snake-pit, as several mythical heroes were cast according to Norse Sagas. According to the MS. we should read—

*Siddan hine Niðhâd on  
nêde legde  
swoncre seonobende  
on sýllan mon.*

*Swoncre seonobende* must mean, "with an elastic band which was bound round his sinews," or, "with an elastic band made of sinews." But on account of the expression

*sum on fêðc lēf  
seonobennum séoc,*

in the poem "Wyrde," and on account of "Vølundarkviða," I prefer to read *swongre seonobenne* (the last word according to Grein), *i.e.*, by cutting his sinews, which hampered his walk. The name *Niðhâd* I will, in what ensues, write *Niðhad*.

shame. In the Anglo-Saxon poem of "Waldere," Widia, the son of Weland, is called Niðhades mæg (*i. e.*, daughter's son). In the epic of "Beowulf," Beowulf's coat of mail is mentioned as being Weland's work.

King Alfred translates Fabricius by Weland, and calls him "wise," and "a goldsmith, a man who in the olden days was most celebrated." Till very recent times a tale was told in Berkshire of an invisible smith called Wayland, who had his abode in an old stone monument, known as his smithy, and this place is mentioned in an old charter, dated 955, as *Welandes Smiððe*. Even in a charter dated as far back as 903, a place in what is now Buckinghamshire is called *Welandes Stocc*.<sup>1</sup> We notice that chap. lxi. of "Thithrik's Saga" mentions that Velent fells a tree and hollows out the trunk into a boat. He gets into this boat (which is called a *stokkr*), and takes with him his tools, food, and drink. In it he drifts out to sea, and arrives at the land of King Nidung.<sup>2</sup> I here pass over several evidences found in later writings of the widespreadness of the legend of Weland in England.

We have an important contribution to the knowledge of how early and how widely the Lay of Weland was known to the English in some carvings on a box made of whalebone, now in the British Museum, and known as "The Franks Casket."<sup>3</sup> It was bought in France, and

<sup>1</sup> Bintz, in Sievers' "Beitr.," xx., p. 189.

<sup>2</sup> It is not my opinion that a tale which agreed in all its details with that of "Thithrik's Saga" was known in England in the year 900. In the name *Welandes Stocc*, *stocc*, like the Old Norse *stokkr*, might also denote that staff on which the anvil rests.

<sup>3</sup> Reproduced in Stephens's "Runic Monuments," vol. i., pp. 474, 475. [Also in "English Miscellany," where Prof. A. S. Napier subjects it to a learned and exhaustive examination, but principally with the object of explaining the Runic inscriptions engraved on it. The casket itself is one of the most remarkable finds of recent years. It is a rectangular box, 9 in. long, 5 in. high, and 7½ in. wide. It is covered in high relief on sides and lid with pictorial representations from the Wayland Lay, the legend of Romulus and Remus, and the visit of the Magi. Borders of Anglo-Saxon runes enframe each picture, except that on the lid, but it is not known what was on the part now gone. The carvings, which are about ½-in. deep,



was formerly in Clermont Ferrand in Auvergne. It has on it carved representations and inscriptions, some in Runic, some in Latin characters, and the Runic inscriptions are (with the exception of one short Latin word) in the English language. Several of the linguistic peculiarities in these inscriptions cannot be of later date than the eighth century, and even the beginning of that century. On one side of the casket, the front, is seen a smith, seated, and forging at an anvil. There are two hammers in front of him, to emphasise more clearly the fact that he is a smith. This is Weland, as I first proved in Stephens's "Runic Monuments" (Preface, p. 69 fol.). The sitting posture of the smith tallies well with the tale of the hamstringing of Weland. In his left hand is a pair of tongs, by which he holds a human head over the anvil. This is the head of one of King Niðhad's sons, out of which Weland is making a drinking-vessel. At the feet of the smith is a headless corpse, that of one of the King's sons. Before the smith stand two women, Niðhad's daughter and her serving-maid. With his right hand the smith is giving something (probably a piece of jewellery) to the one nearest to him. The other woman is carrying

are vigorously drawn, and almost as sharp for the most part as when first wrought. The date of the casket, as Prof. Bugge states, is about the beginning of the eighth century, judging from the language, which is in the Northumbrian folk-speech of that time. The pictorial representations afford excellent details of the contemporary dress, weapons, and house-building. It is supposed that the casket was at one time mounted with plates of silver, which are now lost. It was purchased by Mr. A. W. Franks, of a Parisian curiosity dealer, in 1857, and had been the property of a private individual at Clermont Ferrand in France, where it had served the purpose of a work-basket. How it came into France is mere matter for conjecture. Probably it formed a portion of the plunder captured by Vikings in Northumbria, and was by them conveyed thence to Normandy. When Mr. Franks purchased the box, it had been broken into pieces, and the parts obtained by him were the four sides and the bottom. Subsequently a part of the lid was found in the Barcello Museum at Florence, which had recently received it by legacy. The rest of the lid, it is supposed, may have been metal adornments, but its character is unknown. The casket, with casts representing the recovered parts, is now on show in the British Museum.—E.D.]

a sort of bag, and this is, presumably, a sign that she is a serving-maid, who in the Old Norse language is called *eskimær*, i.e., she who carries a casket, into which her mistress puts her most valuable possessions. A plant is depicted on each side of the serving-maid's head. Perhaps this has reference to chap. lxxiv. of "Thithrik's Saga," which says that the ring of the King's daughter broke as she was walking with her maid in the garden (*i grasgarði*). It must be noticed that the representation on the casket tallies with "Thithrik's Saga," but not with the "Völundarkviða." There is no serving-maid in this. In the Saga, the King's daughter comes first alone to Velent, and afterwards they both come. In what follows I will speak about other representations on the casket which have some relation to the Lay of Weland.

In the *Journal of the British Archæological Association* (vol. xli., pp. 138-9), the Rev. G. F. Browne describes a sculptured cross-shaft in the parish church at Leeds, Yorks, as having a panel containing the pincers, hammer, bellows, and anvil of a smith. The same panel contains an obliterated figure, probably intended for a human being. Attached by bands to the sides of the figure are two wings, while above what should be the head is the figure of a woman in a long dress, who is being held by the back hair and the tail of her dress by the human figure. Mr. Browne supposed this to represent Weland (Völund) carrying off a swan-maiden. But this interpretation seems very doubtful, though it appears not improbable that it is Weland who is here represented; the fact that the attributes of a smith and a pair of wings appear in the same carving speak for it. Maybe the woman is Beadohild, whom Weland intends to shame. As he is depicted below her, his smithy may be underground. The wings are presumably those which Weland has made for himself and with which he is going to fly away.

We have thus proved that the legend of Weland was widely and generally known in England before the poem "Völundarkviða" was written by a Norwegian from

Hálogaland, while we have no such ancient proofs that the legend was generally known at such an early period in Germany, or any other country. But even if the legend were known so early in North Germany, there is every reason to suppose that, judging by the usual direction of the flow of culture in the ninth century, this Lay of Vølund, which a Norwegian poet from Hálogaland treated in his poem "Vølundarkviða," came to the Norwegians from England, and not by way of Denmark from North Germany.<sup>1</sup> In the ninth century, when a race of Slavs dwelt on the Baltic and in the eastern part of Holstein, and when the Saxons were on a lower level than the English, both morally and socially, only a very feeble stream of culture from North Germany reached the west and north of Norway. And, on the other hand, with the ninth century began a new epoch in Norway's relations with the British Isles. From the north many Viking ships and peaceable merchant vessels set out for the west. Certainly the expeditions of the Norwegians went more to Scotland and Ireland, and those of the Danes to England. But the Norwegians also had frequent and lively intercourse, both friendly and hostile, with the English. As early as 787 Norwegian Viking ships came to England; the Scandinavians also came into contact with Englishmen in Scotland and Ireland, which is seen by the fact that the legends and language of old Irish tales are influenced by Scandinavian and English. English life and culture largely affected the Norwegians, not only directly but also through the medium of the Danes, especially those with whom the Norsemen were brought into contact in the British Isles. In the tenth century, according to the Saga, Harald Haarfagre sent his son Haakon to the English King to be brought up, and Harald's elder son, Eirik (who was once King of Norway),

<sup>1</sup>The oldest testimony from Germany is the expression *Vuelandia fabrica*, of Walthari's mailcoat in Ekehard's "Waltharius," from about the year 930. But this does not prove any knowledge of the Saga of Weland in its entirety.

afterwards became King in York. From this it is clear that even in the ninth century there must have been intercourse between Norway and England; a supposition supported by many facts as, for example:—Thorolf, the son of Kveldulf, according to the Saga of Egil, sends a merchant vessel to England from Hálogaland (this seems to have taken place in 874). And we have historical proofs of the statement that Ôthhere or Ottar of Hálogaland entered the service of King Alfred, presumably in the early part of the reign of Harald Haarfagre. In my opinion the probability of the Lay of Vølund, as treated by a Norwegian from Hálogaland in the “Vølundarkviða,” having come to the Norwegians from England, a probability supported by general reasons, becomes a certainty when the poem is examined more closely.

### III.

I will here investigate several details, which show that the author of “Vølundarkviða” obtained the legend from an English source.

(1) The King, who imprisons the smith, is called in the “Vølundarkviða,” *Níðuðr*, gen. *Níðaðar*; in England, *Níðhad*; but in the “Thithrik’s Saga,” in the German tale, he is called *Niðungr*, and in the “Ahang des Heldenbuchs,” *Hertwich* or *Hertnít*. I acknowledge that this argument is not decisive, as the King might have been known in Germany, at an earlier period, by a name more like *Níðuðr*. (2) The King’s daughter is called in the “Vølundarkviða,” *Bøðvildr*; in England, *Beadohild*; but in “Thithrik’s Saga” she is called *Heren*. This may be a Germanic form of *Arienne* or *Arienne*, as *Ariadne* is called in Latin MSS. of Servius from the early Middle Ages.<sup>1</sup> (3) The English poem, “Déor’s Lament,” uses of Weland this expression—

<sup>1</sup> Cf. for the sound change, the old High German *helfuntbein* from Latin *elephantem*; and Dutch *keper* from Latin *caprea*; Anglo-Saxon *glædene* from Latin *gladiolus*. The *H* in *Heren* may be added by the influence of Germanic names in *Here*.

*hine Niðhad on  
nêde legde.*

(Niðhad placed bonds upon him.)

In the "Vølundarkviða," 11, those bonds which are laid on Vølund to bind him are called *naudir*,<sup>1</sup> which is the same word as the Anglo-Saxon *nêde*; and in "Vølundarkviða," 12, Vølund asks, "Who are you who (*á logðu*) placed bonds on me?" The verb here used, *á logðu*, is the same as *on legde*, which is used in the Anglo-Saxon poem. (4) With reference to the pregnancy of the King's daughter, the adjective used in Norwegian (*barni aukin*, stanza 36) is the same as the Anglo-Saxon (*héo éacen wæs*). (5) There is also a similarity, which can hardly be accidental, between *æva skyldi* (it should never have been so), in Bøthvild's answer to her father in the last stanza of "Vølundarkviða," and the words used of Beadohild, with which the part concerning Weland concludes in the English poem—

*æfre ne meakte ðriste geðencan hû ymb ðæt sceolde.*

(She never dared think boldly of what would happen—*i.e.*, with regard to her pregnancy.)

It is worth noticing that in the same stanza of the "Vølundarkviða" occurs—

*ek vætr hánnum vinna máttak*

(I had no strength to resist him),

*i.e.*, *máttak*, denied, the same verb as *ne meakte*, used in the English poem in the same place. Niedner, who has pointed out the last three similarities, remarks with reason<sup>2</sup> that the Norwegian poem hardly presupposes the existence of the short lyrical Anglo-Saxon effusion. As we know now, from sources other than this short lyrical

<sup>1</sup> *naudir* is not used elsewhere in Old Norse with this meaning, except in "Sigrdr." *i.*, where Sigrdrifa's bewitched sleep is called *fólvar naudir*.

<sup>2</sup> "Zeitschr. f. deutsch. Alt.," xxxiii., p. 36 fol. I had, independently, noticed these similarities, with the exception of No. 5.

epic, that the legend of Weland was known in its entirety in England, the only probable explanation of the similarities we have mentioned is this—that both the “*Völundarkviða*” and the short Anglo-Saxon lyric, “*Déor’s Lament*,” have been modelled on a longer Anglo-Saxon epic concerning Weland. The carvings on the whalebone casket also point to such an Anglo-Saxon poem.

Many investigators, especially those of German nationality, have come to the conclusion that that common source from which the “*Völundarkviða*,” and the Anglo-Saxon poem, “*Déor’s Lament*,” were taken, was a Low German poem; but this is to make a *détour* for which there is no reason. Several reasons, given as conclusive, for the “*Völundarkviða*” having its origin in one or even in two German sources have been proved false. The name *Slagfiðr*, which I discussed above, gives no such proof. It is said that the swan-maidens flew through *Myrkvið*. This word has been explained by German investigators to mean *Saltus Hercynius*, and their opinion is that the name has been preserved from a Saxon poem. But *myrkvið* only denotes “the dark forest,” and several places in Norway have borne the name *Myrkviðr*.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, no valid proofs that the Anglo-Saxon poem, “*Déor’s Lament*,” had a Low German origin, have been produced. The name of the King’s daughter, *Beadohild*, is, of course, no proof of this, as in German originals she is never called by any name which could correspond to this, but in “*Thithrik’s Saga*,” *Heren*. The King’s name, *Niðhád*, is a genuine Anglo-Saxon name, the second part of which is also found in the masculine names, *Wulfhad*<sup>2</sup> and *Wighaad*. Why cannot the Low German name, *Nidung*, of the King, in “*Thithrik’s Saga*,” be a German corruption of the Anglo-Saxon name, *Niðhád*? Several names and expressions in “*Völundarkviða*,” due to the influence of Anglo-Saxon poetry, also prove that the

<sup>1</sup> In Fritzner’s “*Dictionary of the Old Norse Language*.” 2nd edition.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Searle, “*Onomasticon*.”

Norwegian author of the poem knew and imitated an English poem on Weland.

In stanzas 4-8 of the "Vølundarkviða" it is said of Vølund—

*Kom þar af veiði veðreygr<sup>1</sup> skyti.*

(From the chase came the weather-eyed marksman.)

We do not find this epithet applied to a marksman in Norwegian, but we still say in English, "to have a weather-eye," "to keep one's weather-eye open." But when we compare with the Norwegian lines, lines in the Anglo-Saxon poems such as, *Þonne hie of wādum wêrige cwómon* ("Gúðlác," 183) (as they came weary from their wanderings), and *wêrige æfter wæðe* ("Andreas," 593) (weary after the wandering), we see that the Norwegian poet has had an English poem as model, and that he, where the Anglo-Saxon poem had *wêrig* (weary), has in his poem used *veðreygr* (weather-eyed), which had quite a different meaning, but was akin to the Anglo-Saxon word in sound.<sup>2</sup> We see at the same time that the English which the Norwegian used as his model can hardly have been written in the Northumbrian dialect, for *wêrig* was in Northumbrian *wærig*. Stanza 5 says of Vølund forging—

*hann sló gull rautt við gim fástan.<sup>3</sup>*

(He forged the red gold towards the sparkling jewel).

<sup>1</sup> The MS. has, in the first place, *vegreygr*.

<sup>2</sup> In Old Norse the same name is pronounced either *þjóðrikr* or *þjórikr*.

<sup>3</sup> The MS. has *gim fástan*. If *fástan* is here the superlative of *fár*, and denotes "the most radiant," it was, in all probability, pronounced as a tri-syllabic word as *faastan*. We might, however, consider *fástan* elliptic accusative, which must be translated adverbially as "incessantly." Many have understood *við gim* to mean "by the fire," from the neut. word *gim*, "fire." But this word is never found in the Old Norse prose literature, nor in the oldest, more popular poems, whose metre is more free, but only in the artificial Icelandic poems later than about the year 1000. The origin of the word remains unexplained. I suppose that *gim* (neut.), "fire," has arisen from the fact that in "Vølundarkviða," 5, *gim* has wrongly been explained to mean "fire."

*i.e.*, he set the jewel in gold.<sup>1</sup> This *gim*, acc. of *gimr* (jewel), from which *gimsteinn* is formed, is a borrowed word, from the Anglo-Saxon *gimm*, which, again, presumably through the Irish *gemm*, comes from the Latin *gemma*. In stanzas 6, 13, and 30, *Níthuth* is called *Niara dróttinn*. Hitherto no explanation of this expression has been found. To explain it I must touch briefly on the origin of the legend, without here giving a real proof of my conception of it. *Vølund*, or *Velent*, the marvellous workman, is, as a punishment, kept by force on an island by a fierce King, to whom he came from a foreign land, and whose anger had been aroused. *Dædalus*, the marvellous workman, is kept by force by King Minos on the Island of Crete, to which he had come from a foreign land. In the oldest Greek writings Minos is mentioned as a just King, but the Alexandrians call him fierce and unjust. *Servius* calls him *crudelis*, and speaks of *Minois sævitia*. The fact that, in this, the Germanic legend tallies, not with the oldest Greek, but with the later Græco-Roman tale, is, in my opinion, one proof among many that the connection is not founded on original relationship, but on later transmission. In "Thithrik's Saga," *Velent*, like *Dædalus*, comes flying over the sea to the strange King, who receives him as a friend and whose service he enters. We may compare the story in "Thithrik's Saga," that *Velent* fells a tree, hollows out the trunk, and sails in it away over the seas, with the Greek tale that *Dædalus* was the first to invent axe, saw, and sailing-ships.

One remarkable likeness between the *Vølund* legend and the *Dædalus* myth is the following:—Both make for themselves wings to get away from the King who keeps them back, and both fly away on those wings they have made for themselves. In the face of this similarity it is arbitrary to refer *Vølund's* flying powers—quite contrary to the statement of the legend—to his supposed quality as a spirit of the air. This would make the cutting of his

<sup>1</sup> Cf. "Hygin. Poet. Astr.," ii., 5.—*Corona. Hæc existimatur ariadnes fuisse . . . Dicitur etiam a Vulcano facta ex auro et Indicis gemmis.*



sinews meaningless. The King's name (Norse, *Níðuðr*; Anglo-Saxon, *Níðhad*; Old German, *Nidung*) denotes that he was malicious, just as Minos, in the later story, was described as fierce.

The prototype of Nithuth being Minos may possibly explain to us that he was called *Niara dróttinn*. Servius on Virgil's "Æneid," vi., 566, has—*Rhadamanthus Minos Æacus filii Jovis et Europæ fuerunt; qui postea facti sunt apud inferos judices*. This note has gone over to the "Mythograph. Vatican.," ii., 76, where we have, *qui facti sunt apud inferiores judices*. I have proved before that both Servius's "Mythological Notes" and the "Mythographs of the Vatican" were in the early Middle Ages known in Britain, and that some features in Northern myths have their origin in them.

A literal Anglo-Saxon translation of *inferiores* is *neodran* or *neoderan*. The Old Norse *Njárar*, from *Njaðrar* (cf., *hvárir* from *hvaðrir*), answers in sound to the Anglo-Saxon *neodran*. When the Norse poet calls Nithuth *Niara dróttinn*, he has, according to this explanation, taken this from an Anglo-Saxon poem which called *Níðhad* the King of *Neodran*. But the Anglo-Saxon poem could not have preserved any traces of the fact that the Latin expression (of which the Anglo-Saxon was a translation) denoted the awful King as a king who afterwards became a judge in Hades.<sup>1</sup> Stanza 10 calls *Vølund álfa ljóði*, and in stanzas 13 and 32 *vísi álfa; ljóði* must therefore denote "lord," "prince." The word occurs nowhere else in the Norse language; it is taken from the Anglo-Saxon *léod* (prince). The alteration in the form from the Anglo-Saxon word is caused by the necessity which the Norwegian felt for distinguishing the word from *ljóðr* (people), and marking it as a derivation of this.

<sup>1</sup> I have also considered the possibility of the correct expression in "Vølundarkviða" being *Njörva dróttinn*, and of *Njörvar* being a poetic description of the people who bind, lame, and imprison *Vølund*. Cf. Anglo-Saxon *nearu*, angustus, angustia, and Old Norse *Njörvasund*—really, "The Narrow Sound."

When Vølund wakes after having been bound, he asks (in stanza 12), "Who are the men who placed bonds on me?"

*Hverir ro jofnar  
þeir er á lögðu  
besti "byr" síma  
ok mik bundu?*

Here there is no sense in the text of the manuscript. It should in all probability be—

*þeir er á lögðu  
besti yr síma (bonds of bast).*

The form *besti* for *bast* (Dat., *basti*) is not found elsewhere in Norse. I opine that this form is taken direct from the Anglo-Saxon Dat. form, *bæste*, in an English poem on Weland. In the same way the expression, *á stræti*, in "Hamðismal," xii., has, according to Zimmer, been taken from the Anglo-Saxon, *on stræte*, where *stræte* is the Dat. of the feminine *stræt*.<sup>1</sup>

In stanza 17 the wicked Queen advises the hamstringing of Vølund—

*sníðið ér hann  
sína magni.*

The second of these lines seems, in its Norse form, metrically irregular, as in Norse the first syllable of *sína* is short, but the Anglo-Saxon form, *seonwa*, suits the metre; and therefore here also the Norwegian poem seems to have had an English model.

In stanza 18, l. 7-8, Vølund says of the sword which he made for himself, but which Nithuth stole from him—

*sú er mér "frā" mækir  
æ fjarri borinn.*

<sup>1</sup> Finnur Jónsson reads in "Vølundarkviða," *bestesima*, but this does not explain *byr* in the MS. We find in several places in "Vølundarkviða" traces of later work, which consists of inserting in the first of the two alliterated lines, two alliterations instead of one, which has injured the meaning. Thus in 2, 3: *fógr mæf fira*, instead of *fógr mæf fira*; 9, 3: *hár* (for *ár*) *brann hrísi*; 34, 7: *ok undir fen fjóturs* (for *sjótuls*).

All editors<sup>1</sup> have understood *frā* to be *frann*, i.e., *fránn* (burnished). But in the last stanza of "Völuspá" this word is written *fran*. But in "Brot of Sigurðarkviðu," xii., 1, we find *frā*=*fram*; in the prose which precedes "Gríp.," *frā vís*. And therefore in the "Völundarkviða," stanza 18, we should read—

*Sú er mér "fram" mækir æ fjarri borinn;*

*fram* is here most likely preserved from the English model, with the meaning of *frú*, in spite of the fact that *fram* used as *frú* does not occur in Old Icelandic.<sup>2</sup> The accentuated and alliterated *fram* here governs the preceding *mér* (cf. Anglo-Saxon, *he hine feor forwæc mancynne fram*, "Beowulf," cx., where *feor* is used in connection with *fram*). The two words, *feor*, *fram*, are used in Anglo-Saxon in conjunction, where the accentuated *fram* can bear the alliteration. As the sword is characterised by Völund in the preceding lines, the designation here of that same sword only as *sá mækir* (that sword) is stronger than a new addition, *sá fránn mækir*.<sup>3</sup>

The word *kista* (coffin), which is used in stanzas 21 and 22, and also elsewhere in Norwegian, is a foreign word, coming from the Latin *cista*, though it is not necessary that this should have come to Norwegian through the medium of English (Anglo-Saxon, *ciest*). Stanza 24 tells us that Völund has murdered Níthuth's young sons—

*und "fen fósturs"  
fetr um lagði.*

The expression is repeated in stanza 34, when Völund

<sup>1</sup> Even the editors of the "Phototypic and Diplomatic Reproduction of the MS.," cf. p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> But, on the other hand, in Swedish (see Kock, "Arkiv.," vi., 31-34, and Noreen, "Altschwedische Grammatik," p. 189, § 248, 3, Note 2.

<sup>3</sup> As *fram* in general was not used in Norse as in "Völundarkviða," 18, and as *fránn* (burnished) was a suitable epithet to a sword, the words *sá er mér fram mækir*, "Völundarkviða," may perhaps have occasioned the expression *þann inn frána mæki* in "Fáfn." i.

relates what he has done. No satisfactory solution of the expression has yet been given. Vølund's hamstrings were cut, but he was not bound in the smithy, therefore "acle-chains" cannot here be the meaning of *fjósturr*.

On the English casket we see a headless corpse at Weland's feet. I think the original expression is—

*und fen sjötuls  
fætr um lagði*

He laid the feet of Níthuth's sons deep down in the mud, at the place where he sat: *sjötuls*, Gen. of Anglo-Saxon *setl*, *seotl*, *setol* (seat). As the word was not used in Norse in this sense, *sjötuls* (either by verbal or written transmission of the word) was changed to *fjósturs*. The word *jarknasteina*, Acc. pl. (25, 35), a sort of shining stone, which also occurs in "Guðr." i., 18, and iii., 9, is borrowed from the Anglo-Saxon *eorcnanstān* or *earcnanstān* ("Crist." 1196).

In stanza 28 Vølund says—

*Nu hefi ek hefnt  
harma minna  
allra nema einna  
"íviþ giarira."*

The last word in the manuscript may also be *giarira*, altered to *gianra* or *giarnra*, with *rn* interlaced. This word contains, as its first syllable, *ívið* (malice), which is not found elsewhere in Norse, and is borrowed from the Anglo-Saxon *inwid* (*inwit*). Here the writer seems to mean *íviðgjarnra* (cf. Old Saxon, *inwiddies gern*). F. Jónsson remarks with reason that *íviðgjarnra* is not an epithet which harmonises with *harma*. He inserts, therefore, *íviðgjørnum*, but Sijmons prefers *íviðgjarnri*. One of these expressions is probably the original. But it seems to me to be possible that *íviðgjarnra* may be a faulty transmission to Norse of the Anglo-Saxon poem's *inwid-gyrna*, from *gyrn* (sorrow); cf. Anglo-Saxon, *inwitsorh*. The transmission may have been caused by *gyrn* not being found in Norse, and by Anglo-Saxon *gyrne*=

*georne*, *gyrnes*=*geornes*, and other similar dialectic forms.

In stanza 29 it is said of Völund that directly after he had completed his revenge he flew away laughing. The stanza begins thus:—*Vel ek, kvað Völundr*. *Vel* is not found in Norse used in this way. Here *Vel* is the same as the Anglo-Saxon joyful exclamation *wel*, as in *wel lá!* (Lat., *euge*), and in *wel him ðæs geweorces*. This exclamation suits *hlæjandi*, which follows, very well.

The King, when Völund has confessed all to him, says, in stanza 37, "You could have said nothing which could have caused me greater sorrow, or for which I would *níta* you worse, Völund."

*ní ek þik vilji, Völundr!*  
*verr um "níta"*

Here *níta* has no sense. I suppose that an English poem on Weland had *nêtan* or *genâtan*, i.e., oppress, downtread, torment, and that the Norwegian poet has preserved this as *neita*. But as the Norwegian word *neita* (to deny) has the by-form *níta*, *neita* was here changed afterwards to *níta*.<sup>1</sup>

In the above I think I have proved that the "Völundarkviða" is a transplanting of an English poem on Weland,<sup>2</sup> and that this transplanting was effected by a Norwegian from Hálogaland, who, just as did Ôththere, who was in the service of King Alfred, spent some time in England.

#### IV.

In order that we may more clearly decide the time in and the circumstances under which the "Völundarkviða"

<sup>1</sup> This *neita* (as I have supposed it found in "Völundarkviða") differs from the Old Norse *hneita*, "Fms.," iv, 58:—*kallaði Óláfr sverðit hneiti; þvi at honum þótti þat hneita snur sverð fyrir hvassleika sakir*, which Fritznér translates, "to hurt, to put aside." Moreover, in a modern Norwegian dialect, *neita*, "to hurt, offend" (Aasen); especially "irritate by sharp reproaches; to sting, to prick" (Ross).

<sup>2</sup> Long ago, N. F. S. Grundtvig, in "Nordens Mythologi eller Sindbilled Sprog" ("The Mythology or Parables of the North"), 1832, p. 176, said, "Evidently the Lay of Völund . . . is translated from the Anglo-Saxon."

was composed, I will enquire into the race of the "swan-maidens." The Norwegian poet describes them as coming from a foreign land. The first stanza of the poem tells us that the maidens came flying from the South, and that the *Southern* maidens sat down to rest at the brink of a lake. Here follows a stanza which throws light on their race. Hlathgunn and Hervør were daughters of Hlødvér, Ølrún was Kiar's daughter.<sup>1</sup> In old Icelandic writings the Frank name Hlodoweo (Chlodewich or Ludwig) is given with this name Hlødvér. From this Müllenhoff<sup>2</sup> has supposed that these two swan-maidens were daughters of a Frank King. The third swan-maiden, Egil's wife, is said to be Kiar's *dóttir* ("Vølundarkviða," 15; in the prose prologue, *Kiar's dóttir af Vallandi*). This mythical King is also named in "Atlakviða," where Gunnar says that he owns helm and shield from Kiar's hall (*ór höll Kiars*). In a verse in the "Hervarar Saga"<sup>3</sup> he is said to have been of yore ruler over the Valir.

*Ár kváðu ráða . . . Vølum Kiar.*

Who is Kiarr? As he is said in olden times to have ruled over the Valir, and as Cásere (*i.e.*, Cæsar, the Roman Emperor) is said, in the Anglo-Saxon poem of "Widsið,"<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I insert after stanza 1, stanza 15, and read as one stanza:—

(2a) *Hlaðguðr ok Hervør  
borin var Hlødvé,  
[en] kunn Ølrún  
var Kiars dóttir,  
Ein nam þeirra  
Egil at verja  
fögr mæv "firu"  
fuðmi ljósum.*

Sijmons inserts stanza 15 between stanzas 2 and 3.

<sup>2</sup> "Zeitschr. f. deutsch. Alt.," xxiii., 167 fol.

<sup>3</sup> Bugge's edition, pp. 265, 346.

<sup>4</sup> "Widsið," ed. Grein, v., 76 ff. :—

*mid Cásere  
se þe winburga gewæld ichte  
wiolena and wilna and Wala rices.*

to have ruled over the kingdom of the Wealas, some scholars<sup>1</sup> consider that Kiarr is the same name as Cæsar. But at such an early date the people of the North must have got the name Cæsar either from the Kaisar of the Goths or from the Cæsere of the Anglo-Saxons, and I am unable to explain how either of these forms could have got to the Norse Kiarr<sup>2</sup>; I therefore turn to another supposition.

Müllenhoff compared the name *Kiarr* with the Irish masculine names, Cearmad, Ciarmac, Cearbhall, Ciaran, Ciarvaidhe, etc., and has come to the conclusion that Kiarr was a Breton King, or what he found less likely, a King in the British Isles.<sup>3</sup> But Müllenhoff was unable to prove how a Breton King could bear a name only to be found in Ireland. Besides, he is at fault when he thinks that the Irish name Ciaran has the same root as Cerball. I think that Müllenhoff was, however, partly on the right track here, though he was not himself able to reach the goal.

The King, who in the poem has become Kiarr of Valland, must have been a real historical person, of whom the Norwegians had often heard. He is mentioned together with Hløðvér, who, as I mentioned before, is a Frank ruler, Ludwig. And in the "Hervarar Saga," Kiarr is called King of the Valir immediately before Alfrekr, or, according to other transcriptions, Alrekr enn frækni, King of the English. In him Müllenhoff<sup>3</sup> has already recognised Alfred the Great.<sup>4</sup> The fact of Kiarr being men-

<sup>1</sup> Holtzmann, "Altdeutsche Gramm.," i., 99, and Heinzel, "Über die Hervararsaga," p. 506 (=92). I had myself, quite independently, reached the same result.

<sup>2</sup> The relation between the Old Norse forms, *isarn*, *isarn*, and *járn*, can give no assistance to an explanation.

<sup>3</sup> "Zeitschr. f. deutsch. Alt.," xxiii., 168.

<sup>4</sup> In "Flateyjarbók," i., 25 (= "Fornald s." ii., 2), we find *Alrekr hinn frækni* a son of *Eirekr hinn málsþaki*, and father of *Vikarr*. By the influence of the name of this Northern Saga-King, the English name *Ælfred* was changed to *Alfrekr* or *Alrekr*. In a similar way "Saxo Grammaticus" has confused the names *Gautrekr* and *Godfrøðr* when he writes, "Gotricus qui et Godefridus est appellatus" (p. 435).

tioned together with Ludwig of the Franks and Alfred the Great of England shows us who Kiarr most probably was.

In the "Landnámabók"<sup>1</sup> are named, among the Kings in foreign lands at the time Iceland was becoming inhabited, the Emperor Hlōðver Hlōðversson, *i.e.*, Ludwig II., who died 875 (876 ?); and then Elfráðr enn ríki in England (871-901) and Kjarvalr in Ireland. This last-named is Cerball (a name which was later written Cearbhall), King of Ossory, in Southern Ireland. In 847 he began the strife against the Scandinavians in Dublin, and killed many of them. After the Norwegian Ólaf Hvíte became King in Dublin (in 853), Cerball united himself to the Danes and won with them a great battle against the Norwegians in Tipperary. In 858 and 859 he fought together with Ivar, Ólaf Hvíte's brother. About 860 he fought against the Normans, led by Rodolf or Rolf, King of Waterford; and in the following years he fought first with, and then against the Normans. Cerball died in 887 or 888.<sup>2</sup> Icelandic sources, probably less authentic, make Kjarvalr King in Dublin, and relate that several of his daughters married Norwegians.

The fact that Kiarr of Valland is in one verse mentioned together with Álfrekr (*i.e.*, Alfred) of England, and in another with the Frank Hlōðvér (*i.e.*, Ludwig, probably Ludwig II.), leads us to believe that Cerball (Cearbhall), whose daughters married Norwegians, is the historic model for the Kiarr of Valland of the Norwegian poem, the Kiarr whose daughter married Egil, Vølund's brother. In my opinion, a Norwegian poet has altered the Irish name Cearbhall to *Kiarr Valr*, or Kiarr of Valland (acc., *Kiar Val*<sup>3</sup>; Kiarr has two syllables). The name Cearbhall

<sup>1</sup> "Ísl. s." i, 25.

<sup>2</sup> For information concerning him, *cf.* especially Steenstrup, "Normannerne," vol. ii, and Todd, "Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh."

<sup>3</sup> We may compare this mistake with another: that Pontius in Pontius Pilate was, in the Middle Ages, understood to be derived from Pontus, and was therefore translated by Anglo-Saxon, *se Pontisca*, and Old Norse, *enn Pondverski*.



is quite distinct from the root *ciar*, *i.e.*, dark, from which comes *Cíarān*, and from *Ciar*, the ancestor of *Ciarraigne* (Kerry), in Ulster. But a Norwegian about the year 900 might very easily confuse these two roots, just as the learned Müllenhoff has confused them in the nineteenth century. In the language of the Icelandic Sagas, *Valland* denotes North France. Properly, the name *Valir* should denote the Bretons. The English used the name *Wéalas* of the inhabitants of Wales, and *Cornwéalas* of those of Cornwall. And Anglo-Saxon *wealh* denotes generally a slave, just as *valu mengi* (in "Sig.," 66) denotes slaves. There are traces that the Norwegians at the beginning of the time in which they became acquainted with the people of the West, used the word *Valir* for all Celtic people, and in a less restricted sense than was the practice later; it was also used for the Irish. *Valþjófr*, *i.e.*, slave from *Valland*, is the name of a son of the Icelandic settler *Ørlyg*, who was brought up in the Hebrides; *Valþjófr*, a grandson of *Helgi Magri* from Ireland. *Vali* (or *Váli*) the Strong is the name of a Norwegian who was first the man of King *Harald Haarfagre*, and who afterwards took up his abode on the Hebrides. In any case a Norwegian who had no intimate knowledge of the Celts might easily transform *Cearbhall* to *Kiarr Valr* (acc., *Kiar Val*), and my opinion seems to gain strength from the fact that in the second stanza of "*Völundarkviða*" it is said of *Kiar's* daughter—

*Ein nam þeir.*  
*Egil at verja*  
*fógr mæ "fira"*  
*fadmi ljósum.*

*Finnur Jónsson* explains this:—"mæ fira : eine Umschreibung der Frau=die Tochter der Menschen" (a rewriting of the word "woman"=the daughter of man). But this gives us an artificial and hardly distinctive expression, scarce befitting this poem, the method of expression of which is otherwise so direct and natural. I therefore opine that the original expression is *fógr mæ*

*Íra*,<sup>1</sup> i.e., the fair maid of Irish race; cf. *þursa meýjar* ("Voluspá," 8); *dís Skjöldunga* ("Helga kv. Hundingsbana," ii., 51).

When the swan-maiden, in spite of the fact that her father is Kiarr of Valland, is called an Irish maiden, my opinion that Kiarr of Valland is modelled on the historic Kjarval or Cearbhall of Ireland is substantiated. In the poem he is made the father of one of the swan-maidens; the poem is therefore not older than the ninth century. But a King who died in 887 or 888 could hardly have been so used by a poet before the year 900 or thereabouts. This can be said with so much more certainty because that poet who changed Cearbhall into Kiarr Valr could not have known him intimately. We have, therefore, here, in my opinion, the important fact that the date of the "Vølundarkviða" cannot be much earlier than about 900. Neither does the date of the poem seem to be much later.<sup>2</sup> I dare not deny the possibility of the Norsemen having known the name Vølund before the "Vølundarkviða" was conceived, but we have no proof of this.

The author of the poem must have become acquainted with the name Kiarr, or rather Kiarr Valr, either in England or elsewhere in the West. Here he also learnt the name of Hløðvér, King of the Franks, or perhaps even on a voyage to France. In this connection we can lay stress on a few unessential similarities in expression between the poem "Vølundarkviða" and an Irish poem. In stanza 40 Níthuth asks his daughter, "Is it true, Bøthvild, what they have told me?" (*Er þat satt, Bøðvildir, er søgðu mér?*) And she answers (stanza 41), "True it is, Níthuth, what they have told you."

*Satt er þat, Niðaðr!  
er sagði þér.*

<sup>1</sup> For the metre cf. *dýrt lín spunnu*, stanza 1, l. 8, and Sievers in Paul-Braune, "Beitr," x., 523.

<sup>2</sup> Here I agree with F. Jónsson, "Den Oldnorske og Oldisl. Litteraturs Historie," i., 212.

In a verse inserted in the Irish tale about the battle of Ross-na-Ríg, Conchobar asks, "Is it true what the men say?" (*In fir an atfiadat na fir?*) and Iriel finishes the verse, which gives the answer with, "It is true what they say" (*Is e a fir a n-arfiadat*<sup>1</sup>). Nithuth says to his wicked wife, who counselled him to harshness towards Vølund, and who thereby occasioned the death of his sons (stanza 31)—

"Joyless I watch, little I sleep after the death of my sons;  
Cold is it in my head, cold to me are your counsels."

In the Irish tale of Ronan, who killed his own son, which is first found in the "Leinster Book" of the twelfth century, Ronan, by reason of the backbitings of his wife, lets himself be persuaded to have his own son, her stepson, and the foster-brother of his son killed. He sits by his son's corpse and wails out verses to her, among which we find—

"Cold is the wind by the warrior's house; dear were the  
warriors 'twixt me and the wind      Sleep, Echaid's daughter.  
There is no rest for me, e'en if you do not sleep, for I see my  
son in his garments soaked with blood."<sup>2</sup>

I dare not insist that these likenesses must necessitate historical connection. But we cannot but acknowledge, in contemplating the second comparison, that the spirit of the Norwegian and the Irish poem are closely connected.

In stanza 39, Nithuth's best slave is called Þakkráðr. This name, which is not Northern, the poet may have learnt in England<sup>3</sup> or North France, as it was common in Normandy in the form of Thankred.<sup>4</sup> When Vølund is waking in his bonds, Nithuth asks, "Where did you, Vølund, King of the Elfs, obtain our treasures which we

<sup>1</sup> Hogan's edition, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> *Revue Celtique*, xiii., 388.

<sup>3</sup> See Thancred in Searle, "Onomast. Anglos."; Hruschka, "Zur Ags. Namenforschung," ii., p. 245.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Joret, "Patois Normand," pp. 21, 65, 93.

found in Wolf-dale?" Völund answers, "This gold<sup>1</sup> was not on the road of Grani; I thought our land was far from the rocks of the Rhine." Here it seems that Níthuth's home was laid near the Rhine. This does not tally with the prose prologue which says that Níthuth was King of Sweden. It likewise does not tally with the Norwegian poem's location of Völund's home in Finnmarken, for Níthuth and his men cannot ride from the Rhine to Finnmarken in a couple of nights. Neither could the report that Völund is alone then have come so quickly from Finnmarken to Níthuth. Therefore Níthuth's location in the Rhine lands seems to be older than the introduction of the poem into Norway. Therefore the tale of the gold that the Wælsing gained on the Rhine was known in England as early as the ninth century. But why did the Anglo-Saxon poem, as I suppose it has, place Niðhad's home in the Rhine provinces? I find the solution in the fact that he, as I have supposed in the above, was made King of the Neoðran. This was a translation of *inferiores*, "the inhabitants of Hades." But, later, this was supposed by the English to mean, "the lands on the Lower Rhine." The legend of Sigfrid or Sigurd was, in my opinion, located on the Lower Rhine as early as the ninth century. In the "Niebelungenlied," the name of Siegfried's and Siegmund's kingdom on the Rhine is Niderlant.<sup>2</sup>

None of the heroic poems preserved in the Edda seem to be older than the "Völundarkviða"; in fact, hardly so old. This lay owes no influence to any still preserved in the Norwegian tongue. There is freshness and originality in its poetic diction. The artificial transcriptions, *kenningar*, are here entirely wanting. The usual poetic expressions for "King" (*buðlungr*, *skjoldungr*, etc.), which previously had an intrinsically different, a more special meaning, and are found, among others, in the "Helge

<sup>1</sup> *gull var þat* (in MS., *þar*) *sigr*.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Sijmons, "Heldensage," in Paul's "Grundriss," ii., (a) p. 33. (b) p. 65.

Lays," are also wanting. The metre in the "Völundarkviða" shows, by its greater freedom, that it is more original than that in most of the other poems of the Edda. It is, on the other hand, to be noticed that several of the poems of the Edda show much similarity with the "Völundarkviða" in poetic style and in single expressions of epic forms. This proves either that these poems were influenced by the "Völundarkviða," or that they originated in the same poetic school. A Norwegio-Icelandic myth of the gods, the myth of Odin and the holy drink of poetry, seems to have been influenced by the Saga of Völund. But I will not here investigate all these questions concerning the influence of the poem of Völund on other Norwegio-Icelandic poems.

## V.

It is pretty certain that the Norwegians received from the English, about the year 900, not only those points of the legend which are treated in the "Völundarkviða," but at the same time other points, not necessarily in verse form. I here mean especially the story of Völund's brother Egil. "Thithrik's Saga," whose information concerning Velent is based chiefly on Low German tales, tells us in detail of Egil, in connection with Velent, and of his prowess in archery. When we read (p. 91), "People call him Olrvnar Egil," this is not taken from that version of the tale of Velent which the author of the Saga obtained from North Germany, but from an older Norwegian tradition, for here only do we find Ølrún mentioned.

In "Völundarkviða" we read that, when the three brothers lived together in Wolf-dale, they hunted, and it is proved by a poetic name for arrows<sup>1</sup> which occurs in a stanza composed in the year 976 by Eyvind Finnsson Skaldaspillir, that Egil was renowned in Hálogaland at that time as a marvellous archer. Then the Icelandic poet, Hallfreth, talks of Egil the Archer, in a verse which

<sup>1</sup> *hlaufstíldr Egils gauþna*, in "Haralds Saga gráfelds," at the end.

seems to have been composed about the year 987.<sup>1</sup> The tale concerning him was rife in Iceland<sup>2</sup> for many years in the Middle Ages; maybe also in Norway, which we may perhaps conclude from the expression quoted in "Thithrik's Saga." We must suppose that this tale also (of Egil the Archer) was brought to Norway from England, because the tale of Weland's brother, the marvellous archer, and the hunter Ægili, was (as can be proved, and which I shall here proceed to do) known in England at a time when the "Völundarkviða" was not thought of.

Many English names of places begin with *Ægles*,<sup>3</sup> among them *Æglesburg* (Aykesbury), not far from *Welandes stocc*. On the afore-mentioned Franks casket of whalebone, the date of whose Anglo-Saxon Runic inscriptions is the eighth century, there is represented, as a part of the same carving, and to the right of the two women, who represent Beadohild and her maid coming to Weland, a man, with his back turned to the women. In his hands he holds by the neck two out of four birds, probably geese, which are to be seen before him. This carving is explained by the story of "Thithrik's Saga," that Velent's brother Egil catches birds of various kinds to provide wings for Velent. Here also the carving on the casket has a point not found in the "Völundarkviða." Jiriczek ("Deutsche Heldensage," i., 19 ff), and with him Sijmons, on the other hand, explain the carving which shows us the person holding the birds to mean that King Niðhad's young sons, when chasing birds, come to Weland's house. In my opinion, this explanation is wrong. Nowhere does the epic tale mention, as an important point in the story, that the King's sons caught birds, or held them in their hands. The Saga says only that they came with their bows to Velent to get him to make arms for them, and

<sup>1</sup> Snorra Edda, edition A.M., i., 422.

<sup>2</sup> In a verse in "Ragnars Saga Loðbrókar," in "Fornald. s.," i., 279, the arrow is called *Egils alnar leygr*.

<sup>3</sup> See Kemble, "The Saxons in England," i., 422; Binz in Sievers' "Beitr.," xx, 150.

afterwards that, as they did not return, the King thought they had gone to the forest to chase birds and animals, or to the shore to fish. The fact that the person represented has his back turned to the women, also argues against his being one of the King's sons. It is true that Sijmons thinks that this means that the King's sons, as is said in "Thithrik's Saga," walked backwards when they went to Velent the second time. But this is impossible, for at the time they walked backwards, early in the day, before the sun had risen, and came to Velent to get him to make arrows for them, they had none, and could therefore not possibly have had the time or the means to shoot birds. And besides, those two birds represented on the casket, which he is not holding in his hand, remain, in this case, unexplained. And, on the other hand, the fact that, according to "Thithrik's Saga," Egil catches birds, whose feathers he brings to Velent, is an important point in the story, and it is therefore quite admissible to consider it represented on the casket by that person who holds two birds in his hand. Finally, I will bring up the following in refutation of Jiriczek. If the person with the birds on the casket is explained to be Weland's brother, the representation of the chronological sequence of events in the story is correct; farthest to the left is the corpse of one of the King's sons, to the right of this stand the two women, and farthest to the right is the fowler. By this it is indicated, and correctly, that the murder took place first; then Weland meets the King's daughter and her serving-maid; and, finally, his brother obtains for him wings for flight. If Jiriczek's explanation were right, the artist would unhappily have separated the dead son from the living by the two women.<sup>1</sup>

I think I have proved in the above that the English tale of the eighth century, from which we first became acquainted with the legend of Weland and his brother

<sup>1</sup> The reason of the fowler being smaller than the figures on the left, is simply that there was not enough room for him on the casket, and this can give no support to Jiriczek's explanation.

Ægili, is unanimous with "Thithrik's Saga" in saying that Weland, while with Niðhad, made wings for himself of feathers brought him by his brother Ægili. On another side of the same casket, *i.e.*, on the lid, we see represented a man drawing his bow to shoot an arrow from it. Over him is written in Runics, "Ægili." Now both the North German and the Norwegian legend knew Egill, Valent's (Vølund's) brother, as an archer and a hunter. I have especially laid stress in the above on the fact that the carving on the front of the English casket shows that the English tale of that time knew Weland's brother as a fowler. No other old English or Germanic hero of the name of Ægili (Egill) is known. It is therefore certain that Ægili the Archer on the casket is Weland's brother.<sup>1</sup>

We cannot reconcile the story in which Ægili is represented on the casket with those points in the legend which we obtained elsewhere. We see several warriors step forth from left to right towards the archer. Farthest to the left a man armed with sword and shield marches on. Behind him is a man clad in a cuirass, sword in hand, bending his head and his body from the waist upwards, probably because he is wounded. To the right we see a man, armed with spear, shield and helm, stepping towards Ægili; to his right is another cuirassed warrior, holding his sword in his right hand, and in his left a shield, with which he covers himself. The shield is struck by two arrows, which must have come from Ægili's bow, as no one else in the carving has one. A third arrow is in flight towards the warrior's head. On his right is a man armed with a sword. He has sunk down, having been struck in the breast by an arrow.

I will pass over, for the present, three persons in the centre of the carving.

Ægili the Archer stands before a house. Behind him, inside the door, we see the upper half of some person, probably a woman. She also is looking at the attackers,

<sup>1</sup> This is denied by Jiriczek and Sijmons, without sufficient reason, and without their being able to give any other explanation.



and holds in her hand an upright staff, or something of that sort (it can hardly be an arrow). The explanation of this scene seems to be that Ægili is defending himself, his house and his wife against an advancing attack. It is pretty certain that we know of no other such story from any other country telling of Weland's (Völund's, Velent's) brother Ægili (Egil), but I think I shall be able by comparison with another tale to make it probable that the solution just given of the carving on the casket is the right one.

In "Thithrik's Saga," chap. lxxv., this story is told of Egil, Velent's brother: that in the presence of the King he shoots an apple from his little son's head. In an English ballad we are told the same story of the apple about an English archer, William of Cloudesley. This ballad is printed in "Bishop Percy's Folio MS.," vol. iii., p. 76 ff., and by Child, "The English and Scottish Popular Ballads," v., No. 116. The last scholar who has examined the story contained in this ballad is Klockhoff (in "Arkiv f. Nord. Filol.," xii., pp. 191-9). This same ballad tells us the following: William of Cloudesley, an outlaw, was married, and his wife Alice lived in Carlisle. Once he visited her there, but an old woman whom, out of charity, he had taken to live in his house, told of his coming to the Justice of the County. Accordingly, the house was surrounded on all sides. William seizes his bow, and his wife a battle-axe. He first of all defends himself by shooting arrows—

"Cloudesle bent a wel good bowe  
That was of trusty tre,  
He smot the justice on the brest,  
That hys arrowe brest in thre."

The house is set fire to, and William exhausts his arrows—

"William shott soe wonderous well  
Till hes arrowes were all agoe."

He thereupon, when his wife and children are safe, dashes out of the house, only to be overpowered.

I have mentioned above that the tale of an archer shooting an apple from his son's head has been told both of Velent's brother, Egil, and of William of Cloudesley. We have especially noticed above that the archer represented on the casket is Weland's brother. In my opinion, therefore, the tale represented on the casket shows that another tale (besides the one of him shooting an apple from his son's head) was told of Ægili; a tale which was afterwards also told of William of Cloudesley. I explain the carving on the casket, therefore, as follows:—The warriors of a hostile King (probably Niðhad) advance, armed, on the house where Weland's brother, Ægili, lives with his wife. It is the intention of the attacking party to take Ægili prisoner. But when he sees the enemies advance he places himself with drawn bow to defend himself. Behind him, in the house, sits his faithful wife. We see how he, like William of Cloudesley in the ballad, wounds one of his enemies in the breast with an arrow. This same carving has three other figures which I have hitherto not discussed.

At the top, and in the very middle, seemingly suspended in mid-air, we see a naked man in a horizontal position; his face is downwards, and he has a shield before him. This can be no other than the flying Weland, as Hofmann correctly surmised. As the flying Weland is represented in front of Ægili, who stands with drawn bow, the artist must have known this point in the story, told in "Thithrik's Saga," that Egil (Ægili) was ordered to shoot at Velent (Weland) as he was flying. But the relation of this to the story of Ægili has been rather unhappily represented, because the artist, in order to get in as many as possible of the events of the story, has, on the front of the casket, shown on the same level events which did not occur simultaneously.

In the middle, furthest down on the lid, just under the man hovering in the air, we see a naked man on his back, with his shield before him. I can give no certain explanation of this man. But he, like the one in the air, is

naked, and, as taken all in all, he is represented answering in every particular to the first man, except that he is on his back on the ground, we cannot deny that the artist possibly has here intended to represent what is told in "Thithrik's Saga," that Egil fell to the ground when he attempted to fly.

Finally, to the left of the recumbent figure, we see a clothed but unarmed person, his head bent forward. His one hand is held to his forehead. Presumably only on account of lack of room, he is placed quite close on the recumbent figure, so that the top of his hair is under this one's shield, and his one hand touches the foot, and the hand he holds to his forehead is close to one knee of the recumbent figure. This bending man has two peculiarities which demand our attention. The artist has treated his hair quite differently to that on any other figure on any side of the casket—for it is standing on end. And suspended in the air over the head of this person is an arrow, which, strangely enough, has its head turned upwards. Each of these peculiarities must have a special reason. Just by the arrow's point are represented three small round articles; we see two of the same over the man who is on his back, and five of them round Ægili. The art which has been at work here is so naive and helpless, that we can easily find various meanings in the carvings; I shall therefore assert nothing positively as to what the artist intended, and what I say must be considered only as a supposition. I think that the bent figure is Ægili's son, from whose head he had to shoot the apple, as he did according to "Thithrik's Saga," and as William of Cloudesley did according to the ballad. By the upward-turned arrow, the artist naively, and not very happily, tried to show that the arrow did not touch him, and in that case the round things by the arrow point are apples. The artist has amused himself by drawing many of these as ornamentation. The hair standing on end, towards which he is reaching with his hand, presumably denotes the fright which seizes the youth after the shot has

successfully removed the apple; he touches his head to assure himself of the fact that the apple has really gone. I will lay stress on yet another detail in the carving. In front of Ægili is an arrow which he cannot yet have used; this turns our thoughts to that point told us in the Icelandic MS. (A.B.) of "Thithrik's Saga," that Egil, when he has to shoot the apple from his son's head, places another arrow beside him. (The Norwegian vellum, however, tells us that he had two arrows, besides the one he used to shoot the apple from his son's head.)

The explanations which have been given of the carving on the English casket are not all certain, but I consider the following to be so. The English artist who executed these carvings, not later than the eighth century, knew those points which were also in "Thithrik's Saga," *i.e.*, that Ægili brought his brother Weland those feathers of which he made wings, and that Ægili was ordered by King Niðhad to shoot at the flying Weland. The artist knew also other tales of Ægili's prowess as an archer, especially that he, like William of Cloudesley, defended himself with arrows against advancing foes, who attacked him in that house where his wife was. According to this, the tale in "Thithrik's Saga" of Egil's prowess as an archer cannot, as Klockhoff thinks, have been borrowed from the Norwegian tale of Heming. As we know that, as early as the tenth century, Egil was known in Norway as an archer and ski-runner, the Saga of Heming must, contrariwise, have been borrowed from the tale of Egil, which was brought to Norway from England.

In the Middle Ages a tale was told in France of a marvellous forger of arms, *Galand* (*Galans*), who was said to have made several famous swords.<sup>1</sup> This name of the smith was brought to the French by the Normans. This is proved by the vowel *a* in the first syllable, and especially, as Jiriczek remarked with reason, by the fact that the

<sup>1</sup>As found in Depping and Michel, "Vèland le forgeron"; "Altdeutsche Blätter," i., 34-47; W. Grimm, "Heldensage," Nos 28, 29, 30; Jiriczek, "Deutsche Heldensage," i., 23.

oldest French chronicle, dating from the first half of the eleventh century, and telling of fights against the Normans in the second half of the tenth, has the name *Walander* with the Norwegian nominative ending. In a French tale Galans is mentioned as one of the three brothers who were all marvellous smiths. But the name of the one brother, *Ainsiax*, seems to have come to the French from the Germans. This circumstance, that the name *Walander* came from the Normans to the French, makes it probable that the tale of *Vølund*, or *Walander*, was widespread in England, not only among the Norsemen, but also among the Danes; *Walander* is rather Danish than Norwegian.

## VI.

In the prose prologue to the "*Vølundarkviða*," *Níthuth* is said to be King of Sweden (*Svíþjóð*). This I consider a later idea, to be ascribed to the Norwegians of *Hálogaland*. This makes it necessary for *Vølund's* home to be supposed to be in *Finnmarken*. *Níthuth* could not in reality, as in the poem, have come to this place from the Rhine lands in a few nights. The Norwegian, therefore, found it necessary to place *Níthuth's* home nearer to *Finnmarken*. In the ninth century *Finnmarken* was bounded by the countries of *Ångermanland* and *Jæmtland*, the former of which was, at that time, reckoned to *Helsingjaland*.<sup>1</sup> Up to the heights there came, from the West, Norwegians, and from the East, *Kylfingar* (*i.e.*, Swedes, according to *Gustav Storm*), who held markets with the Finns, and demanded tribute from them. Then there were often fights between the Norwegians, to whom the Finns were subservient, and the "*Kylfingar*," for these two nations accused each other of unlawfully taking tribute from *Finnmarken*. It became strife to the death, with no quarter. The later, peculiarly Norwegian form of the

<sup>1</sup> See "*Egil's Saga*," chap. xiv., and *G. Storm*, in "*Akademiske Afhandlinger til S. Bugge*," p. 73 ff.

legend of Vølund, makes Níthuth, King of Sweden, attack, take prisoner and maim Vølund, son of the King of the Finns, in Wolf-dale, in the wilds of Finnmarken, and makes him accuse Vølund of having stolen treasures, which belonged in reality to Níthuth. This reflects, therefore, in accordance with what I said before, historic events in Finnmarken about the year 900.

The old Norse poem, "Haustlǫng," assumes a knowledge of the poem of Vølund. This poem, "Haustlǫng," is generally allocated to the year 900 or thereabouts, but is, in my opinion, not older than the second half of the tenth century. The fact that the giant Thjazi is, in this poem, called "*Níðuðr*<sup>1</sup> of the Stone," proves that a knowledge of the tale of Vølund is assumed. As the country of the giants is called, in a closely related poem, "Cold Sweden," *Svíþjóð kólga*,<sup>2</sup> we might from the expression, "*Níðuðr* of the Stone," for a giant, be led to suppose that the author of "Haustlǫng" also knew Níthuth as King of Sweden. But this conclusion is less certain.

From Norway the tale of Vølund has passed to Sweden, and has become naturalised there, which was made easier because Níthuth, in the Norwegian tale, even before this passed to Sweden, was said to be King of Sweden. In Richard Dybeck's "Runa" (New Series, folio, 1870, i., p. 39) the following is stated:—"In the parish of Misterhult, in the East of Småland, by the lake of Göttern, is a forest-clad mountain range called Fjälla and Gullstrecket. In the lake of Göttern is an island called Gullholmen, which, according to a remark on a map of the beginning of the eighteenth century, was previously called Bågön (Baugöen, *i.e.*, the island of rings). Another small island in the lake is called Silfverholmen. Close to this place, in the same parish, a valley stretches to the lakes of Göten and Rammen, and there lies the village of Ulfvedal, which has given to a part of

<sup>1</sup> *grjótníðuðar* (gen.) Snorra Edda., ed. A.M., i., 312.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid* i., 298, in "Thórsdrápa "

the parish the name of Ulfvedalsgränd. . . . By the lake of Göttern is the farm Vällehorfva, close to which a small stream runs down into the lake. The bridge over this is called on a map Verlebro. It is said that in olden days there lived by the lake a famous smith, by name Silvernagel, who, whenever he wished, went into the mountains and fetched gold, which he found there in long bars. This he wrought, and yet he himself did not become rich." In this tale we have, as I agree with Dybeck and Svend Grundtvig ("Danmarks Gamle Folkeviser," iv., 592) in thinking, a probable scene of the story of Völund. But I do not think that the collector of the "Sæmundar Edda" knew these Smaalands tales, and therefore made Níthuth King of Sweden. I think, on the contrary, that the Norwegian legend, which gives the name of the place as Ulvdale, and makes Níthuth King of Sweden, passed to Sweden. It has been allocated to East Smaaland because the name Ulvedal was found there, and there it was fused with an originally North German form of the legend which called the smith Veland or Verland.<sup>1</sup>

The fusion of a more specially Scandinavian form of the legend, most closely related to the English, and of the one imported from North Germany, can also, quite apart from "Thithrik's Saga," be traced in Denmark. In the Danish ballad of "Kong Diderik og hans Kjæmper" ("King Diderik and his Champions") (Danmarks Gamle Folkeviser," ed. by Svend Grundtvig, vii., B. 15), Vidrik says—

"Verland is my Father's name,  
A clever<sup>2</sup> smith was he;  
Bodil was my Mother's name,  
A beautiful King's daughter."

<sup>1</sup> The names of places, Vällehorfva and Verlebro have, of course, their origin in the name of the brook, and not in the name of the smith. But popular superstition seems to have connected these names with Veland and Verland. The name Gullholmen has not necessarily its origin in the legend, but may have been connected with it at a later date. Dybeck's explanation of the name Bågön is hardly correct.

<sup>2</sup> I correct *høu* (clever) for the word *skøu* in the MS.

The name of the smith's mother, *Bodil*, bears no likeness to any name that we know Weland's mother to have had in Germany. The vowel *o* in the first syllable clearly proves that it did not come from Germany. *Bodil* is evidently a corruption of the Norwegian name of Vølund's mother, *Bøðvildr*, taken from the English name, *Beadohild*. But we are not able to prove more concisely how the name *Bøðvildr* has come to the Danish ballad as *Bodil*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>I have proved elsewhere that the ballad, "Ridderen i Fugleham" (The Knight in Birds' Feathers), which has been sung in Denmark ("Danmarks Gamle Folkeviser," No. 68), in Sweden ("Arwidsson," No. 112), and in the Faroe Isles, has been influenced by the tale of Vølund. See Sophus Bugge and Moltke Moe, "Torsvisen," p. 108.

*Christiania, 1899.*

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## “ E D D A . ’

BY EIRIKR MAGNUSSON, M.A.

I SHALL begin my remarks to you by at once stating how I propose to deal with the subject I have chosen for my discourse to-night. In the first instance, I shall draw attention to the one derivation that has been proposed of the word “Edda,” as a genealogical term. Next, I shall consider the derivation and interpretation that the word, as a book-title, has received. Lastly, I shall endeavour to show what historical facts and probabilities may fairly be taken to favour one, to the exclusion of the rest, of the interpretations that have been given of “Edda” as a book-title.

In dealing with these points I shall endeavour to be as explicit as the nature of the subject will allow. But as we are left utterly without any direct documentary evidence showing how the name came to be used as a title of a book, we have to thread ourselves along, as best we can, by what side-lights we can obtain from the evidence of historical probability. Any conclusion arrived at, on such a ground, will carry conviction only proportionate to the strength of the evidence adduced. To expect or demand more, would be unreasonable.

The oldest document in which the word “Edda,” as a genealogical term, occurs is the *Lay of Rig* (*Rígsþula*, *Rígsmál*), a poem which in editions of the Older Edda is included in the group of its mythic songs. The only old copy of it existing is found on a loose leaf, the 78th, of the so-called Codex Wormianus of the Younger Edda, a MS. that dates from the earlier half of the fourteenth century.<sup>1</sup> The end of the poem is lost with the leaf that once followed the one on which is now preserved what remains of it.

The term “Edda” stands in so peculiar a relation to the rest of the poem, that I cannot very well avoid giving a general résumé of it, though thereby I digress somewhat from the direct line of my argument.

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<sup>1</sup> No. 242, fol. in the Arnemagnæan Collection at Copenhagen. From Iceland it was despatched by its last owner there, Arngrímur Jónsson, as a gift to Ole Worm, Denmark's most famous antiquary of the seventeenth century, in whose possession it is known to have been already by 1628.

A short preface in prose tells us that the poem is evolved out of an *old tale*. Heimdal, the northern counterpart of the Agni of the Rig Veda, travelling along a sea-shore, so begins the poem, comes upon a homestead where the door was ajar; there was fire on the floor, and at the hearth sat together a hoary man and wife, called Ai and Edda (great grandfather and great grandmother); she, becoifed in ancient fashion. Heimdal sat down betwixt the two, and spoke wise lore to them. Then Edda took a lumpy loaf, heavy and thick and swelled with bran, and set it on the table; broth in a bowl on the board she placed, there was boiled calf, the best of dainties. Three nights the god spent at the house. In nine months' time Edda gave birth to a child, and the name given to it was Thrall (þræll), slave. Well he waxed, and well he throve; on hands wrinkled skin, knotty knuckles, fingers big, foul his face, louting back, long heels withal.

Then he began to try his strength: to tie bast, to make burdens, and to bring fagots home the livelong day.

Next there came to the homestead the gangrel-legged one, with scars on her foot-soles, with sun-scorched arm, a crooked nose, and she named herself Þir (A.S. þeow), a bondswoman. From her and Thrall sprang the progeny of slaves.

Again Rig came to a "hall" with a sliding door; fire burnt on the floor, man and wife were busy; the good man was whittling a loom-beam, his beard was trimmed, his hair shorne over the forehead, his shirt was tight fitting; there also sat the good wife and swayed her rock (spinning-wheel), plying her hands working stuff for weeds; on her head was a bent coif, a smock on her breast, a kerchief round her neck, brooches bedecked her shoulder. Afi and Amma (=grandfather and grandmother), owned the homestead. Rig again makes himself familiarly at home and spends three nights at the house, and in due course Amma gives birth to a son who, having been sprinkled with water, is named Karl, Carle, Churl. The mother swathed in linen the ruddy bairn with rolling eyes. The boy grew and throve apace, broke in oxen (to the plough), fashioned ploughs, timbered houses, built up barns, wrought carts, and followed the plough.

Next they brought to the house her of the hanging keys and of the goat-hair kirtle and wedded her to Karl. She is called Snor (=A.S. snoru, O.G. snuor, Lat. nurus)=daughter-in-law. She sat linen-veiled; the couple were married, they joined their rings

(wealth), spread the sheets and set up house. From this couple sprang the kindred of Karlar, Carles, Churls, Tillers of the Soil.

Again Rig went on his ways, and came to a castle, the doors of which faced the south. The door was let down (hugin) and in it there was a ring. He went in. The floor was bestrawed (covered with straw or rushes). The married couple sat and looked each other in the eye. They were Father and Mother. The lord was twisting a bowstring, bending the bow and shafting arrows. But the lady was giving heed to her arms, ironing linen, starching sleeves, strutting (straight) was her coif, on her breast was a brooch, trailing were her garments, her sark blue-dyed: her brow was brighter, her breast lighter, her neck whiter than newfallen snow. Rig was entertained luxuriously. He spent three nights at the house and in due course of time Mother gave birth to a male child, sprinkled it with water, and swathed it in silk and gave it the name of Earl. His hair was flaxen, his cheeks were bright, his eyes were sparkling as a young serpent's. He grew up at home. He parried with linden-shield, fitted bowstrings, bent the elm-bow, shafted arrows, flung the dart, shook frankish spears, rode horses, flung the dice, drew swords and practised swimming.

So, one day, Rig comes running out of the wood and declares himself to be the father of the youth and gives his own name, Rig, to him. Earl Rig follows the profession of arms and conquers for himself an earldom and takes for wife the daughter of Hersir, called Ern(a). And from this union sprang “Konr ungr,” the youngest of the sons of Earl and Erna: a term whereby the poet tries in his own way etymologically to account for the northern name of Konungr.

There are many points about this poem which go to show that it cannot be very old. The description of a thrall as a householder, tiller of his own fields and owner of a cow or cows, as the fare of the house testifies, goes against all we know from northern laws about the social status of a slave, who could own no property and could even inherit none. The author of *Rígs-mál* is ignorant of this, which means that he pictures the thrall's social condition, not from what he knows from observation or daily experience, but from what, on deficient antiquarian study, he imagines was the case. And the conclusion lies therefore near at hand that the poem was written by one to whom slavery was an institution of the past, that

had left no other impression upon his mind than that the slave was a coarse-limbed, gross and ugly looking being. In fact he does not describe a slave, but a tolerably well-conditioned peasant cottager who tills his own plot of ground. It has been supposed by some interpreters that the fare that Afi and Amma dished up for Heimdal, and of which the lay makes no mention, must really have been the "broth" in a bowl and the "veal" with which Ai and Edda regaled the god. But the word "soð," which for want of a better rendering I translate "broth," means merely the water in which anything has been cooked. According to the lay of Helgi the slayer of Hunding, "soð" is an article of food for pigs; and to this day it hardly counts as an article of human food at all in Iceland. So there is no really urgent reason to transfer to Amma that part of the fare at Edda's which consisted in boiled veal served up with the fluid it was boiled in.

Now as to Edda, we can clearly see that she is in no proper sense a great-grandmother. The fact of the matter is that the poem, or rather the original story, out of which it grew, is illogically conceived. Its purpose is to account for the evolution of society, the ultimate goal of which was reached in the position of a king. The problem is solved by making the god Heimdal light upon the homes of three different married couples, all of them childless, Edda and Amma presumably long past all hope of ever becoming mothers. Ai and Edda must have had their parents, of course, as well as Afi and Amma, Father and Mother; but of this the poem takes no account whatever; nor of the fact that Heimdal's sons, begotten with these mothers, marry wives of their own class. That is to say, the poet does not conceive or realize that the three classes of society he calls in a god to procreate in a somewhat Don-Juanic manner, were all existing before Heimdal made his erotic round of the earth. He further commits the mistake of making slaves the original type of man. Again, there is no relationship of descent between the three classes he deals with; the consequence being that Edda is in no sense mother to Amma, nor Amma to Mother. If, therefore, he meant Edda to signify great-grandmother and Amma to stand for grandmother, his own production proved that these terms could in no proper sense bear such an interpretation.

Of course, we can see what the aim of the original story was, if it is faithfully reproduced by the poet; the idea was, to show how

from humble origins human society went through successive stages of evolution, until the highest dignity, that of king, was reached. In order to bring this idea home to people, the poet, or his original, hit upon the device of finding mothers with distinctive names to figure as typical starting-points of the three classes into which he thought fit to divide the god-begotten race. His language supplied him for that purpose with no other more suitable terms than just those he made use of. He was not working out any serious genealogical statement. The whole was a poetical conceit, not intended for serious analysis, which it could not bear, but for the amusement of the vulgar.

Since the Eddas became known to the outer world in the seventeenth century, scholars and interpreters have been agreed that, on the strength of the Lay of Rig, *Edda* must mean great-grandmother, although in the Icelandic—the most genealogical literature in the old Teutonic world—it occurs as a genealogical term, nowhere else—that is to say, if we except the so-called “*ökend heiti*”= simple appellatives in *Cod. Reg. of the Younger Edda*, where the term is simply borrowed from the Lay. But a serious attempt at giving an account of the derivation of the word in this sense has appeared first in our own day only. In the “*Corpus Poet. Bor.*,” II., 514, Dr. Vigfusson proposed a derivation of the word in this sense which cannot be passed over. And lest by curtailing his remarks I should run the risk of seeming unfairly to present his view, I will quote him at such length as to guard myself against any charge on that score.

He says:—“The first point to settle is, how this word came into the Lay of Rig; no solution, which does not account for this part of the problem, can be correct. The poet makes *Edda* the ultimate ancestress, grandmother, first mother, from whom, by Rig, the earliest race of mankind sprang. Tacitus tells us how the old poems of the Germans of his day make ‘*Terra Mater*’ the mother of ‘*Tuiscon*,’ whose son is ‘*Man*.’ And he gives the German name of *Terra Mater*—*Mammun Ertham*. Here, between the *Ertha* of Tacitus and the *Edda* of the Lay, there is a twofold identity, viz. the common notion of MOTHER, and the resemblance of both words in form and sound. In the days of the Righ Lay, the Low German form of earth would still have been ‘*Ertha*,’ as in Tacitus’ time, while the High German (even Frankish?) would be ‘*Erda*’; the Old English ‘*Eorthe*’ weakened;

“the Old Northern ‘Eorth’ monosyllabic. Both words Earth and Edda are, we take it, etymologically identical, Edda being a poet’s adaptation of the foreign bisyllabic form, by him aptly designed as great-grandmother. The High German form meets all requirements. According to the regular Northern formula, ‘zd’ becomes ‘dd’ (thus the old ‘hozd’- becomes ‘hodd’-, the old ‘hazd’- becomes ‘hadd’-, and so on). The Old Northern tongue had no *rd*, only *rth*; the nearest sound to a German or foreign *rd* would thus, in fact, be the assimilated *dd*.”

“It is not hard to fancy,” Vigfusson goes on, “how it came about. Let us suppose that a Western man has learnt a snatch of a High German song on that favourite subject with all Teutons, the *Origin of Mankind* and *Mother Earth*, from a Southern trader or comrade (there were Germans and Southlings in Orkney and Scandinavia in the tenth and eleventh centuries, as we know from history and Saga). In this song the word ‘Erda’ (or *Grandmother Erda*) occurs; he puts it into his own tongue as neatly as he can, and the result is ‘Edda.’ Or, if he himself did not make the change, the minstrel would have done so, who sang it after him, for the Lay had passed through many Northern mouths before it got written down in our Codex.”

Vigfusson’s etymological argumentation, which is somewhat lacking in coherency, amounts then to this: There is the twofold identity of form and sound between the O.H.G. Erda and Icel. Edda, then Earth and Edda are etymologically identical, because “according to the regular Northern formula *zd* becomes *dd*.”

But this argument is altogether beside the question, since no such Teutonic or other form as Ezda for a word meaning earth is known to exist. The known forms are: Greek *ἔρρα*, Goth. *airpa*, O.H.G. *erda*, M.H.G. *erde*, O. Sax. *ertha*, A.S. *eorde*, Du. *aarde*, O.N. Icel. *\*erðo*: *eorð*, *iorð*, *jörð*, Dan.-Swed. *jord*. That is to say: the *r* is a primitive element of the stem all through as far back as we can trace the word.

The *zd* examples of stem-terminations that Vigfusson quotes apply to *-a* stems only, and cannot have anything to do with a fem. *-i* stem like *eorð* or a fem. *-an* stem like Edda.

Besides, on Vigfusson’s own showing, there was no *etymological* identity in this case, which was one of simple sound-imitation, or transference of a German sound to the organs of speech of the author of Rig’s Lay or somebody else, who “put it into his own

tongue as neatly as he could,” with the result that Erda came out in the form of Edda.

This, then, is a case of mechanical imitation strangely miscarried. For, since “the Northern tongue had no *rd*,” but “only *rth*,” why did the Northern bard then not follow this only law, and pronounce Erda erða?

Now he is supposed to have learnt from a Southern trader or a comrade a snatch of a German song on that favourite subject the Origin of Mankind and Mother Earth, in which for mother earth the word Erda occurred. This word, we are to believe, was so foreign to him, that he could do nothing with it but to imitate it, in the form of “Edda,” and mechanically to foist upon it the technical genealogical sense of great-grandmother.

This poles-asunder sort of relation between the German word and the mind of the bard is made plausible by the statement that Southlings and Germans visited Orkney and Scandinavia in the tenth and eleventh centuries. But Vigfusson is not doing himself justice here. If there was one people the roving children of the North knew better than any other in the tenth and eleventh centuries, “the days of the Righ Lay,” as Vigfusson has it, that people was their nearest Southern neighbour and kindred, the Saxon or North-German. If there was one idiom with which the Scandinavians were more familiar than any other in those days, that was German. Vigfusson’s conclusion involves disregard of several points which must not be overlooked. We are to suppose that a person, intellectually so wide-awake as is the author of the Lay of Rig, on hearing a snatch of some Old High German song, found it so interesting as to want to learn it by heart, and yet, having accomplished his desire, not only did not understand what “erda” meant, but even troubled not to ask his Old High German friend what the proper sense of it was; the consequence being that, by his own efforts, he failed to recognise in it an equivalent for his own word eorð=earth, made a mechanical imitation of its sound, “edda,” and imbued it with the meaning of *great-grandmother*, in the anthropological sense of “ultimate ancestress, grandmother, first mother from whom by Righ the earliest race of mankind sprang.” All this is an obvious impossibility; and the supposition that *slaves* were the earliest race of mankind is flatly contradicted by the sad history of that unfortunate type of *homo sapiens*.

This is the only derivation of Edda, as a genealogical term, that, so far as I know, has yet been philologically attempted. I think I

have treated it with all the fairness that is due to the great scholar who is the author of it. If my reasoning is not at fault, then this derivation of Edda, as a genealogical term, must be impossible.

Now I pass over to the consideration of Edda as a book-title.

I must introduce this chapter of my remarks by showing, how Vigfusson accounts for the word having come to figure as a title of the Younger or Snorri's Edda. His words are these:—

“From the Lay of Rígh the word Edda passed into that curious “list of synonyms, ‘*okend heiti*,’ which is the base of the Thulor “Collections and of Poetic Gradus, such as Snorri's. Thus the “name got applied to Snorri's book; for it is probable, though not “absolutely demonstrable, that this older draught of Scald- “*skapar-mal* was *headed* by our Lay of Rígh, being in all likelihood “called forth by that very Lay. From it the text in Cod. W. is “derived, for the List of Synonyms, at the end of the MS. of Snorri's “unfinished work, contains the words ‘*móðir heitir, ok amma, “þriðja, Edda.*’ Hence it follows that the author knew the Lay.”

“From Snorri's work, as we have elsewhere shown, the word “came into general use as expressing the very spirit and essence “of the Court-poetry with all its intricate synonyms and figures.”<sup>1</sup> “Thence, by false and misleading application of the scholars “of the Icelandic revival, it got transferred to the old heroic epic “Lays, the ‘Eddic’ poems.”

What Vigfusson evidently means here, though he expresses himself somewhat obscurely, is this, that “*ókend heiti*,” appellative nouns, form the base of the Thulor, metrical lists of such nouns (including proper names too), and form the base of Snorri's Poetical Gradus as well. By this “gradus” he means “Scald-*skapar-mal*,” that portion of Snorri's Edda which deals with “Kenningar,” *i.e.*, poetical circumlocutions (such as, for instance: “*Hildar veggs hregg-nirðir*” = “*Nirðir hreggs veggs Hildar*” = warriors; thus: “*Hidr*” = goddess of war, her “*veggr*” (= wall) a shield, the “*hregg*” (= squall, storm) thereof, battle, the battle's *Nirðir* (*Niords*, gods, creators) = warriors). The “*ókend heiti*” Vigfusson takes to have been the “older draught of Scald*skapar-mal*”; at the head of this “old draught” he thinks the Lay of Rígh probably had its place, and that this “old draught” was called forth by that lay. Into the probability or the reverse of this theory I do not propose to enter. I will merely

<sup>1</sup> “Corpus, P. B.,” I., xxvi.



remark that the “þulor” show no sign of having specially drawn synonyms from the rich store of Rig’s Lay. But attention must be called to what clearly is a slip, namely, that the present text in “Cod. W.” [Codex Wormianus] of the “ókend heiti” is derived from the Lay of Rígh, for we know not from where the old text of “ókend heiti” in that codex was derived, because the whole section of the codex which contained “ókend heiti,” if it ever did, was lost, probably some time in the 16th century, and the lacuna thus created was filled up with paper MS. in the hand of an Icelandic amanuensis of the famous Danish antiquary Ole Worm, some time between 1635-40, the contents being drawn principally from Codex Regius. Consequently the authority Vigfusson means by “Cod. W.” can be no other than “Cod. Reg.” I do not maintain that “Cod. W.” may not have contained the chapter of Snorri’s Edda to which Rask gave the heading of “ókend heiti,” but a stop-gap from the 17th century, demonstrably supplied from sources that no one can identify with the old genuine text of “Cod. W.,” cannot be quoted as Codex Wormianus, and the words “*móðir* heitir—Edda” are evidently in part due to the 17th century scribe himself, who found the corresponding passage in Cod. Reg. reading rather oddly. (See below.)

Well, then, we depend upon the Cod. Reg. only for our knowledge of the fact that the term “Edda” is found included in the vocabulary of “ókend heiti.” But Cod. Reg. is by a long way not the oldest MS. of the Younger Edda. The oldest is the Cod. Upsaliensis, of which I shall have more to say presently. Where that MS. runs parallel, as to subject matter, with Codd. Reg. and Worm., it distinguishes itself from both, irrespective of its extraordinary copiousness of scribal blunders, by at once greater brevity of treatment and more antique mode of expression. Now considering how importantly this MS. bears upon the question of the derivation of the word “edda,” it is of importance to confront the chapter in it that deals with the simple appellatives for women with the chapter in Cod. Reg. that deals with the same subject. I quote from both chapters, of course, only as much as serves the purpose of my argument:—

*Cod. Reg., SE. I., 536<sub>22</sub>—538<sub>8</sub>. Cod. Ups., SE. II., 347 19-22.*

Þessi eru kvenna heiti ókennd. Þessi eru kvenna nöfn

— — — Ekkja heitir sú, er vkend Eckia heitir sv  
 búandi hennar varð sótt dauðr. Mær kona er bondi hennar er  
 heitir fyrst hver, en kerlingar er gam- andaþr.

lar eru. Eru enn þau kvenna heiti, er til lastmælis eru, ok má þau finna í kvæðum, þótt þat sé eigi ritað. Þær konur heita eljur er einn mann eigu ; snor heitir sonarkvön, sværa heitir vers móðir, amma, þriðja edda ; eiða heitir móðir. Heitir ok dóttir ok barn, jóð ; heitir ok systir, dís, jóðdís. Kona er ok köllut beðja, mála, rún búanda síns, ok er þat viðrkenn- ing.<sup>1</sup>

Þær konr elior er einn mann eigo.

Kona er kollvð beþia. eða mala ok ryna bonda síns, ok er þat viðkenning.

From this quotation we learn not only how very largely a *res aucta* the text of Reg. is, as compared with Ups., but also, what is of still greater importance, that while the author of Reg. knows the term "edda," for a certain class of woman, and consequently, as Vigfusson says, must have been acquainted with the Lay of Rig wherefrom the term is borrowed, the author of the original of Ups. had no knowledge of the term in that application, and therefore knew not the Lay of Rig.

Now it is evident that the text of "ókend heiti" in Ups. must chronologically stand nearer to that "old draught" thereof, which Vigfusson was thinking of, than the text of Reg. And if "edda" was included in the nomenclature of simple appellatives for women in the original, from which the Ups. text was copied, it is incomprehensible that the scribe of that text should have left out the whole catena of synonyms in which that term forms one of the links ; all the more so, because of all those synonyms "edda" must have presented itself to him as the most striking.

The only possible conclusion therefore seems to me to be this: the author of the oldest recension of "ókend heiti," in Snorra Edda, that we now can trace, was ignorant of the existence of such a term as "edda" for a great-grandmother. This author

<sup>1</sup> I translate the text of Cod. Reg. only. These are women's nouns "un-kend" (simple). Widow is that one hight, when (hus-)band hers got "sick-dead." May (is) hight first each, but carlines when old (they) are. Are still those women's nouns, that to(wards) blame-speech are, and may they (be) found in songs, though that be not written. Those women (are) hight "eljur" who one man own ; "snor" is hight a son's wife, "sværa" (is) hight a husband's mother ; "amma" (grandmother), third "edda" ; "eiða" (is) hight a mother. (Is) hight also daughter and bairn, "jóð" ; is hight also syster, "dís" "jóðdís." Wife is also called "beðja," "mála," "run(a)" of (hus-)band hers, and is that "with-kenning."

was Snorri Sturluson. Clearly, therefore, Snorri Sturluson knew not the Lay of Rig, consequently *he* could not have given the title Edda in the sense of *great-grandmother* to his work.

This, I beg to state, does not necessarily mean that Rig's Lay is of later origin than Snorri's age, 1178-1241. Still, I ask, what word, passage, turn of speech or allusion to life and manners in that poem tend to make it decidedly older than the 13th century? <sup>1</sup>

Again I must venture to say that on fair grounds no evidence can be admitted to exist showing that Edda, as an appellative for woman, originally was transferred from Rig's Lay to the so-called Snorri's Edda as a title of that book.

Coming now to the consideration of the derivations of Edda as a book title, the first that presents itself is Arni Magnússon's. After rejecting the great-grandmother interpretation and Biörn of Skardsa's suggestion that edda was derivable from Oddi,<sup>2</sup> the home of Sæmund the Learned, whom Biörn took to be the author of the

<sup>1</sup> I would call attention to the words: “kom hann at sal, suðr horfðu dyrr”: “came he to a hall, south looked the door,” Rígs-mál, v. 26. In itself there is nothing striking about the door of the aristocratic hall of Father and Mother facing the south. Only, the words quoted strike an Icelander, me, at least, as indicating that the door of this hall faced the south, because that was what the door of such a hall *ought* to do.

And why should the door of an aristocratic hall be supposed to face the south? Doubtless because those who supposed it thought it was the fashion. Now this notion finds, apparently, for the first time an expression in these words of the *Morkinskinna*, a vellum of the early thirteenth century: “Konungs háseti var á lang-pallinn þann er vissi í móti sólu”: “the king's high-seat was on the long = side-dais that looked to the sun = the south,” which really means that the king's seat was arrayed up against the northern wall of the hall, so that, when he sat in it, he faced the south. This means that the Icelanders, at an early date, got the idea into their head that royal and aristocratic halls, or even halls generally, were so built that their side walls ran west to east. That idea has maintained itself in Iceland down to our own day, cf. Cleasby-Vigfússon's Dictionary 765 45: “the northern bench facing the sun was called öndvegi í æðra, *the higher or first high seat.*” But the idea is quite mistaken. The position of a hall depended upon the lay of the land in relation to water (ocean shore, firths, lakes, rivers) and highways, and its side-walls could, of course, face any point of the compass.—If this mistaken notion of the Icelanders should run under the expression of Rígs-mál quoted above, then that expression would serve a twofold purpose: proving the poem to be *Icelandic* and of comparatively *late origin*.

<sup>2</sup> Vigfússon, who has made a very careful study of Biörn's Edda speculations, does not mention this point, and I have no means of verifying the source of Arni's statement.

Younger Edda, he proposes to derive the term from "óðr," which originally means "wits," the faculty of thinking and reasoning. Later on it is used by the Court poets in the sense of poetry, song, poem, lay; undoubtedly, as I think, on the ground, that in the so-called Bragi's discourses, Braga ræður, in SE. I., 216, it is stated that whoso drinks of the fluid contained in the kettle Óðrerer, which fluid was the spiced blood of the wise Kvaser, which Odin stole from the Giant Suttung, "becomes a skald or a man of lore" (skáld eða fræða-maðr). Arni Magnússon is well aware of this evolution of the sense of óðr, and states it in his scholarly fashion in "Vita Sæmundi Multiscii" (in "Edda Sæmundar hinns Fróða" I., xxii.-xxiii., Hafniæ, 1787). As reason for deriving Edda from óðr he gives, that he has come across the expressions "Eddu list," the art of Edda, and "Eddu reglur," the rules of Edda, in two poets of the fourteenth century. From these expressions he says "it is clearly to be gathered that the said word Edda does not mean a poetical book, but the poetry itself or the doctrine (teaching) of poetry, since metrical art was in use long before the Edda was put to writing." But in this argument Arni overlooks the fact (possibly because he did not know of the existence of 'Upsala Edda') that the poets he mentions obviously knew the rules and art of Edda from a written corpus, which bore that name, and which was regarded by their contemporaries as the standard work, by the rules of which it was obligatory for poets to abide. For both poets, one of whom was a Benedictine abbot of Thingeyrar, the other an Augustinian canon regular of Thickby, bid defiance to the prevailing fashion of slavish adherence to the rules of this poetical law-code.

Arni Magnússon's derivation was taken up by Professor Konrad Gíslason of Copenhagen in a paper he contributed to "Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed" in 1884. On the lines of comparative philology he endeavours, in a most learned manner, to show that Edda may be derived from óðr, and may thus mean what he in Danish calls "poetik," a term equivalent to ars poetica. In support of this derivation he adduces *stedda*, a mare, which he derives from *stóð*, a collection of horses out at pasture and not employed in domestic use; this word is really the same as the English stud. Another corroborative instance he detects in *ledda*, the leaden sinker on a line used for deep-sea fishing. I say leaden, which to you will appear a superfluous epithet to a sinker. But I do it, because I am old enough to remember the time when,

in the East of Iceland, where I was born and bred, the foreign sinker of lead, which exclusively went under the name of *ledda*, was driving out the homely sinker made of a surf-filed oblong spheroid boulder, the longer diameter of which was about eight, the shorter about five inches long. This kind of sinker was called *sakka*, etymologically identical with the English term “sink.” When the *ledda* had got into general use, and the old stone *sakka* was gone out of existence, the two terms, *sakka* and *ledda*, were promiscuously applied to the lead sinker for a while; but now the genuine native term, *sakka*, is, I think I may say with certainty, the one universally and exclusively used; the reason being, that *ledda* was felt to be a foreign word for which there was no use any longer, when it had driven out of the field the old occupier. Well this word, *ledda*, Gíslason derives from *lóð*, which, amongst other things, means a mason’s plummet, and as a technical term for that object, is a modern loan-word in Icelandic.

Now *stedda* is certainly a foreign loan-word. It is found in two fifteenth century MSS., one a copy of the romantic story of Parcial, the other a MS. of Grettis saga. But, of course, it is of a much older date, though most likely it came to Iceland in the Norwegian translation of Parcial’s saga, which is founded on the “Conte el Graal” by “Chrestien de Troyes,” and was done into Norse in the days of the Norwegian king Hakon the Old (1219-1263). Now, to derive *stedda*, a term for the individual we know by the name of *mare*, from *stóð*, a *collective term* for a number of horses of either sex and any age, including foals, seems to me simply impossible. So derived, considering that in that case, formally regarded, it would be a diminutive, what could the word possibly mean but little stud, a small collection of horses of any sex and age out on pasture? The same objection applies to *ledda* if derived from *lóð*: what could the word mean in that case but little plummet? In derivations to overlook the no less delicate than unerring logic of *sense-evolution* must necessarily lead to results that fail to hit the mark.

Now it is a fact that cannot be ignored, that of the many genuine Icelandic stems terminating in -óð there is not one that evolves a diminutive term -edd-. (Masculines: Hróðr, praise; sjóðr, purse; gróðr, growth; móðr, temper; róðr, rowing, &c. Neuters: blóð, blood; flóð, flood; kóð, fry of fish; skóð, scathing weapon; tróð, roof-laths. Fem.: glóð, gleeds; hlóð, hearth; slóð, sleuth;

track—in none of these, or any other similar cases that I can think of, is there any trace of a tendency to form diminutive derivatives in -edd-). And I certainly do not think I overstate the case in saying that such a form-evolution is *altogether foreign to the Icelandic language*. As to *stedda*, I must venture to suggest that it is simply derived from Engl. *stud*(-horse), a stallion, and meant originally a breeding mare.

Gíslason himself admits that Edda is to be regarded as a diminutive of *óðr*; but he translates it “poetik,” *i.e.*, poetics, the art or doctrine of poetry. But to make a diminutive form of a word that means song, poetry, to express anything but song, poetry in some diminutive sense, is altogether contrary to the logic of sense-evolution. And I must regard it as a matter admitting of no doubt, that such a diminutive never could have conveyed the sense of teaching of or instruction in the vast body of laws that regulate the whole art. Besides, there is the incontestable fact, that Edda *was* the name of a book teaching the art of poetry, consequently Edda rules and Edda art are terms that simply mean the teaching relating to the art of poetry which is contained in the book called Edda.

The derivations I have now dealt with meet with so many and so serious objections as to render them obviously untenable.

Now, as the explanation of the name that I am about to venture on is not confined to etymological speculation only, but will be supported by historical facts and evidence of probability, I will begin by briefly glancing at the history of the two books that currently bear the name of Edda.

In the year 1639 one of the most learned men of the North, Brynjólf Sveinsson, was appointed Bishop of Skalholt in Iceland. Soon after his accession to the see he became the possessor of the MS. which contains nearly the whole of the songs that collectively go under the name of The Older Edda. There seems little doubt that he acquired this MS. in the year 1643, for his monogram **U**, with that date affixed, is written on the foot of the first page of the MS. Where or from whom the Bishop got the book we do not know. He caused a copy of the MS. to be taken on vellum and gave it the title “Edda Sæmundi Multiscii.” This copy he gave to the historian Thormod Torfason, but what has become of it is not known. About 1662 the Bishop made a present of the old book to King Frederick III. of Denmark, and now it is preserved in the so-called Old Collection in the Great Royal Library of Copenhagen,

No. 2365, 4<sup>o</sup>. An excellent phototype edition of the MS. was brought out at Copenhagen, 1891, under the superintendence of Prof. Wimmer and Dr. Finnur Jónsson. The age of the MS. is variously referred by various palæographers to the 50 years between 1220 and 1270.

A fragment of a codex that has contained a collection of ancient lays such as we have in Cod. Regius of the Older Edda is preserved in the Arna Magnæan collection of MSS. at Copenhagen (No. 748, 4to). Bugge, in his excellent edition of the Older Edda, has made it clear that both these MSS., the only larger monuments of Old Eddaic Lays now existing, older than the seventeenth century, are descended through various intervening links from one common original.

The songs we now know under the common title of the Older Edda, seem from the beginning to have formed two groups within the same book: the mythical and the heroic group. Of each group there appeared, not later than the thirteenth century, a *popular edition* in the shape of a prose paraphrase, interlarded, after the fashion of the sagas, with verses from the songs themselves in corroboration of this or that statement. The paraphrase of the mythic songs was done by Snorri Sturluson, and goes under the name of Gylfaginning; that of the heroic songs is due to an unknown author, and is known as the Völsunga saga. Where these paraphrases draw upon, or quote verses from, songs which still are preserved in the Cod. Regius of the Older Edda, they show that the text of those songs was so closely in agreement with those still preserved, as to warrant the conclusion that both sets of lays descended from a common written source.

Now as to the Prose Edda, or the Edda of Snorri Sturluson, that work is preserved to us in three principal MSS., the Cod. Regius 2367 4<sup>o</sup>, in the Royal Library of Copenhagen, from the early part of the fourteenth century, defective at the beginning; the Codex Wormianus, from about 1330, now in the Arna Magnæan collection at Copenhagen, N. 242 fol., an imperfect book with many lacunas; the Codex Upsaliensis, the oldest of these three, from about 1300, preserved as No. 11 among the Delagardian collections at the University Library of Upsala.

Besides these principal codices of Snorra Edda, there are still extant several fragments on vellum, all dating from the fourteenth century, except one from the fifteenth.

Of the three principal codices aforementioned, the one that

especially concerns us is the Codex Upsaliensis. It is agreed on all hands that it must be a descendant from Snorri's own original; and Dr. Finnur Jónsson, a first rate authority in these matters, takes the Codex to be a copy of Snorri's own work, or of an apograph of the same. It must have been written by some member of Snorri's kindred or at any rate under the auspices of one. It begins by a titular superscription in red letters, which in literal translation runs as follows:—

“This Book is called Edda. Snorri Sturluson has put it together according to the manner herein set forth. First there is (told) of the Æsir and Ymir. Next thereto is Skaldskaparmál and the names of many things. Last is Háttatal, which Snorri wrought on King Hakon and Duke Skuli.”

This title is in the hand of the scribe who copied the MS. itself, and is clearly the first item he penned of it. Consequently it is not added later, or after the copying of the MS. had been executed. The words: “This book is called Edda,” therefore, can hardly be the invention of the scribe. They must be derived from the original of which this MS. is a copy. Even if they were due to the scribe, they could only mean that he knew, or had learnt, that the name given by people in general to the book was Edda. But the most natural way of accounting for the title is, as I have said, to take it for a copy of an older original.

This MS. bears evidence of connection with Snorri's literary activity and of having been executed at the instance of near relatives of his. For it contains a list of Court poets corresponding to such an one as Snorri must have drawn up and used for his *Heimskringla*; it also contains a genealogy of the Sturlungs, Snorri's kindred, that terminates with a nephew of his, and lastly a series of the Speakers-at-Law (*Lögsögumenn*) down to Snorri's second speakership, 1222-31. The MS. is written probably rather before than after 1300, some 50 to 60 years after Snorri's death.

Such being the case, the conclusion seems warranted that Snorri himself gave this name to his work.

Well, then, this conclusion brings us face to face with certain historical facts connected with the life of Snorri Sturluson, which cannot be overlooked and must on no account be ignored, as hitherto has been the case, when a rational solution is to be attempted of the origin and meaning of Edda as a book-title.



Snorri Sturluson was born in 1178, in the west of Iceland, at a place called Hvam. A child of three years of age, he was taken into fostering at Oddi by the grandson of Sæmund the Learned, Jón Loptsson, 1181; and at Oddi the future historian of the Scandinavian races remained till he was 19 years of age, when (1197) his fosterfather died. Jón Loptsson was universally acknowledged to be the mightiest chief and the highest character in the land; and was succeeded by a son, Sæmund, Snorri's fosterbrother, who combined all the best and noblest characteristics of the famous race of Sæmund the Learned.

What sort of a house was this, at which Snorri spent his studious and eager-minded youth, and where he laid the foundations of his future greatness as critic, historian, mythographer, poet, lawyer, politician? Why, it was a famous house of learning. Sæmund the Learned, after having spent many years in studious pursuits on the continent of Europe, particularly at Paris, was persuaded to return to his native land, a youth of twenty, in 1076. And settling down at the family mansion of Oddi soon bestirred himself in setting up a school there, which his descendants were most zealous in maintaining in healthy emulation with those of Skalholt and Hawkdale. Sæmund himself must have been, of all men in Iceland, about the best versed in contemporary learning abroad, and the wealth of his house supplied him with ample means for getting together a library suitable to his tastes as a scholar and satisfying his ambition as a schoolmaster.

What Sæmund began we know his descendants took zealous care of even into the thirteenth century.

So far, then, we are in possession of these historical facts: (1) That Snorri Sturluson was fostered for sixteen years at Oddi. (2) That Oddi was still a famous centre of learning at the time. (3) That Snorri is the author of the book which the *Codex Upsaliensis* says is called *Edda*. (4) That the first main portion of that book is a prose paraphrase of mythical songs such as we have collected in the book which variously bears the names of the *Poetical*, the *Older*, or *Sæmund's Edda*.

Other historical points present themselves. They are obvious, it is true, and therefore pass without any particular notice, somewhat after the fashion of the walk of man, which is an obvious and unheeded fact, but in reality a continuous succession of interrupted and counteracted falls. It is obvious that Snorri must have had before him a collection of mythical songs such as we know exist

in the Cod. Reg. of the Older Edda. It is obvious that a book containing this collection must have existed. It is obvious that it must have been kept somewhere, and that Snorri must have found it somewhere, or got it from somewhere for the purpose of paraphrasing it. Now the Older Edda is a book for scholars, and always has been. It has never been a popular book or a book for the general reader in the real sense of that expression. And though its language was generally understood by the people, being the same in grammatical form and syntactical structure as the idiom they spoke themselves, the mythic and heroic background of a vast number of its allusions was as much a sealed mystery to the general reader of the twelfth century as it is to him of the nineteenth. Nay, even more so. Orders for copies of such a book must have been few and far between. We know that we can gauge pretty accurately the popularity of the old books of Iceland by the number of MSS. and MS. fragments of them that have escaped destruction to our day. The Older Edda has reached us in two fragments only, for the Cod. Reg., though less of a fragment than A.M. 748, is still but a fragment.

It is an evident matter that such a work would chiefly be found in the libraries of seats of learning. Now, in the days of Snorri there were several such in the country: Oddi, Skalholt, Hawkdale, besides the monasteries. At some one of these such a book was most naturally to be looked for. But it was not a book one would expect to find in the house of an ordinary yeoman.

Seeing that it was quite as likely that it should be found at Oddi as at any of the other seats of learning in the country; and considering Snorri's long sojourn at Oddi and his intimate connection with the lords of that manor from 1181-1241, there is nothing whatever in the nature of improbability about the assumption that it was at Oddi that Snorri became acquainted with the contents of the volume, or that it was from Oddi that he borrowed it in order to bring out his popular prose edition of it, if, indeed, he did not do it before he left Oddi.<sup>1</sup> Now, assuming that such a perfectly natural thing should have happened, why should Snorri have given the name of Edda to a book of his, the first main portion of which was this very paraphrase? Or, if he did not himself give this name to the book, why should his family, under whose auspices the book

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<sup>1</sup> I think it must be granted that in finished stateliness of style, Cod. Ups. stands far behind the later recensions, Reg. and Worm., and bears in comparison to them the stamp of immaturity.

was copied some fifty years after his death, give their sanction to the statement that the title of the book was Edda?

The natural answer to these queries is this: Snorri's book was called Edda by somebody or somebodies for some reason or another. The inventor of the title might have been Snorri or some relative of his or anyone else; but the reason why it took the form of Edda must have been one. Well, the book began with that most important section, the paraphrase, or popularized edition of mythical songs contained in a book preserved at Oddi. Scholars and other outsiders who knew of the existence of such a book at Oddi would naturally, in talking about it, give it a derivative local designation. That designation must take the form of a feminine, agreeing with “bók,” understood, and be derived from the name of the place where it was preserved, in accordance with the laws and feeling of the Icelandic language. The term satisfying these conditions in every way was Edda = the book of, or at Oddi.<sup>1</sup>

Now what name could a popularized edition of this book bear more properly than that of the mother MS.? And this is even what, in my opinion, has taken place, that either Snorri himself or some one else who knew that Snorri's work was a prose edition of the famous Codex of Oddi, *gave the prose edition the name of its poetical original.*

That Edda, as a book-title, is to be derived from Oddi, is a proposition in support of which I may adduce one further consideration. We have seen already that the author of the recension represented by Cod. Upsaliensis did not know the term “edda” as an appellative for woman. Consequently he did not know the document—the sole document, so far as we know—that preserved this word, I mean the Lay of Rig. Yet he calls the book Edda when he sets about writing it; for the first words he penned of the book were these: “Bók þessi heitir edda,” this book is hight Edda. Now, to me it is incomprehensible, that the author of this recension, or the copyist of it (the scribe of Cod. Ups.) should have borrowed out of Rígmál the name Edda, in the sense of great-grandmother, for a title to the book, and yet in the chapter on “ókend heiti” should not only be ignorant of the term as a synonym for woman, but should even betray no acquaintance whatever with that poem. It is therefore an obvious matter that “Edda” has come to figure here, as a book-

<sup>1</sup> Edda is formed from Oddi in the same manner as is “hyrna” from “horn” in “Vatnshyrna,” the book of Vatnshorn.

title, entirely independently of Rígs-mál. And where could it then have been got from, but from Oddi, as already shown above?

But now, you will ask, what about the *etymology* of this strange word? Will that suit or unsuit it for the purpose you maintain it answers?

Well, the fact of the matter is, that we have to deal with two Eddas, sprung from an identical *sound-source*, but from two realities as distinct from each other as, *e.g.*, are Salisbury, England's prime minister, and Salisbury, the episcopal see of that name.

Primitive appellatives are parents of derivative appellatives on one hand, and of proper names on the other. In the Icelandic language there is an old appellative ODDR, an -a stem, meaning a *point* (of an instrument, a weapon, &c.); concurrently with this the ancient language (as well as the modern) has the form ODDI, an -an stem, signifying a point of land jutting into water. Both these appellatives pass at a very early age into proper names, without however at all losing their appellative character and use: Oddr into proper *personal* name only, Oddi into proper name for both *persons* and *places*. What Oddr and Oddi, as personal names for *homo masculus*, primitively signify, is a matter I need not go into. What Edda, derived from these names, etymologically must mean, is too obvious to require explanation. She is the female counterpart of Oddr or Oddi, as, for instance, Æsa is of Asi, Hrefna of Hrafn, Olöf of Olafr, &c. She is the passive, while Oddr or Oddi is the active principle in the evolution of the species, simply: *WOMAN*. This is the *Edda of Rígs-mál*. From Oddi, as a local name, the derivative fem. Edda for a particularly notable book preserved at a place of such a name, is in every way appropriately evolved both as to form and sense. This I maintain is the derivation of the Edda of Cod. Upsaliensis, which, as far as any tangible evidence goes, has nothing to do with Rígs-mál.

In both cases, however, Edda descends from the stems odd- and oddan- in a perfectly correct manner. Only, the palatal mutation of o > e is a phonetic change peculiar to Iceland and unquestionably of late date. Similar cases we have in hnot > hnetr, nut; kom- > kemr, comes; sof- > sefr, sleeps; brodd- goad, > bred-da, big knife; boli, bull, > belja, cow; þollr, pine, > þella, pine sapling, &c.

If I am right in what I have advanced in the foregoing argument, with regard to the real derivation of Edda as a book title, all

attempts of modern scholars to show that the irrelevant lucubrations of Biörn of Skarðsá (1574-1655) are the original source of the tradition which to this day has linked the Older Edda to the name of Sæmund the Learned of Oddi, must be regarded in the light of irrelevancy themselves. That tradition must be allowed to date far rather from the twelfth or thirteenth, than from the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries. This being granted, the solution of the vexed and long discussed question : who was the probable collector of the songs of the Older Edda, need not wait much longer for a satisfactory answer.

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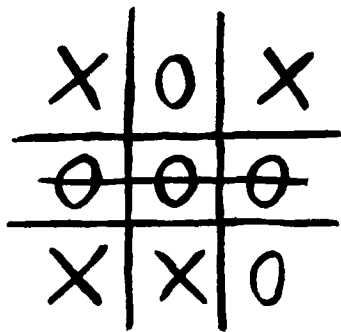


FIG. 1.—OUGHTS AND CROSSES.

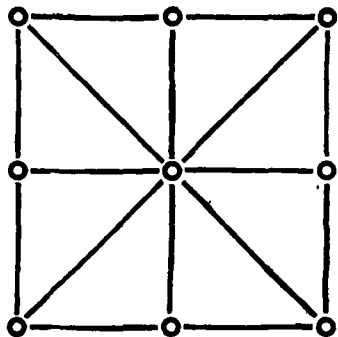


FIG. 2.—NINE-HOLES.



FIG. 3.—DUTCH TILE.

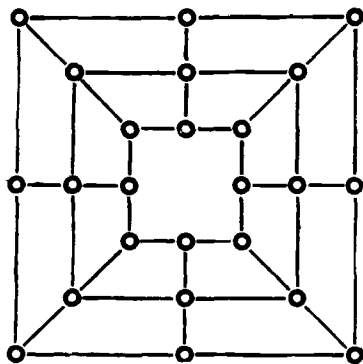


FIG. 4.—NINE MEN'S MORRIS.

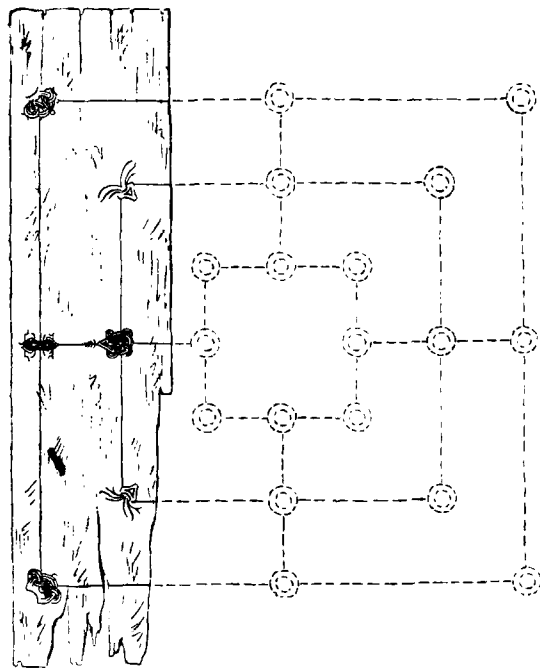


FIG. 5.—BOARD FROM VIKING SHIP.

# NINE MEN'S MORRIS :

AN OLD VIKING GAME.

BY A. R. GODDARD, B.A.

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“The nine men's morris is fill'd up with mud,  
And the quaint mazes in the wanton green,  
For lack of tread are undistinguishable”

*“Midsummer's Night's Dream,” Act II., Scene 2.*

THE recurrence in widely-separated parts of the world of certain similar games and sports goes to furnish us with yet another proof that “all mankind, the world o'er, are brithers a' for a' that.” The early Oriental forms of chess and draughts and kindred table games, the singular animal sports of the native Indians of Guiana, the lines scratched on pavements at Rome and Athens, or on the stone benches of our mediæval monasteries, all tell us that “to play” is as widely human as “to err.”

It was the writer's good fortune to chance upon a pleasant little discovery about eighteen months ago, by which an interesting game, known to be mediæval and Shakspearean, was proved to be centuries older than was suspected, and found to have been a table game amongst our Viking forefathers. When these sturdy adventurers swept the seas with their long ships, braving the perils of the unkindly ocean, “that broad way of daring on which no footprints linger,” as it was called by an old Saxon writer, they carried with them, it is suggestive to know, their sports to beguile their leisure hours: wherein their descendants are like unto them, faring to all the ends of the earth, and revelling in their strenuous recreations, even under the hail of the enemy's bombs.

If the question were asked of most persons, even those of fairly wide reading, "What is 'Nine Men's Morris'?" the answer would probably be, "It is a game mentioned in Shakspeare, and said still to be occasionally played to-day by rustics in out-of-the-way places." This statement summarises such information as students of Shakspeare will usually find appended in footnotes to the passage at the head of this article, in which Titania is describing the effects of a flood in an English rural district. Hitherto, therefore, the game has been an obscure detail, all but lost in the mass of Shaksperiana, although of recent years attention has been called to it by interesting matter in *Notes and Queries* and in the *Archæological Journal*.

Nine Men's Morris belongs to the class of "three-in-a-line" games, which is larger than most people would imagine. The simplest example of the class is the "Oughts and Crosses" of the English schoolboy. Have we not all of us memories of odd moments whiled away, perhaps even during school hours, in waging this battle on our slates with our next neighbour? The illustration will sufficiently recall the game and the manner of playing it, by scoring an alternate cipher or cross, until the first uninterrupted three placed in line secures the victory.

Probably few lads who play at Oughts and Crosses are aware that English boys played practically the same game long before slates came into use in our schools, under the name of "Nine-holes." Drayton in his "Polyolbion" describes how

"The unhappy wags which let their cattle stray,  
At Nine-holes on the heath while they together play."

And again in his "Muses"—

"Down go our hooks and scrips, and we to Nine-holes."

The object of this game appears to be the same as in the previous one—that is, to place three men in unbroken line, and to prevent the enemy from doing it. In an old Dutch tile in the writer's possession the holes are cut in



the ground, and the players are about to place their pieces. This would seem to show that the game was known and played in Holland two or three centuries ago.

The same game was played by the lads taught in our old monasteries, or perhaps by the monks themselves in their idle time, for in many of our Cathedral cloisters the lines or holes belonging to it are found scratched or cut in the stone seats. These occur in both the second (Fig. 2) and the third (Fig. 3) form at Westminster, Canterbury, Norwich, Gloucester, Salisbury, and elsewhere, and there is an interesting example cut on a stone in the old graveyard of Arbory, Isle of Man.

It is possible that invaders from Imperial Rome first taught the ancient British how to play this game, for Ovid evidently describes something very similar in his "Art of Love." He refers to it as a pleasant means whereby lads and lasses might make progress in one another's affections. Let us read a paraphrase of the passage, and relegate the text to the footnote. "A little board," he writes, "receives small pebbles, three to either side, and the way to win is to range them in unbroken line. Crack a thousand jokes! For a lass not to know how to play is a shame. In playing, love is ever forwarded."<sup>1</sup> There is also another reference to the same game in his "Tristia." It is evident, therefore, that this three-in-a-line game was a source of amusement to young folks in very early times. In the British Museum, in the Egyptian department, there may be seen a small red-brick tablet, with nine shallow hollows, in which stand pieces of red and black tile; this has all the appearance of a Nine-holes board. The game was also played in England for something more than mere love. Herrick, in his "Hesperides," makes this clear, when he refers to the gains made by a certain player—

<sup>1</sup> "Parva tabella capit ternos utrimque lapillos,  
In qua vicisse est continuasse suos  
Mille facesse jocos; turpe est nescire puellam,  
Ludere, ludendo saepe paratur amor."

"Art of Love," III., 365.

Compare also "Tristia," II., 481

“Raspe plays at Nine-holes, and 'tis known he gets  
Many a tester by his game and bets.”

Such then was the simplest of the three-in-a-line games. One authority, Nares, in his “Glossary,” says that Nine Men’s Morris is only another name for Nine-holes, and gives the plan shown in Fig. 2 as an example he had seen cut on small boards. This is not quite correct, as may be seen by examining the board on which our game is usually played, which is also the form found in the fourteenth century, as Strutt tells us in his “Sports and Pastimes.” Dr. Hyde considers that the game was known to the Normans, although he gives no authority for the statement. In the light of later evidence it is likely enough, and we derive a second name for the game, “Merelles,” from a French source, from *muraille*, or the Latin *muralis*, because of the fragments of brick or tile sometimes used for the pieces. Merelles was also played as a table-game. An old edition of Petrarch’s works, dated 1520, gives a quaint woodcut of two monkeys playing it in this shape.

In this more developed form, each player has nine men, and plants or “pitches” them down alternately, as at Nine-holes, and with the same object, to get three in a row, and to hinder the opponent from doing the same. When a three is made, the player may take one of his enemy’s men off the board. When all the nine men on both sides are placed, they are then moved one place at a time, still with the aim to secure continuous threes, until by constant removals one player is left with only two, when the game is lost. It is a surprisingly good game, and much more skill is needed to play it well than one would think. The wrestles and deadlocks, the strategy in occupying useful stations to secure the threes, and the stiff fight between players at all equal before victory can be scored, must be experienced to be understood.

This is the game to which Shakspeare refers. It is little known in England, except amongst the rustics in country districts, who are of all people those who best conserve old customs and immemorial tradition. The

ease with which men and table can be extemporised has also something to do with it. The lines or stations of the board may be cut in the turf of the common, or scratched on the top of the corn-b n, or chalked on the pavement or floor; whilst the men may be made of anything at hand—sticks and stone, beans and oats, or chalk and coal. Various contributors in *Notes and Queries* write of the game as being known and played in Yorkshire, Wiltshire, Dorset, Norfolk, and other counties. The name also varies according to local pronunciation. Thus in Dorset it is known as “Marnull” or “Marells”; in Norfolk as “Nine Stone Morris”; while in Wiltshire it has many forms, such as “The Merrils,” or “Madell,” or yet again, “Medal.” Thus, “Elevenpenny Madell” is played on the full board, as in Fig. 4; in “Ninepenny Madell” the diagonals are omitted; “Sixpenny Madell” is played on three triangles, one within the other; and “Threepenny Madell” requires only one square, and is, in fact, the Nine-holes form. The word “penny” refers, not to the coin, but to the pins or pieces.

John Clare, the peasant poet of Northamptonshire, in his “Rural Muses” (1835) speaks of the game as played on the leys, or on the grass at the end of ploughed fields, in a sonnet, “The Shepherd Boy” :—

“Pleased in his loneliness he often lies  
 Telling glad stories to his dog, or e'en  
 His very shadow, that the loss supplies  
 Of living company. Full oft he'd lean  
 By pebbled brooks, and dream with happy eyes  
 Upon the fairy pictures spread below;  
 Thinking the shadowed prospects real skies  
 And happy heavens, where his kindred go.  
 Oft we may track his haunts where he hath been  
 To spend the leisure which his toils bestow,  
 By nine-peg-morris nicked upon the green,  
 Or flower-stuck gardens never meant to grow,  
 Or figures cut on trees his skill to show  
 Where he a prisoner from a shower hath been.”

The lines for this more advanced game also appear on the stone seats in cathedral cloisters. Mr. St. John Hope

and Mr. Micklethwaite, in the *Archæological Journal*, quote many examples, with woodcuts. Some have the diagonals, some are without. They are found at Norwich Cathedral and Castle, Gloucester, Canterbury, Winchester, Salisbury, and there is a fourteenth century example at Scarborough Castle.

A yet more interesting case comes from Athens, where Mr. Leveson Gower describes a similar board cut in the steps of the Acropolis, and elsewhere in that city. It is not suggested that these incised game-tables in Greece come down from old classic days. It is more likely that they were wrought by the same hands that cut the Runic scroll on the Lion of St. Mark's on the top of the column at Venice, when that animal stood on his original site in the Piræus. The inscription in the scroll has been said to point to the Varangian Guard, and they may have cut the familiar recreation too, to supply them with a favourite table-game.

However that may be, evidence is forthcoming from a most unexpected quarter to connect our old game with the Scandinavians, and to put the date of it four or five centuries further back than anything hitherto known. Many will remember the interest awakened by the discovery of the great Viking ship at Gokstad in 1880, of which a model was exhibited in the "Healtheries" Exhibition held at Earl's Court two or three years later. Within the ship was found a rich store of furniture and equipment to help us to fill in the romantic picture of the life of the old Norse sea-rangers. Professor Nicolaysen, of Christiania Museum, published a full account of the excavation, and a detailed record of all found therein, in a most valuable monograph, with exact and beautiful engravings of all the objects, drawn to scale.

Amongst these illustrations is one called a "Fragment of a Game-board," with incised lines and ornament on both faces of it. On one hand the game was evidently some form of draughts, with many more squares to the line than we have on our modern boards; on the other,

the lines and ornament were not recognised as belonging to any known game. The engraving of it was reproduced in Du Chaillu's "Viking Age," where it figures as "A Fragment of Wood from the Gokstad Ship." A finely-turned playing-piece of dark horn, in the shape of a helmet, was also found hard by the board, together with a candle-stand, the old rover's wooden bedstead, and a number of other personal items and fittings. When the lines and the tiny scrolls at intersecting points are examined, there can be no doubt as to the game that was played on the board. So much is given, that, with the fixed proportions of the squares which decide the playing-table, it is easy to restore the whole. The result may be seen in the illustration (Fig. 5). We have here the earliest trace yet known of our old game of Merelles, or Nine Men's Morris.

We have, therefore, one detail the more to enable us to realise the life of those great seafarers who found King Alfred so much to do in his time; the ninth century being the date assigned by Professor Nicolaysen, for reasons given, to this interesting ship and burial. Brave old adventurer! With hard fights before him in strange lands; with the storm-wind whistling through his spars and rigging; with chronic rheumatism racking his veteran joints—for the doctors report a bony enlargement of them from this cause—he was careful not to lose the chance of sport on his *tafbord*, and carried it with him on his sundry expeditions, even in that last great voyage of all, when he sailed forth into the Great Unknown. And there it lay interred under the clay of Gokstad, with the bones of its worn-out old master.

The Sagas tell us that the hot spirit of the players was shown in their games, no less than in their fighting. They, like certain descendants of theirs, did not take kindly to defeat. King Knut, at Roeskilde, in playing chess with one of his jarls, lost a knight, and wished to have it back; but his antagonist was bent on "playing the game," and rather than yield the point, he lost his

temper, upset the *taffbord*, and went off in a fume. On another occasion, Sam Magnusson wanted to withdraw a piece he had exposed, but Thorgils Bodvarsson, his opponent, objected. A friend looking on, who acted as referee, said it was surely better to concede than to quarrel; but Thorgils did not see it in that light. He knocked the game over, put the men in a bag, and smote Sam a blow on the ear that made the blood flow.

As we have seen, the Vikings bore their games with them in their ships. Thus they, no doubt, conveyed them into their new settlements beyond the seas. Was this the way the game came to be known in Greece? Did the Normans derive it from their forefathers of Scandinavia? Do our rustics unknowingly owe their simple sport to those hard years of raid and ravage, when the Nors men rode through Saxon England with much the same celerity that their Dutch descendants are found displaying to-day in South Africa? There is one old possession of theirs to which they certainly bore it. When the modern board, as figured in Fig. 4, was shown to Mr. Eiríkr Magnússon, at Cambridge, he said, "Why, we have this game in Iceland, and we call it 'Mylla'; only in our boards we have not the diagonals at the corners." That is to say, in Iceland, they play the same game that the Vikings took with them to the island. Even in mediæval England we did so too, for several of the examples on the cathedral seats also lack the diagonals; and for the name "Mylla," or "The Mill," Brand mentions that in certain parts he found the game was known as "The Shepherd's Mill."

That fragment of board turning up in the ship at Gokstad justifies us in calling the Nine Men's Morris an old Viking game, and there it must be left. Whether they received it from some earlier civilisation, perhaps from the East, has yet to be ascertained.

In the modern story of the game, it should be mentioned that it was played with living figures at a Floral Fete held at Saffron Walden in connection with Lord

Winchelsea's "Order of Chivalry." It may safely be said that it can never have been played on so large a scale before, as the outer square was 45 feet each way, drawn in lime-white lines on the pleasant green turf of a garden. Nine boys in black, with red sashes and caps, were matched against nine girls in white, with sage-green sashes and bands round their straw hats, and the victory rested with the lady who marshalled the girls. The first four diagrams served as banners, and may be seen in the picture taken at the time, on June 24th, 1897, eighteen months before the further light was shed on the subject by the recognition of the game in the monograph on the Viking ship.

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# THE VIKINGS IN LAKELAND :

## THEIR PLACE-NAMES, REMAINS, HISTORY.

BY W. G. COLLINGWOOD, M.A.

### PLACE-NAMES :—

1. Corrections of the ' tests '—*ham, ton, by*.
2. Value of early forms and dialect pronunciation.
3. Names, Norse in meaning,
4. And in grammatical form,
5. Show that the settlement must be dated earlier than hitherto supposed,
6. And prove the immigrants Irish-Norse.

### REMAINS .—

7. Antiquarian evidence : dialect, customs, arts.
8. Archæological :
9. Of the Thingmount and Tynwalds.

### HISTORY :—

10. The Danes in Deira and Cumbria.
11. The Norse in Lancashire and Cheshire.
12. The Irish-Norse in the Isle of Man.
13. Occasion of their emigration.
14. The colonists at the Commendation.
15. Invasions by Saxons.
16. Evidence of Domesday and Charters.

### THE VIKINGS IN LAKELAND.

It has long been held that the ancestors of the English in our north-western counties, and more especially in the Lake district, were Vikings, of Norse rather than Danish origin. This, though formerly denied, is now generally conceded to local antiquaries ; whose diligence in collecting evidence from dialects, survivals and remains has greatly strengthened the theory, since it was first stated in a somewhat tentative form by Mr. Robert Ferguson, M.P., F.S.A., forty years ago.

It is the object of this paper to offer, in brief notes, some additional suggestions from place-names, archæology, and history ; fixing the origin and date of the settlement, and the extent and fortunes of the colony.

### PLACE-NAMES :

- 1.—In drawing the ethnographical map, it has been usually



assumed that names in *ham* are Saxon, in *ton* Anglian, and in *by* Danish. This is true when we find considerable groups, but it does not hold for isolated instances. There are many names ending with *ham* in Anglian districts; some in ancient Norway are practically parallel, for Thrándheimr, Unarheimr, Stafheimr, and Sœheimr\* would become Thrandham, etc., in English; and Medalheimr,† in Iceland, is simply Middleham. Consequently an occasional Dearham or Brigham, Spunham or Waitham, do not prove the presence of Saxons in Cumberland and the Lake districts.

*Ton*, again, though not common as a place-name ending in Scandinavia, is found in Túnsberg and Sig-túnir: and *tún* in old Norse means just what it means in Lake district names: not 'town,' but the ground on which a group of farmbuildings stands. Where we get *-ington* we may assume an Anglian family settlement; and where (as in Low Furness) there is a group of *-tons* near *-ington* or *-ingham*, we have the tokens of Anglian population. But a casual *-ton* in a Norse context—like Kettleton in Galloway, Colton and Ulverston in Furness, etc.—may be regarded as a Norse settlement.

*By* is also common enough in Norway and Iceland (in the form of *bær*) to be no proof of exclusively Danish settlement. Where we find a distinct group of *bys*, there we may assume Danish origin, but an odd Sowerby or Kirkby does not imply a Danish colony.

Local antiquarianism has to eliminate names that are not coeval with the original settlements. Some of these are modern, like Maryport; while some, like Parsonby and Oughterside, are very old, but not primitive Danish, Anglian or Norse foundations.

2.—It is important, also, not to despise the help of ancient forms and local pronunciation. Neither source of information is infallible; for if the mediæval sometimes misspelt a name that seemed to him uncouth, the modern native sometimes mispronounces a name of which he has forgotten the origin. The place now called Langanby, and written Langwathby, was in mediæval times written Lang-Waltheof's-by. Country folk say Bow-ness (*Bow* to rhyme with *now*),

\* Heimskringla, Harald, 40.

† Heidarviga Saga.

and TORPENNA, for the mediæval Bulness (*Ból-nes*) and Thorpen-how (*Thórþins-haugr*). But taking both the rustic pronunciation and the various thirteenth and twelfth century forms, when they are available, and correcting one by the other, we find in nearly every case that Lakeland names are practically identical with Icelandic names, or very closely analogous.

3.—Every tourist to the lakes knows, as “Norse test-names,” *beck* and *bowse*, *fell* and *force*, *guard* and *ǣill*, *hause* and *holm*, *lathe* and *lund*, *nab* and *ness*, *raise* and *rake*, *scale* and *scree*, *tarn* and *thwaite*. But it is not perhaps so commonly known how neatly and completely the old form of our country names can be transliterated into Norse; how often the translation explains what are otherwise meaningless appellations.

What, for instance, does Blawith mean? or Claife, or Gascow, or Greenodd? Ickenthwaite, Greta, Latterbarrow, Satterthwaite, or Sunbrick? These have no meaning in English nor even in dialect; but when with the help of early mediæval forms we write them as old Norse, they become not only sense, but thoroughly good sense—appropriate descriptions of the places:—*Blá-vidr*, *Kleif*, *Gard-skógr*, *Græn-oddr*, *Grjót-á*, *Ikorna-thveit*, *Látra-bjarg*, *Sætra-thveit*, *Svina-brekka*.

4.—Not only the meaning, but also the grammar of the old Norse is preserved in these place-names. For example, Osmotherley used to be written Asmunderlawe, for *Asmundar-ljá*; Arnside (mediæval Arne-side) represents *Arna-sida*; but Rampside (Rammes-heved) correctly represents *Hranins-höfði*. The early form of Broughton is Borch, for *Borg*; but we find the genitive case preserved in Borrowdale, mediæval Borcheredale, for *Borgar-dalr*—a name given to two valleys from the Roman forts in them.

There are, of course, a number of difficult and puzzling examples; but the percentage of such is trifling. In an area which can be mapped with precision we may say that the names as a whole are Norse, indicating Norse settlement and continuous habitation. This is no new theorem, and it has long been taken as proved. I think we may venture to add two corollaries as to the date of the settlement, and the origin of the settlers.

5.—The Lakeland word for “brook” is always “beck,”

never "burn," as in Anglian districts; rarely "leck" for the *lækr* of tenth century Icelandic place-names. This seems to show that our settlers belonged to an earlier generation than those who fixed the names of Iceland, for they used the old word *bekkr*, which dropped out of currency after the ninth century.\* In other words, they were men whose fathers had left Norway with Thorgisl and Olaf the White, not Norwegians of Hakon the Good's time or later, in touch with the general progress and development of the North.

Our dialect, though not our place-names, gives also "brant" for *brattr*; on the other hand old place-names have "breck" and "brick" for *brekka* (not "brink"), and "back" seems to stand for *bakka*, instead of "bank," e.g., Sunbriek and Backbarrow. Whether it is possible that Thorgisl's companions said *brant*, or whether our word regained its *n* under English influence, which certainly modified the settlers' Norse into the Dalesmen's dialect—this must be left for the judgment of scholars.

6.—We also learn from the place-names that our Vikings, like the Icelanders, but more distinctly than they, were Irish-Norse. There are several Gaelic words so firmly rooted in compounds or contexts of Norse form, that they must be regarded as loan-words from the Gaels, with whom these 'Galls' combined to form the tribe of Gallgaels. These words are chiefly names of things which must have been unfamiliar to the Norse on their first arrival in these islands: as *boireand*, 'ruins' (appearing as *borran*, burn, barn), applied to Roman remains (*Borrans ring*, the Ambleside camp) or British cairns (*Barnscar*, *Burn-moor*, etc.); *bothar* (*boher*, in Manx *bayr*), 'road,' in *Bare*, *Barbon* (Domesday, *Berebrune*): or hardened (as in Leinster, to *batter* and *botter*) in *Butterilket*, *Butterliphowe*, etc.; *kil*, 'chapel' in *Killerwick* (*Kilverdiswic*, *temp.* Richard 1, and *Chil-uestre-uic*, Domesday); *korke*, 'oats,' in *Corby* (*Korkeby*); *peel*, 'fort,' and *parak*, 'a fenced field other than a *tún*,' and other such words in common use, show a strong Gaelic infusion in the Lakeland Vikings.

\* Preserved however in Icelandic poetry, Mr. Magnússon says, down to the seventeenth century; adding, "A settler from Halogaland in Norway, Olaf, son of Karl in Biarkey (Birchisle), set up a home in Iceland which he called *K'via-bekkr* (sheep) pen-beck."

## REMAINS.

In drawing our map, we are not left entirely to the guidance of the place-names. We have some help also from antiquarian and archæological evidence.

7.—The dialect, as many antiquaries have shown, is full of Norse words. Customs, such as the arvel feast, and arvel-bread; the Shepherds' Parliament at the Steading Stone on Thirlmere; the use and name of the 'lug-mark' for sheep, and many similar farming traditions; the folk-lore of the Rowan-tree, etc., may be passed lightly over, as this part of the subject has been treated by others, especially by the Rev. T. Ellwood, of Torver, in various papers. The arts of the Vikings seem to have survived in wood-carving, in which



NORSE SURVIVAL IN FURNESS.

(KIST-PANEL, CUNSEY, 1692.)

(Height, 10 inches; breadth, 7 inches).

Norse "worm-twist" panels are frequent, and the knitting-sheaths described by Chancellor Ferguson\* as closely

\* Trans. Cumb. and West. Ant. and Arch. Soc. for 1882.

resembling traditional (Norse) types in the Orkneys and Shetlands. The twisted ironwork of the country smiths differs hardly at all from finds of the Viking age.

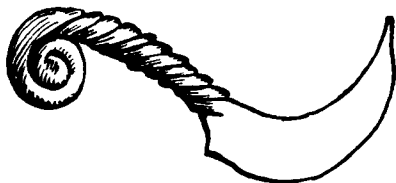
The Norse wooden house has naturally disappeared, and on its site subsequent generations have built their own



WESTMORLAND RUSHLIGHT-HOLDER (length, 4 inches).

homestead. But in this it is perhaps not merely fanciful to trace survivals of characteristic features. The old north-country farm-buildings grouped round a courtyard; the 'fire-house,' as the Dalesmen call it, translating *eldhús*, with stone hearth and peat fire, and mutton hanging from the beams to smoke for winter; the long table and bench against the wall; the porch with its high threshold and oaken door studded with 'dead nails'; the outside stair and pent-house or gallery, and loft bedrooms, with little unglazed windows under the eaves—all these recall the descriptions of the Sagas, though not in themselves a convincing kind of evidence.

8.—Of archæological remains, there are at present fewer than in other Viking homes. It seems likely that the settlers were Christianized before they had greatly multiplied, and that once Christianized, the burial-hoard went out of fashion. There are, however, many tumuli yet unexamined, like the



VIKING KNIFE (length, 4 inches).

Ellabarrow at Pennington, where, tradition says, Lord Ella lies with his golden sword. In 1789 a tumulus was opened at Aspatria, and a kist of sculptured stones was found. The carving on the stones was referred by Mr. James Fergusson

(in "Rude Stone Monuments") to the Viking age. Chancellor Fergusson (Trans. C. and W. Ant. and Arch. Soc., xiii., p. 397) thinks that the sword and dagger, gold fibula and other fragments found with the gigantic skeleton "probably mark the interment as a result of the settlement of Cumberland by the Northmen."



DACRE STONE.  
(ANGLIAN. TENTH CENTURY ?)  
(Height, 38 inches ; breadth at foot, 14 inches).

This, however, is in a district which I should incline to map as Anglian or Danish. The crosses, of which so many fragments have been recovered by the Rev. W. S. Calverley, F.S.A., member of this Club, are in Anglian neighbourhoods, and, so far as they can be dated, seem rather to be Anglian than Norse.

In a distinctly Norse district, at the foot of Esthwaite water, were found a number of felt hoods, buried in peat-moss. One of these is in the possession of Mr. H. Swainson Cowper, F.S.A., and resembles, in all but the fringe, the

well-known Orkney Viking hood figured in Anderson's "Scotland in Pagan Times." ("Iron Age," p. 103.)

9.—Some have seen in the so-called 'Druid circles' the doom-rings of the Northmen; but, so far as they have been explored, they have yielded only British remains. The place-names near them do not point to their use by the Vikings: 'lund' and 'legbarrow,' and '-ergh' are not found in the immediate neighbourhood of circles; although this negative evidence from place-names is not in itself conclusive: for, curiously enough, there is no tradition attaching to the most remarkable monument of the Viking age which Lakeland possesses—a monument which was unknown to antiquaries until it was made the subject of a paper, quite recently, by Mr. H. S. Cowper,\* whose attention had been called to it by a hint of the late Dr. A. Craig Gibson, of Coniston.

This is a terraced mound, like the Manx Tynwald and the Thingmote formerly existing at Dublin. It stands in a central position, at the junction of three Roman roads, and a fourth probable route, making it accessible from all parts of the district; and it is surrounded by the proper complement of flat fields, with a convenient site for the "hof"—as complete as the most rigorous of law speakers would demand. This thingmount in Little Langdale may be regarded as the Lakeland Tynwald. The northern colony has left the name Tinwald in Dumfriesshire, and the southern has left two Thingwalls by the Mersey. Of minor lögbergs and lunds and hörgs there are so many that it might almost be possible to reconstruct the map of Norse Lakeland with all its divisions and godords complete. It will be enough to shade it broadly to represent the settlements of different races; and in the light of this consensus of testimony we can hardly doubt the fact of Norse occupation. We only have to ask from history the explanation of our ethnological chart.

#### HISTORY.

10.—At the end of the 8th century the Anglian power had passed its meridian. Danish pirates had begun to attack it in the rear, calling it back from its work of colonization along the Roman roads of Cumberland and Lancashire, to defend its old home in Northumbria. The Danes came in at Humber and Tees and spread up to York, making all the

\* *Trans. Cumb. and West. Ant. and Arch. Soc. for 1890.*

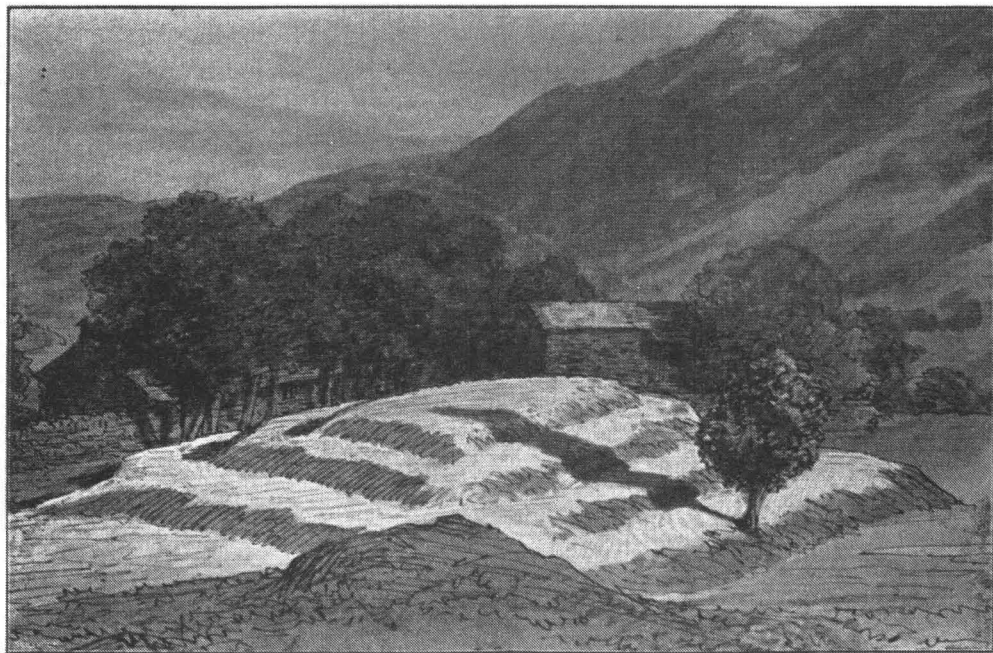
East Riding Danish land. Taking York in 867 (Symeon of Durham, "Hist. Reg."), they went along the road to Carlisle, leaving settlements marked with the ending *by* in a close group to Appleby and Kirkby Thore and Sowerby; and then, for reasons which we can only guess, avoiding the direct high road to Carlisle, but following the river Eden, they reached Carlisle 876, destroyed it utterly, but settled in its neighbourhood. Thence they spread along the great road to Maryport. The use of these groups of settlements becomes clear when we see how valuable that line of country was for strategical purposes.

About 894 Sitric the Elder,\* having established himself on his father's throne at Dublin, attacked Northumbria, to recover his rights in York, where his father Ivar had been king. His son Guthferth held both towns, and died at York in 896.† Thenceforward, until the middle of the tenth century, the Danes were constantly travelling between their two capitals. Their most direct route would have been by Chester and Manchester, but this would have led them into hostile Mercia, and every journey would have been a battle. To have gone by Preston and the Ribble to Aldborough would have been possible, but, as we shall see, there was probably by this time (the beginning of the 10th century) a hostile Norse colony in that neighbourhood. Their best road was, therefore, by Man to Ellenborough (Maryport), the old Roman harbour, and through Cumbria over Stainmoor. That this was a common route we learn from several hints, such as the death of Eric, met and killed on Stainmoor in an attempt to recover York (Wendover, 950).

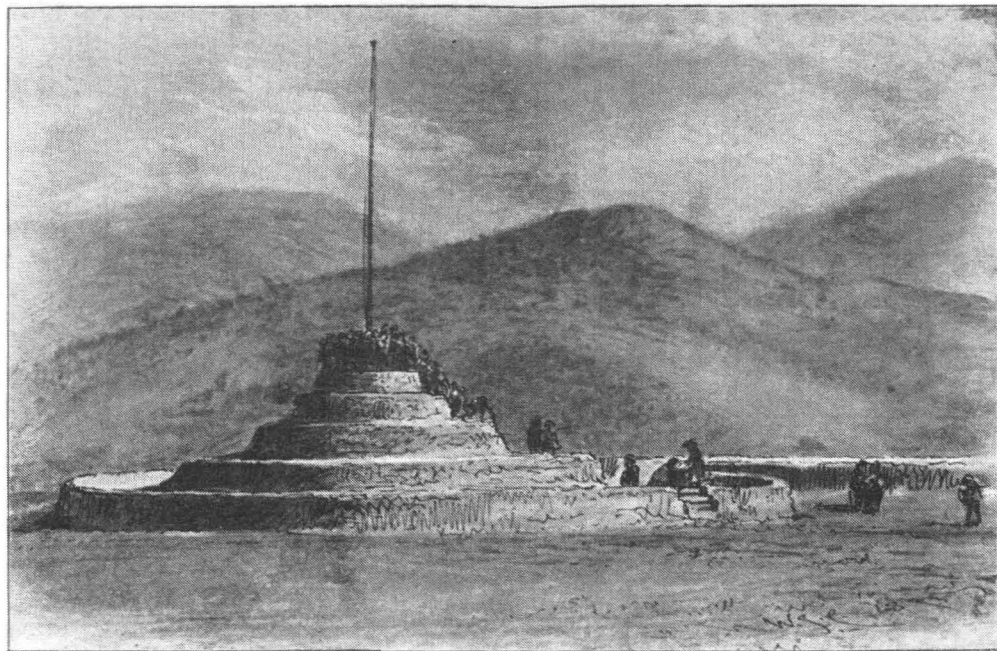
Having secured this line they seem to have taken no interest in the surrounding districts. Some "*bys*" indicate that they occasionally used the alternative road via Keswick and Penrith, but speaking in general terms we may say that the Danes avoided the hill country of the Lakes, Westmorland and Craven, just as the Anglians had heretofore avoided it. And until the Norse came and settled it, the only inhabitants must have been wild Welsh, the survivors of the old kingdoms of Cumbria, Westmaria, and in the south of Craven, Elmet. And though there is mention—perhaps apocryphal‡—of a

\* 894, Ethelwerd; see also 893, "Ulst. Ann." † 896, Ethelwerd; 894, Symeon.  
‡ In the story of Eadgar's boat crew on the Dee. It seems apocryphal because other names in the context are apparently anachronisms and forgeries.

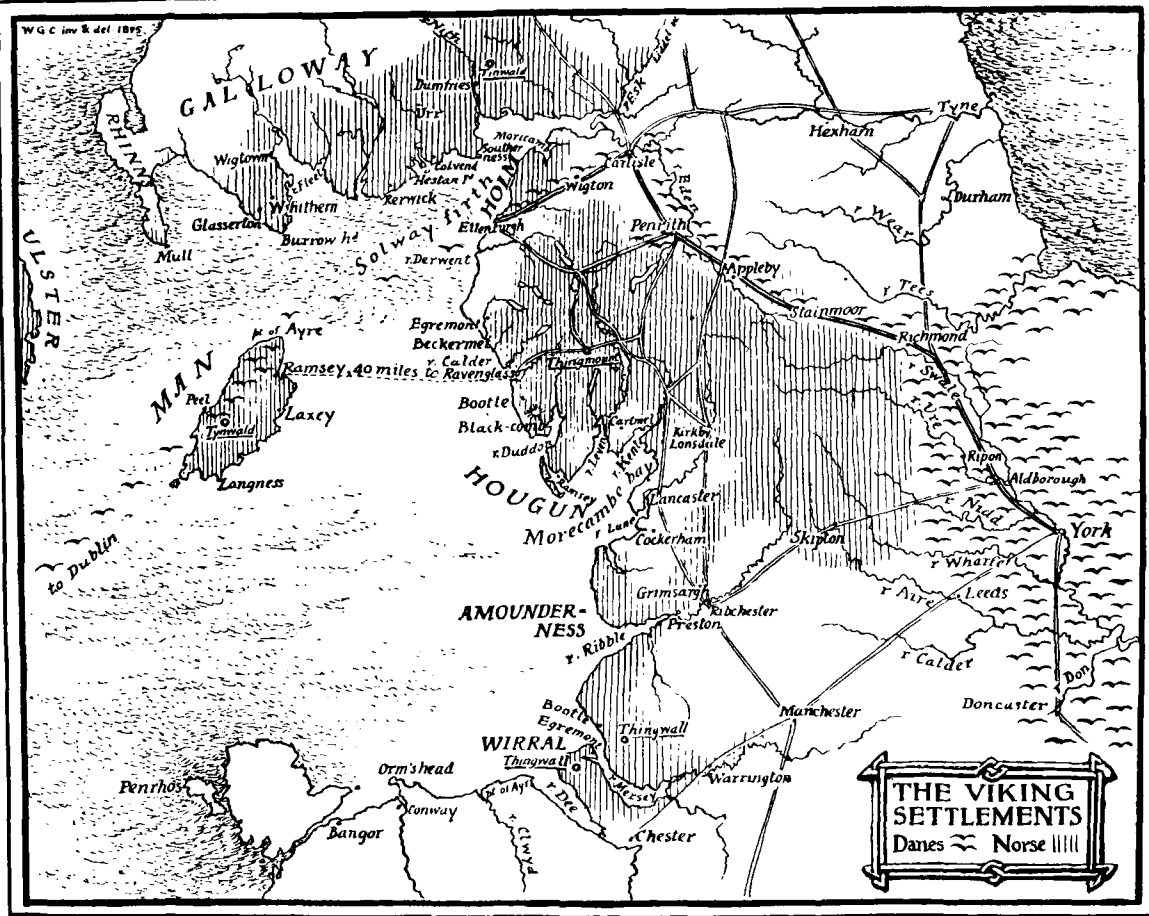




THIN MOUNT AT FELL-FOOT, LITTLE LANGDALE.



THE MANX TYNWALD.



**THE VIKING SETTLEMENTS**  
 Danes ~~~~~ Norse |||||

king of Westmorland in the latter half of the tenth century, these Welsh, cut off from the great centres of their race in Strathclyde and Wales, can have been no more than a decaying remnant of helpless hill-folk.

11.—Meanwhile, as everyone knows, other Vikings, Norsemen, had settled on the shores of the Irish Sea from the middle of the ninth century onwards. Under Olaf the White (852—870)\* the Norse (Lochlann, Finnghoill) held Dublin; but after his death, for a short time, Ivar the Dane, and then again after the rule of Cearbhall, Sitric Ivarson in 885, with their Dubhghoill, or “New Danes,” as they were sometimes called, dominated the Dublin Norse.

Some of these Norse (Lochlann), weakened by the famine of 895,† emigrated to Iceland. The remnant were expelled in 897 by Cearbhall of Leinster. They crossed the sea under Hingamund (Agmund), and after some years of fighting in Wales, they begged Æthelflæd, lady of the Mercians, for a home to settle quietly, “for they were weary of war.” So in 900 she settled them on lands said to be “near Chester,” where Hasting had just been ravaging.

This, I think, dates the Norse colony shown by place-names, and by landowners' names in Domesday, nearly 200 years afterwards, in the neighbourhood of the Mersey. It is possible that they extended northward along the Lancashire coast and that Amounderness (Agemundrenesse of Domesday) got its name from Agmund their leader. The account of lands given in 705 to Ripon at “Hasmundernesne” may use the name retrospectively, for it is a Scandinavian word with the regular Norse genitive inflexion. But in any case there is no indication that these settlers colonised Lakeland. They had two thingwalls near the Mersey. They joined the revolt of 911 (A. S. Chron.), and submitted with the rest of the south-west to Eadward in 922—“All the people of the land of Mercia who before were subject to Æthelflæd submitted to him, and the kings of the north Welsh . . . and all the people who were settled in Mercia, as well Danish as English, submitted to him” (A. S. Chron.). But the incident shows how colonization was proceeding on this coast.

\* *i.e.*, he appears first in 852, and disappears after 870, in the “Ulster Annals.”

† Caused by “locusts,” or some vermin “which fell from heaven.” (Welsh and Irish annals quoted in Haliday’s “Scandinavian Dublin,” p. 49).

12.—We look more naturally to the Isle of Man for the source of our Lakeland immigrants, as Mr. Robert Ferguson has suggested.\* He, however, dates their arrival 945—1000; I think the reasons already given oblige us to set the clock back. We have to find the occasion when Irish Norse of the earlier swarm, akin to the Dublin and Manx Vikings of Olaf the White, settled in Cumberland and Westmorland.

Before the Viking age, the Isle of Man was subject to Ulster. In 852 it was harried by the Norse of Olaf the White, and thereafter, until 913, it seems to have been in the hands of the Finnghoil—*i.e.*, of the Dublin Norse, and then the Ulster Norse under Baridh (Bardi) and his sons. Baridh, a Lochlann, married an Irish princess in 873,† and was killed in 878‡; his son, named after her father Uathmharan (which may perhaps be rendered by Ottar, Othere, as Cearbhall=Kiarval, and Muirgheal=Myrgiol), seems to have been the father of another§ Baridh who was killed off Man in 913 by Ragnald O'Ivar the Dane.|| Some few remnants of his people may have gone to Cumberland; but as his army was almost entirely destroyed, this does not account for the main settlement. We learn, however, that Man had long been and was still Irish Norse, though there had been a moment when the Viking colony intentionally and effectively emigrated *en masse*, in the same manner and almost at the same time as the people of Agmund.

13.—Heimskringla (Harald, xxii.) says:—"Harald the King speered to wit how Vikings harried the mainland—they who a-winter were beyond the western sea. . . Then was it on a summer that Harald the King sailed with his host west over sea. He came first by Shetland and slew there all Vikings then who fled not from under him. Thence sailed Harald the King south to the Orkneys and cleared them all of Vikings. After that fared he all in the South Isles and harried there; he slew there many Vikings who ruled over hosts erewhile. He fought there many battles, and had always victory. Then harried he in Scotland, and battles there he

\* "The Northmen in Cumberland and Westmorland," p. 11.

† See Haliday's "Scandinavian Dublin," p. 85.

‡ 880, Barreth, the great tyrant of the north, killed ("Ulster Ann.," Johnstone); 878, Barred, a fierce champion of the Northmen, killed ("Ann. Four Masters").

§ This is Haliday's suggestion, p. 85. The younger Baridh could hardly have been more than 20 at his death.

|| "Ulster Annals" (Johnstone).

fought. But when he came west to Man, there had they already speered what harrying he had garred before there in the land. Then fled all folk into Scotland, and the island was unpeopled of men: all goods that might be were shifted and flitted away. So when Harald's folk went a-land there took they no booty."

The latest date for this attack on Man is 895.\* We see how King Harald was sweeping the seas from the north-west and north, driving all before him. No fugitives could escape in the direction of Galloway; east and south they could sail and be safe. Snorri Sturluson, writing 300 years later, still uses the old Norwegian phrase "west to Man;" and he still uses the old political geography, I think, in calling the coast of Cumberland and North Lancashire by the name of Scotland. This was once strictly correct. Cumberland was Scotland until William Rufus expelled Dolfin from Carlisle. The shore of Morecambe Bay was, in 895 and thereabouts, no-man's land—beyond the bounds of Mercia, neglected by Danish Deira, and held only by a few surviving Anglians and Welsh.

I take it, therefore, that Snorri's account is meant to imply that the Ulster Norse in Man crossed, bag and baggage, to the Cumberland coast, and settled up the firths to begin with, and among the fells as time went on. They could have found no better refuge, whether they wanted it as a hiding-place or as a home. They must have known the seaboard at least; it is visible from Man, and it is possible that already some of their number had settled there. Through the channels of Solway and Morecambe Sands, Harald's great ships could not follow them, and he turned back foiled of his vengeance. After Man, we read no more of his victories. But here we have the cause and circumstances of our colony.

14.—We are not left without further indications of the presence of the Irish Norse in this district early in the tenth century; about a generation after the flight from Man. In 924 all the north submitted—as all the west had submitted two years before—to Eadward. "Then chose him to father and to lord the Scots' king and all the Scots people, and Regnald, and Eadulf's son, and all those who dwell in Northumbria as well English as Danes, and *Northmen and others*, and eke the

\* This is the old chronology of Johnstone. Munch put it c. 870, and Hildebrand c. 885. Mr. Magnússon informs me he considers the latest date possible.

Strathclyde Welshmen's king, and all the Strathclyde Welsh' (A. S. Chron., 924; Florence of Worcester, 921).

The chronicler seems to be anxious to enumerate all the parties to the treaty, as in the case of the previous commendation of the west. He begins in the north-east with Constantine and his Scots, coming down the east coast to Ragnald O'Ivar, "dux Galwalensium,"\* and his Galloway Vikings, then harrying in Northumbria; next naming the Bamborough Anglians, next the Danes in Deira under Sitric. Then crossing the country he notices "Northmen and others," Gallgael, Irish Norse, on the west coast, and completes the circle with Strathclyde.

These "Northmen and others," cannot be the Orkney and South Island Vikings, who were quite out of the range of Saxon politics. Agmund and his people had been pacified two years before; Ragnald and his Galloway men are separately mentioned. No other Northmen existed in the sphere included in this treaty, unless they were the Lakeland settlers, whose colony was now a generation old, and already beginning to grow into an important factor in the politics of the day.

Understanding this, we get the key to several events which followed, otherwise very insufficiently explained.

15.—Twenty years later, 945, Eadmund ravaged Strathclyde and Cumberland—not to possess himself of the country, which he handed over to the Scottish King Malcolm, but in pursuance of his policy to keep down the Vikings. If our Norse colony were then growing and extending inland, as we see from the place-names it did, we get a reason for Eadmund's presence in the middle of the Cumberland fells; a much stronger reason than can be supplied by any quarrel with the feeble Celts of the old race.

Twenty years later, 966, Thored ravaged Westmorland. It is Mr. Freeman's view that he did so as Eadgar's lieutenant, under English orders,† but the Welsh of Westmorland were then of the least dangerous kind—a handful of miserable natives who lurked in the crannies of the hills; their king, Juchill or Inkill, is only named in the half-mythical account of Eadgar's boat crew on the Dee; they were the Celtic fringe,

\* See Skene, "Celt. Scot.," i., p. 373, and Agnew, "Hereditary Sheriffs of Galloway," i., p. 31.

† "Norman Conquest," i., p. 65.

fast wearing away, of the diminishing kingdom of Cumbria. On the other hand, the place-names show that all their land was being taken up by the Norse, who during the last half-century must have been spreading into the dales, and adding thwaite to thwaite, up the Kent and Lune, and down the Swale and Wharfe; filling the heart of the country with a vigorous and dangerous race; and seeming, to the ministers of the Saxon kings, a standing menace to the peace of England.

Henry of Huntingdon tells us of Æthelred's invasion, in 1000, of Cumberland, "which was at that time the stronghold of the Danes; and he vanquished them in a great battle, and laid waste and pillaged almost all Cumberland." Whether Henry uses the word "Danes" in the usual loose way, or whether he means especially the Danish "bys" of Edenside and North Cumberland, he tells us plainly enough the secret of Saxon policy with regard to this borderland.

16.—Punitive expeditions, however, do not result in extermination. In spite of repeated attacks, we have the strongest evidence that the Norse colony survived: not only in the place-names, but in the distinctly Norse or Gallgael landholders who are recorded in Domesday Book.

In the Lancashire colony, where Agmund's Viking settlements were nearly two centuries old, and only fringed a thickly inhabited Anglian district, which might easily have absorbed them, we find Osmund (Asmund) in Warrington, Gamel in Salford, Chetel (Ketil) in Halsall, Steinulf in Holland, Bernulf (Biörnúlfr) and Stainulf in Toxteth (Stock-stead)—and Dot, which must be the French scribe's phonetic attempt at Thord, in Huyton.

In South Lancashire, as was natural, the fusion of Norse and English had begun. In North Lancashire and in the area of our central colony, so far as it comes into the survey, with the exception of Earl Tosti, all the old landholders are Norse or Gallgael. In Hougun (the district round about Furness) there are Ernulf (Örnulfr), Turulf (Thorulfr), and two Gallgael, Gilemichel and Duvan (like Dufan in Landnámabók, the Gaelic Dubhan). In Lonsdale are Torfin (Thorfinnr) and Chetel (Ketil). In Craven, two Ulfs, Orm, Cliber (Klyppr, whose namesake Klyppr Ketilsson is mentioned in *Islendinga Saga*), Machel (Maelchael, a



Gaelic name grotesquely Latinized into 'malus catulus'), Ghilemichel, Fech (Ofeigr), Burun (Björn), Archil (Arnkell), Carl, and one great holder Torfin, Dolfin's son, Gospatric's son, Arkyl's son. This last was expelled to make way for a Norman; but most of the others were undisturbed. We gather this from the frequency of Norse names in the charters of the next century: such as Arnketil, Asketil, Dolfin, Frostolf, Gamel, Hamund, Havard, Ketel, Malchael, Lyulf (not 'Le Ulf,' which is an invention of antiquaries, but Ljótulfr), Orm, Ranulf, Ravenkell, Siward (Sigurd), Swein, Thorphin and Whelp. Here, I think, we get the explanation of those holdings of the north country 'statesmen' traditionally dated from before the Conquest, and enjoyed on a tenure which puzzled the lawyers, and forced them to invent "border service,"\* as an excuse for the allodial independence of the Dalesmen.

And so we trace the Northmen in Lakeland, and round about, for three hundred years from their arrival. That they have left no account of themselves in Sagas is not to be wondered at—no more did the Irish and Galloway Vikings; for the Saga was the late growth of Icelandic culture. That they were not more explicitly described by English chroniclers is no marvel, for the ground they occupied was not then English soil. Gradually, during the middle ages, they forgot their alien and heathen origin, of which, like the Normans, they were careless or ashamed, in the presence of the older civilisation into which they became incorporated.

\* Mr. G. Gatey, "How Customary Tenure was established in Westmorland" (Trans. Cumb. and West. Assoc., No. XI, pp. 1-11.)

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NOTE.—In the Map of Viking Settlements the roads roughly represent the direction of the old Roman roads, still in use in the ninth and tenth centuries. The Danes' route is marked with thicker lines.

The Manx Tynwald is circular. Its dimensions are 256 feet round at the base; 12 feet in total height; the steps each about 3 feet high; the lowest 8 feet broad, the next 6 feet, the third 4 feet, and the summit 6 feet across.

The Fellfoot Thingmount (seen in the sketch from the north-west) is oblong. Its summit is about 70 by 20 feet; each step is about 3 feet high and 14 feet broad. Total height on south and east sides about 12 feet.

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## REPORTS OF THE PROCEEDINGS AT THE MEETINGS OF THE CLUB

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AL-THING, APRIL 5TH, 1895.

SURGEON-COLONEL ROBERTS in the Chair.

A paper was read by Dr. Phené on "A Ramble in Iceland," which is printed in full in the present number of the *Saga-Book*.

In the discussion which followed, Prof. T. Rupert Jones said that, never having visited Iceland, he might talk on the subject with great freedom, as he would only have to draw on his imagination and the recollection of what he had learned from books and travellers. He could well realise the lecturer's description of the grand and weird aspect of the scarred and riven lava rocks. Dr. Phené had had some exciting escapes from morasses and other difficulties in crossing the country. The speaker remembered an adventure which had befallen two students, one of whom he knew (now an eminent scientist), who were travelling there. Making their way across country on foot they came to a wide and deep fissure or crevasse in the lava. There seemed to be no way of crossing. It was impossible for them to retrace their steps, as they were a long way from their base and without provisions. One of them, first throwing his knapsack across, boldly sprang after it and just cleared the gulf. Then, lying down on the brink, as his comrade leaped and just fell short, he caught his hands and pulled him up safely. The speaker had greatly enjoyed Dr. Phené's account of his voyage and travels. It must add greatly to his enjoyment when travelling abroad that, being observant of the works of nature and art, as well as of men and manners, he always found something to investigate wherever he was, whether the elephant-mounds of America, the serpent-mounds of Scotland, the dragon-mounds of Italy, the ship-mounds of Scandinavia, or others. He could not sit down without expressing his high sense of the great services Dr. Phené had rendered to archæology by his investigations into the origin of these mounds, and their probable relationship to sun-worship, serpent-worship, and possibly to other cults; and, though all do not yet understand the points and bearings of his observations, the speaker trusted that in time they would, and that Dr. Phené's long life would be happily extended with the satisfaction of his conclusions being received at last.

Mr. R. Wright Taylor said that he remembered his visit to Iceland well, and it had struck him as a country of unique interest. He had been most impressed by the spectacle there presented of a brave and kind-hearted

people engaged in an impotent struggle with the forces of Nature. Cultivation and population alike seemed to be fast disappearing before the floods of lava and the volcanic powers at work. The primitive character of the people had also been another striking feature. There were only two policemen in the island, and they acted also as Custom House officers. A prison had been built at Reykjavik, but for want of occupants it had then been turned into a public library. There was no carriage in the island and he believed no garden; and he thought he was correct in stating that the woods had disappeared, till there was now only one tree remaining in the whole country. He had visited the Fiskivötn, or Fish Lakes, abounding in fish, but remarkable for gnats. He had found his usual quarters in a tent; but had also been lodged in the churches, which were comfortable wooden structures with benches apparently intended for the accommodation of travellers.

Miss C. A. Bridgman inquired in what sense the lecturer had used the term "Baalistic."

Mr. Annesley Owen asked for some further explanation of the illustrations of animal-shaped mounds, which the lecturer gave.

Mr. A. F. Major, in reply to a request from Dr. Phené for any historical light on subjects mentioned in his paper, said that the custom of taking possession of unoccupied land by the ceremony of fire-hallowing occurred in several Sagas. A very interesting instance would be found in "The Story of Hen Thorir," translated in vol. i. of the Saga Library, where Blundketil, an Icelandic chieftain, was attacked and burnt to death in his house. His son sought help from a neighbour named Odd; but when Odd reached the scene, he took a blazing rafter from the house, and ran round the house with it, saying that he took the land for himself, as he saw no house inhabited there. So he snatched the dead man's landed property from his heirs. The introduction to the volume quotes other instances and details of the custom in varying forms.

Dr. Phené, in reply, offered his best thanks to Prof. Jones, whose words were valued by all who knew him, for the sympathy he had expressed with his studies. He had been cheered by many marks of sympathy from unexpected quarters in his labours in elucidating early mythology. He was obliged also to Mr. Taylor for his remarks about the country. There were evidences that it had previously been much more wooded than at present. In reply to the question asked by Miss Bridgman, he, of course, only used the word "Baalistic" in a symbolical sense, as a way of indicating sun-worship that would be generally understood. Burton uses "Baalistic" in the same way in connection with Orkney. Dr. Phené then

exhibited some specimens of Icelandic native costume, calling special attention to the gold embroidery used in its adornment. He also showed some of the ornaments mentioned in his lecture, and an Arabic talisman made of jet which he had discovered in Iceland.

### AL-THING, NOVEMBER 15TH, 1895.

THE REV. A. SANDISON (Jarl) in the Chair.

Mr. Eiríkr Magnússon (Jarla-man) read a paper on "Edda," which is printed in full in the present number.

In the discussion which followed, Dr. Jón Stefansson said that he felt sure all present were very grateful to Mr. Magnússon for his paper, which he considered among the most important of any that had yet been given before the Viking Club. It was certainly one of the most learned; but that learning, and the clear logic with which it was set forth, had led to such a result as could not well be impugned, and, however new and startling Mr. Magnússon's conclusions might seem, his chain of reasoning seemed most difficult to attack. The Edda might be regarded as the Bible of the Scandinavian and English races—in fact, of the Teutonic world. It was therefore very important to establish rightly the meaning of the term; and although, from the nature of the case, Mr. Magnússon could not absolutely prove his own theory, but could only attain a high degree of probability, he had in a careful and conclusive manner disposed of all earlier theories as to the origin and meaning of the old and revered name of Edda.

Mr. E. H. Baverstock said that he was very glad to have heard Mr. Magnússon, as he had always hitherto taken it for granted that "Edda" meant "great-grandmother" or "mother earth." Apparently no one had previously known the true meaning, but the lecturer to-night had certainly thrown very great light on the word and its history. He wished to thank him personally, not only for this lecture, but also for the book in which he had thrown fresh light on the myths of Yggdrasill and Sleipnir. Of course a subject like this was one which an Icelander could discuss far better than an Englishman, as there were so many points in it which could only be fully appreciated by one who knew intimately the language and the value and sense of the words quoted. As Lord Kames in his *Principles of Translation* has said, words must lose something even in the best translation, even as wine loses something of its aroma when poured from vessel to vessel. He would, therefore, content himself with again expressing the intense pleasure with which he had listened to the lecture.

In reply to Miss C. Bridgman, Mr. Magnússon said that Snorri Sturluson did not himself write the MS. known as the Codex Upsaliensis, but there

was very little doubt that it was either a direct copy of his original or the transcript of one. Prof. Bugge had proved that Snorri did not use the MS. of the older Edda, which we know as the Codex Regius, but one that varies from it considerably. In the lecturer's opinion, "Edda" as the title of a book had no connection with the word as used in *Rígsmál*.

Mr. R. Niven said that he was much surprised to learn that Snorri Sturluson was a sealed book to the people of his own day. He had always believed that Carlyle was correct in his view, that the stirring history of the North was due to the inspiration of the songs of Edda, and that those songs were as familiar to them as the songs of Homer to the people of Greece, where we are told even women were to be found who could recite the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

In reply, the lecturer said that the Eddas were not popular books for the general reader, because they were so full of allusions to lost mythical and heroic traditions; and, while no doubt a great deal of them would have been intelligible, very much would not be taken in; for instance, all the allusions in *Hyndluljóð*, because those allusions were very often to things which were not only unknown to us, but which seem to have been lost sight of in the time of Snorri. These books, moreover, were often obscured by the carelessness and want of intelligence of the scribes through whom they had come down to us. Carlyle might be right, but Mr. Magnússon had his doubts about it. With regard to the women of Greece and their knowledge of Homer, it must be remembered that of old the women knew the literature and traditions of the land much better than the men, whose time was fully occupied by the profession of the sword. Their influence we can see running like a red thread through all the histories, for it was the wives and mothers who by oral tradition handed down the records of the past.

Mr. A. F. Major said he wished to move formally a vote of thanks to the lecturer for a very powerful paper, which, he fully agreed with a previous speaker, was one of the most important to which the Viking Club had yet listened. Where an Icelander could find nothing to criticise, an Englishman could not venture to say much. It seemed to him that Mr. Magnússon had not only routed and slain, but finally buried, the theories hitherto set up to explain the word "Edda," and his own theory was certainly very clearly set forth and seemed very probable. If we talked of the Codex Upsaliensis, if in our own early literature we spoke of the Exeter Book and the Vercelli Book, why should not Icelandic scholars have talked of the Book of Oddi?

The vote of thanks was seconded by Mr. Baverstock, and supported by the president, who said that he wished to add his sense of his own personal indebtedness to the lecturer, whose destructive criticism was, he thought, most fair, though crushing; while the constructive part of his paper was, if possible, even more brilliant, and so lucidly set forth that to him, at any rate, it had carried conviction.

Mr. Magnússon, in reply, said that he must reserve for himself, as his platform, that he did not profess to offer anything as proven, but only a case of the strongest probability. Etymological speculation by itself was very unsafe; but as soon as we can make a philological chain of argument, supported by historical links in the evidence, we tread upon ground that we may consider fairly firm.

### AL-THING, DECEMBER 13<sup>TH</sup>, 1895.

THE REV. A. SANDISON (Jarl) in the chair.

Mr. W. G. Collingwood, M.A., read a paper on "The Vikings in Lakeland," which is reproduced in full in the present number.

In the discussion which followed, Mr. J. Mitchell said that, with regard to the origin of the place-names referred to by Mr. Collingwood, while he was quite ready to admit that the Norsemen who colonised the Lake-country came thither from Ireland, he thought that the Welsh of Strathclyde were responsible for some of the Celtic names.

Mr. Collingwood replied to the effect that Celtic words compounded with Norse in the place-names of a Norse district might be regarded as Norse importations; but that there were certain districts in which clusters of place-names, both Cymric and Goidelic, showed survivals from primitive Celtic times and races.

Mr. F. T. Norris congratulated the society on the clear and learned paper to which it had been privileged to listen. He thought, however, that the particle "ing," occurring in place-names, did not invariably signify a Saxon tribe or family, but sometimes grew out of a genitive ending in "an." Buckingham, for instance, might mean "the ham of the beech woods." "Tun" was found as a Scandinavian as well as a Saxon form—for instance, in "Sigtuna;" so Ulfarstun might be Norse in both its elements. Place-names altered so completely, that in trying to trace and account for them it was highly necessary to consult the oldest form, otherwise derivations are sure to be false. No one, for instance, would suppose that Harrietsham in Kent was derived from a man's name, yet Herigeardsham is the oldest form of it. He thought the Ordnance surveyors and their renderings of local pronunciation were responsible for many

misleading forms and false derivations. The explanation of Rother as "trout-water" was very interesting, and would account for many similar names in various parts. With regard to the two forms "beck" and "leck," the latter was found in the Thames valley—for instance in the name Pimlico, and in Letchmere, on the opposite bank. With regard to sculptured stones, he might remark that in the *Building News* for the current week a stone at Bakewell, which had hitherto been considered to be a Christian monument, was shown to be Scandinavian, and with its figures of horses was connected with the worship of Odin. He should like to hear whether Mr. Collingwood could identify Agmondesham (now Amersham) in the Thames valley with the chieftain Agmund, who had left his traces in Lancashire.

Mr. Collingwood replied, that as there seemed to be at least one other Agmund known as leader of Vikings in the South of England, there was no need to connect the Agmund of the Lancashire settlement with the Thames valley. With regard to "ham" and "ton," his point was that both might be Norse, though usually indicating Saxon and Anglian settlements respectively. Aldingham was shown by archæologists like Chancellor Ferguson to be an Anglo-Saxon *burh*, and its name was taken to be the "home of the Aldings," in agreement with a great series of names in "-ingham" and "-ington." But "ham" or "ton," occurring in a distinctly Norse context, might be Norse, and nothing else. We know from history that the Norsemen were an eminently versatile race, readily adopting the customs and identifying themselves with the people among whom they settled. In France they became Frenchmen and in a generation or two even lost their own tongue; in England they became English, and he thought it quite conceivable that they should adopt the Anglian ways of forming names of places and join the Anglian termination to a name of Scandinavian origin, so that Ulfar, a Norseman, settling near the Anglian Pennington, &c., might call his place Ulfars-tún.

Mr. E. H. Baverstock said that at Wantage in Berkshire there was a place called the Ham or, in old documents, Hame. There is also a village of the same name in Wiltshire, four miles from Hungerford, Berkshire, and other Hams in Essex, Kent, Somerset, Surrey, and Sussex. Antiquaries had endeavoured to account for the name, but, so far as he knew, its meaning had never been traced. His own name occurred as that of a village in Wiltshire, and appeared in Domesday as Babes-toche—*i.e.*, Babe's or Child's Dowry; while to show how names got corrupted, he might instance Ducksfoot-lane, leading out of Cornhill, which, after much search, he had found to originate in Duke's Foot-lane, so named

because the alley originally led to the Duke of Suffolk's town house, which stood hard by in Suffolk-lane. He was very grateful to Mr. Collingwood, not only for his lecture, but also for the pleasure he had derived from "Thorstein of the Mere," the Lakeland saga, in which the lecturer had embodied much of the result of his study of the early history of the district.

Dr. Jón Stefansson said he wished to move the vote of thanks which was certainly due to Mr. Collingwood for coming over three hundred miles to give the club his most scholarly lecture. Would that we could have similar ones on Northumberland, Yorkshire, and other Scandinavian counties! A great quarrel existed some years ago between the historians of Denmark and those of Norway as to the word "beck." The Danes claimed it as Danish, and Swedish scholars supported them; but the question could not be regarded as settled. "Bec" was a common termination in Normandy, and on the strength of this the Danes argued that Normandy was largely colonised from Denmark. As to "tun," it occurred in Sweden, and was found occasionally in Iceland, but it is fair to conclude that, speaking generally, it is a Saxon termination. The area of Norse settlement in England was very much widened by the conclusions of the lecturer; and it was hardly too much to say that the History of England would have to be largely re-written when nearly one half of the country was found to be Scandinavian.

Mr. A. W. Johnston, in seconding the vote of thanks, said he wished to include in it Mr. E. G. Pope, who had so kindly lent and worked the magic-lantern by which the lecture was illustrated.

The lecturer in reply said that, owing to the lateness of the hour, he would only remark that in some Danish parts of England "beck" was not found, while in the Lake-district the Norse testwords predominated.

## GREAT AL-THING, APRIL 21ST, 1899.

Dr. KARL BLIND (Jarl) in the Chair.

The Great Al-thing was held at the King's Weigh House, on Friday, April 21st, 1899, at 8 p.m. The Law-Thing Saga, or Annual Report of the Council, and the Statement of Accounts and Balance Sheet for the year 1898, were laid before the meeting and unanimously adopted, and Umboths-Vikings, or Officers of the Club, for the ensuing year were elected.

A paper by Professor Sophus Bugge, Viking-Jarl, on "The Wayland Lay," translated by Miss E. Warburg, was then read by Miss Warburg, and is reproduced in another place.



In the discussion which followed, Mr. Alfred Nutt said that listening to Professor Bugge's very complicated, ingenious, and acute paper excited a feeling that one could not see the forest for the trees. The theory was that Vølundr's tale did not in reality belong to the Scandinavian North, but was an importation from England, no doubt in its ultimate origin concocted by Englishmen from classical fable. The latter point, however, was not before us. As usual with Prof. Sophus Bugge, we find a curious instance of circular reasoning. The date of the legend in its present shape is assumed to be the ninth century, and because at that date there are certain historical personages who are assumed to be the originals of the characters in it, the date is held to be proven. This is so much part of Prof. Sophus Bugge's method, that he himself was always suspicious of it. There is no doubt that this story was widely known in England, though the explanations given of the carvings on the Frankish casket were quite new to him. But he still failed to see any reason why the story should not be Teutonic, and known to the North Germans who inhabited Scandinavia. Professor Bugge always regarded what we actually have as all that ever existed, and made no allowance for what must have perished in the lapse of time. He also seemed to regard all variants of a story as so many versions of one definite tale, instead of as separate handlings of traditional matter. He was interested in the identification of Kiar with Ciarbhal, but he doubted whether this could be Ciarbhal of Ossory, as the latter was well known to the Norsemen; but there were three earlier kings named Ciarbhal in the sixth century, one of whom might perhaps be the original of the Kiar of the story. He thought that there had been much give and take between Celtic and Scandinavian legend, but was of opinion that swan-maidens occurred first in the Celtic tales. With regard to the date of "Haustlong," which he had hitherto considered a fixed date, he would like to know whether Prof. Sophus Bugge had any ground for throwing it forward except a desire to make it fit in with his theories.

Mr. G. M. Atkinson said that the paper presented an interesting mixture of myth and reality, bringing together actual Irish kings and mythical swan-maidens. The swan-maiden story was extremely common in legends of various countries. He hoped the ornamentation of the bone casket would be fully reproduced if the paper was published.

Mr. C. A. Seyler echoed the hope that the paper would be printed, as it was impossible to properly criticise it from one reading. It displayed remarkable ingenuity, especially in the explanation of the designs on the Franks casket and the details as to Egil. But why was it always deemed necessary to assume that one nation had borrowed from another? Why

was it impossible that each should have drawn on a common stock? He would like to know what connection there was between the legend and that of Wudga, who was called the son of Wayland, and was mixed up with the stories of Theodoric and Ermanric.

Colonel Bertie Hobart asked for further information as to the place-names, Wayland's Smithy and Wayland's Stock. He did not follow the topographical point as to whether Wayland came from England to Norway or *vice versa*.

Dr. Karl Blind expressed the thanks of the company to the author of the paper, as well as to the lady, Miss Elsie Warburg, who had translated it so ably and read it so charmingly. Prof. Sophus Bugge, he said, was a very learned man, to whom we must listen with respect, but he must protest against his always trying to prove the Scandinavian mythology to be a mixture of classical myths and Christian lore. Dr. Bugge makes Wayland a Finn or a Lapp, and one of the swan-maidens an Irish girl—a theory which he was compelled to combat, though he had nothing to say against the Finns as a race, whom we must especially sympathise with as victims of the peace-loving Czar; nor against Irish girls, or any Keltic race. Professor Bugge glided over the passage in the Edda which makes Wayland come from the Rhine. The names of the brothers in the "Völundarkviða," a fragmentary poem interlarded with prose by the scribe who wrote it down, are not Finnish, but Germanic. Jakob Grimm asked whether the name Finn in the poem is not the same name that we find in genealogies of the Germanic and Anglo-Saxon kingly races. This name, he (Karl Blind) would add, is found as a family name in Germany, Norway, and Ireland, introduced into the latter country by the Fionna, or Fenians, who were fair-haired, blue-eyed conquerors from the Scandinavian North. One might have expected that Prof. Bugge, who shows his full reading by numerous quotations, would have mentioned and dealt with Grimm's noteworthy hint; but he does not. The author of the Völundr poem is certainly not answerable for the prose note prefixed to it. In his own view, the "Völundr Saga" has twice travelled to the North from Germany. In the "Wilkina Saga," which contains a version of it, the author distinctly refers to German songs, and to the communications of men from Soest, Bremen, and Münster. There are other Eddic poems which deal with Germany, and in which Sigurd appears dwelling on the Rhine, and the whole Sigurd, or Siegfried, story is located on that river. Professor Bugge thinks Egil gave his name to Aylesbury, but he is wrong in saying that there was only one hero of the name. The Egil or Eigel name occurs in the German Wieland tale. Germany also can show a great

many place-names connected with Wayland. No doubt the story has contact with the classic tales of Hephaistos, Erichthonios, and Daidalos; but, as we have it, it is a Teutonic tale brought to the North from Germany, whether it came by way of the Anglo-Saxons or not. "Southern," in the Eddas, always means German, and the Swan-maidens and Valkyries of the tale are southern demi-goddesses (*dísir sudhrænar*). So the Battle Virgins are called in the "Lay of Helgi the Hunding-Killer." No doubt we should have had stronger evidence of this if the Germans had not unluckily lost their old heroic ballads through monkish fanaticism. The Mirk-wood of the legend is the equivalent of the Schwarzwald, or Black Forest. The oldest German testimony to the existence of a Wayland tale in German is in a Latin poem, which may be assigned to about the year 930, where, as in Beowulf, certain armour is said to be Wayland's work. Geoffrey of Monmouth mentions cups which Wayland, working in gold and jewellery, made in the Siegen country, and Simrock identifies this with Siegen on the Lower Rhine, a mining district. The Rhine is beyond doubt a gold-bearing river, and was still more so in early years. The statement of Geoffrey of Monmouth has also not been alluded to in the paper read before the Club. In conclusion, he was bound to say that he thought Professor Bugge's attack on the origin of the noble Scandinavian mythology had failed.

The proceedings terminated with a vote of thanks to Dr. Karl Blind on his vacating the office of Jarl, and to Mr. E. M. Warburg on his resigning the office of Skatt-master.

### AL-THING, DECEMBER 15TH, 1899.

MR. EIRÍKR MAGNÚSSON (Jarl) in the Chair.

Mr. A. R. Goddard read a paper on "An Old Viking Game."

In the discussion which followed, Mr. E. Magnússon thanked the lecturer in the name of the Society for his paper, and said that he thought great credit was due to Mr. Goddard for having recognised from one glance in the speaker's house at the picture of the fragment of a board found in the Gokstad ship what game it had been used for. He himself did not know if the game was known in Norway, but it was very common in Iceland, where it is called "Mylla." The Icelandic name is no doubt a corruption from an original "Milla," and there may be a connection between this and the name "Merelles," which also has had its corruption into "Morris." The game is nowhere mentioned in the Sagas, at any rate so as to be recognisable. The game described as played by Knut, called

"Shák-tafl," was no doubt chess, the word *shák* being probably derived from "shah," the Persian name for chess. Other games mentioned are the game played by the gods in the days of their innocence, but no hint is given as to what this was; also a game called "Hnefa-tafl," in which the object was to surround and checkmate one of the pieces. There was also a game called "Hala-tafl," and he thought some light was thrown on the nature of this by Mr. Goddard's discovery. There was one story in the Sagas that told how two men were playing this game, and an old woman, incensed with one of them, seized one of the pieces on the board and struck him in the face with it, forcing his eye out of the socket. No doubt in this case the pieces had a pin to stick into a hole in the board when the game was played at sea.

Mr. A. F. Major asked whether the game was purely Scandinavian in its origin.

Mr. G. Maynard, Curator of the Museum at Saffron Walden, said that he had seen the game played by Welsh shepherds, who called it "Caer Troja." With the figures cut in the turf for playing, the game might be compared to the so-called mazes in the grass found in various parts of the country. There were some in south-west Northamptonshire, which were said to be of Scandinavian origin.

Mr. W. F. Kirby quoted a game mentioned in a Danish ballad, which might be similar. Dr. Prior, the translator, however, thought it was a kind of backgammon.



## RONALD GEORGE FINCH

Professor Ronald Finch, a Life Member of the Viking Society, died unexpectedly on 26 February 1991 at the age of 65, a few months after retiring from the Chair of German in the University of Glasgow. After dame school and grammar school Ronald Finch had two years as a student in his home-town university, the University College of Wales Aberystwyth, before being called up in 1944 towards the end of World War II. He spent three years in the Army, mostly as a Staff Sergeant Interpreter working with German prisoners-of-war, which considerably extended his German vocabulary. Not a practical man, he used to say himself that he knew the German for all the parts of an engine even though he would not recognise them if he looked under the bonnet. On his demobilisation he returned to U.C.W., and in 1948 he graduated with first-class Honours in German, which had included a course in Old Icelandic inspiringly taught by Gwyn Jones. He was immediately appointed to the lecturing staff of the Department of German in U.C.W. His teaching was chiefly in medieval literature, German language and Swedish. He had begun learning Swedish as an undergraduate, and in 1950 he gained his M.A. degree with a thesis on the foreign element in the Swedish language. In 1954 he was appointed Lecturer in German in Queen's University, Belfast, where he rose to become Professor and Head of Department, and to have responsibility also for Spanish for a period. He gained his PhD in 1963 for a critical edition and translation of *Völsunga saga*. In its published form in Nelson's Icelandic Texts (1965) his treatment of this major text was an outstanding service not only to Scandinavian studies but also to European comparative literature. While in Belfast, and also in Glasgow, to which he moved as Professor in 1974, he published a series of invaluable critical articles on medieval literature, several of them on Old Icelandic topics and two of them in *Saga-Book* (XVI, 315–53, and XVII, 224–60). His priorities, however, were the administration of his departments, and the education and welfare of his students, for which he will be remembered with respect, affection and gratitude by many.

D. S.

## JEAN ISOBEL YOUNG

Dr Jean Young, Emeritus Reader of the University of Reading and a loyal member of the Viking Society for some sixty years, died peacefully in her sleep on 25 November 1990. Born in 1903 of Scottish parents, she was educated at no less than seven schools (since her father, a tax inspector, moved frequently) before going to Girton College, Cambridge, where her lifelong devotion to the early languages and cultures of north-west Europe began, especially a love of Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse. Her warmth, generosity, zest, infectious enthusiasms and quick sense of humour made her someone who will never be forgotten by her friends, while her bold imagination, passion for the right word and unfailing delight in sharing her understanding with others have given her published work an equally lasting quality. In particular she was an eminently readable translator (from modern Danish and Icelandic as well as Norse), as the success of her version of *The Prose Edda*, reissued a number of times since its first publication in 1954, exemplifies. Indeed, her last work was a translation of *The Fljotsdale saga and the Droplaugarsons*, made jointly with Eleanor Haworth and published in Everyman's Library shortly before she died. Typical of her adventurous spirit, her most significant contributions to fundamental interpretation are the articles she published during the 1930s and early fifties in the tricky field of Norse and Irish cultural exchanges of various kinds, in various conditions and of varying degrees of probability. Her alertness and facility of connection are well illustrated by this short paragraph in Gísli Sigurðsson's survey of research to date, *Gaelic influence in Iceland* (*Studia Islandica* 46, 1988, at p. 84):

In her study of *Rígsþula*, Young drew attention to Heimdallr's popularity in the British Isles as is reflected on sculptured crosses with images identified as Heimdallr. She then proceeded to show affinities between a tale in the *Rennes Dindsenchas* (p. 294–95), explaining the river name Inber n-Ailbine, and references to Heimdallr in *Völuspá in skamma* (st. 7) and in the lost *Heimdallargaldr*, quotations from which are preserved in *Snorra-Edda* (*Gylfaginning*, ch. 15 and *Skáldskaparmál*, ch. 16).

But it is not only this 'academic' observation that impresses; she was just as likely to base an independent interpretation of the Exeter Book Old English riddle 8 on her own 'listening to the singing of thrushes and blackbirds during the spring of 1941' (the second spring of the war). Jean was no mean poet either, as is demonstrated by the publication for her eightieth birthday in 1983 of a collection of the mainly occasional poems she had written over some fifty-five years, appropriately entitled collec-

tively *The well of joy*. They express her deep and strong feelings for friends, places and religion with her characteristic linguistic sureness and skill. She was a triumphant person in spite of, or because of, her experience of suffering. Anyone who has known her, as I did as my immediate senior when I was a raw, post-war late-starter in an academic post, will remain permanently indebted to her warm encouragement, unquenchable spirit, shrewdness, fun and sheer flair. How fitting that some of her friends are commemorating her by planting one of her favourite flowering trees outside the Department of English at Reading.

P. A. M. C.



## NOTES

### GUÐBRANDUR VIGFÚSSON IN OXFORD

BY D. A. H. EVANS

To the pleasing volume of ‘Guðbrandur Vigfússon centenary essays’ which Rory McTurk and Andrew Wawn have edited under the cryptic title *Úr Döllum til Dala* (1989) Dr B. S. Benedikz has contributed a lively ‘biographical sketch’. One of his sources is the obituary article on Guðbrandur which Dr Jón Þorkelsson published in *Andvari* 19 (1894), 1–36, with a bibliography (pp. 36–43) of 58 items and 20 obituary notices. The Bodleian Library has an offprint of Jón’s article (still uncut in May 1991) inscribed to Charles Plummer by York Powell, with an accompanying letter from Powell to Plummer, dated from Christ Church on 18 December 1894. On p. 20 of his sketch Dr Benedikz quotes part of Jón’s statement (p. 22) that in 1871 ‘fékk Guðbrandur eitt af collegiis háskólans í Öxnafurðu (Christ Church)’, which he then translates as ‘received one of the colleges of the university’. He calls this a ‘delightful overstatement’, and indeed it does sound on the face of it as though Jón entertained some curious notions of Oxford arrangements; ‘one wonders what Scheving would have said about that’, Dr Benedikz adds, alluding to Guðbrandur’s old teacher at Bessastaðir, Hallgrímur Scheving, a formidable stickler for accuracy.

Jón’s obituary certainly does contain delightful features, not least the appearance of a figure called Jórvíkur-Páll, whose identification I leave to the reader, but on this particular point Dr Benedikz has written with uncharacteristic haste. Jón’s phrase is clearly a variant of the expression *að fá Garð*, which actually occurs earlier in the article (p. 9) where Jón is speaking of Guðbrandur’s matriculation from Bessastaðir in 1849: ‘Sama ár og Guðbrandur útskrifaðist fór hann til Kaupmannahafnar og fékk Garð, og mun hann hafa haft í hyggju að leggja stund á gríska og latínska málfræði’ (*Garður* being of course ‘Regensen’, *Collegium Domus Regiae*, the student hostel in Copenhagen). I cannot find this expression in any published dictionary, but in a letter of 5 July 1991 Gunnlaugur Ingólfsson kindly tells me that he and his colleagues at Orðabók Háskóla Íslands are familiar with *fá Garð* in the sense ‘fá garðsvist (og jafnvel nokkurn frekari styrk að auki)’, though only one instance in their files has come to light, from *Tímarit hins íslenska bókmentafélags* XI (c.1890), 203: ‘skyldu læknaefnin . . . fá þegar Kommunitets-styrk og “Garð”

(Regents)'. Jón's phrase means simply that Guðbrandur was admitted to, became a member of, Christ Church, with, no doubt, common room and dining rights. So it is not Dr Jón but Dr Benedikz on whom, I fancy, the ghost of Hallgrímur Scheving is now bending his chill gaze.

#### 'LÍTIL SKYNSEMI Í SYDNEY?' A CORRECTION

The editors of the *Saga-Book, Notes and reviews*, vol. XXIII, part 2, and Margaret Clunies Ross, author of the article that appeared on pages 73–9, wish to apologise for the uncorrected error that appeared in the title of the article, which reproduced a quotation from Snorri Sturluson's *Edda* as *Mikill* [rather than *Mikil*] *skynsemi er at rifja vandliga þat upp*.

## REVIEWS

THE BATTLE OF MALDON AD 991. Edited by DONALD SCRAGG. *Basil Blackwell in association with The Manchester Centre for Anglo-Saxon Studies*. Oxford and Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1991. xiv + 306 pp.

The 'AD 991' of its title gives an important clue to the emphasis of this book, which is very much on the event, as opposed to the poem, that has come to be known as 'the Battle of Maldon'. As the editor says in his Introduction (pp. xii–xiv), and as Wendy Collier's Bibliography (pp. 294–301) confirms, 'the poem has attracted a considerable body of literary criticism over the last half-century' (p. xiii). In this collection of commissioned studies, therefore, he has not thought it necessary to include a detailed account of the poem as literature, though Roberta Frank's essay on '*The battle of Maldon* and heroic literature' (pp. 196–207; memorable for, among other things, its provocative statement that 'there is something in heroic literature that does not like heroes', p. 203) places the poem in the broad literary context indicated by her title, with reference to heroic traditions as widely separated as the Old Irish and the Japanese. Not that the poem is neglected in the present volume; on the contrary, it is given pride of place in that the first item in the collection, by Scragg himself, is an edition of the poem with a facing line-by-line prose translation (pp. 15–36), preceded by a facsimile of the manuscript in which the poem survives—the eighteenth-century transcript by David Casley, formerly attributed to John Elphinston (pp. 2–14). Nevertheless, for all that this edition has a section on 'style' (pp. 32–34), its final emphasis is on 'the poem as history' (pp. 34–35), and this is in line with the book's stated purpose, i. e. 'to present all the surviving evidence' (p. xiii) for the battle; the poem, in Scragg's view, is a contemporary source (p. 32), since he is not convinced by John McKinnell's suggestion (in *Medium ævum* 44, 1975, pp. 121–36) that the poem's application of the term *eorl* to the English leader Byrhtnoth indicates a date of composition later than Cnut's accession in 1016.

In addition to this contribution by Scragg, the first of the book's four parts (entitled 'Documentary evidence') provides editions and translations of other written accounts of the battle or of Byrhtnoth that may be regarded as sources, together with accompanying facsimiles of accounts from before the Conquest: by Janet Bately in the case of the *Anglo-Saxon chronicle* (pp. 37–50), the relevant sections of which date from the first half of the eleventh century; by Michael Lapidge in the case of the Latin *Life of St Oswald* (pp. 51–58), which he believes was composed by Byrhtferth of Ramsey between the years 997 and 1005, and which he sees as a witness to the battle probably independent of the poem, but too imbued with typology to be taken very seriously as a historical source; and by Alan Kennedy in the case of the Winchester, Ely and Ramsey obits of Byrhtnoth (the third of which is of uncertain date, while the first and second date from the eleventh and twelfth centuries respectively), and the twelfth-century Latin accounts in John of Worcester's *Chronicle of chronicles* (formerly attributed to Florence of Worcester); Henry of Huntingdon's *History of the English*; the *Liber Eliensis*; the *Ramsey chronicle*; and the *Historia regum* attributed to Symeon of Durham (pp. 59–78). The sources treated by Kennedy provide in different ways evidence for Byrhtnoth's death on the 10th or 11th of August,

1991, and for his having been a benefactor of the monastic houses of New Minster (at Winchester), Ely (where he was buried) and Ramsey; they tend to confirm the view that Byrhtnoth's defeat at Maldon in 991 was the beginning of the end for the English in their struggle against the Danes, which had previously been relatively successful.

In the second part of the volume (entitled 'The background of the battle') the first two studies are by Simon Keynes (pp. 8–11 3) and Niels Lund (pp. 11 4–42), on 'The historical context' and 'The Danish perspective' respectively; both these scholars discuss, among other things, a question likely to be of special interest to readers of *Saga-Book*, the identity of the Viking leaders at Maldon; and both refer in this connection (on pp. 88 and 132) to Janet Bately's study in the first part of the book, from which it emerges (pp. 42–49) that the information in the annal for 993 in the A-manuscript of the *Anglo-Saxon chronicle*, which appears to connect Óláfr Tryggvason with Maldon and has been thought properly to refer to events of 991, is in fact a conflation of material belonging to more than one year and cannot be taken as reliable evidence that Óláfr was present at the battle. No more reliable in this respect, according to Keynes (pp. 103–04, cf. Lund, p. 132), is the treaty now known as *II Æthelred* between Æthelred and, among other Vikings, Óláfr, which seems to belong to 994 rather than 991. While they both thus emphasize the uncertainty of the evidence, neither Keynes nor Lund wishes to exclude altogether the possibility that Óláfr was at the battle of Maldon, and both of them, in referring (pp. 90, 133) to Æthelred's confirmation of the will of Æthelric of Bocking, in Essex, show the way to an argument—none the less attractive for being based on indirect evidence—that Sveinn tjúguskegg was present at the battle. The conscientious tentativeness of these two historians in seeking to identify individual Vikings at Maldon may be contrasted with the more literary approach—hardly represented in the present volume—of, for example, G. C. Britton, in his 'The characterization of the Vikings in *The battle of Maldon*', *Notes and queries* 210 (1965), 85–87, which depends for its argument on the fact that none of the Vikings is named in the poem as it survives, and which sees the poem as treating the Vikings as animals rather than human beings. Richard Abels, 'English tactics, strategy and military organization' (pp. 143–55) contrasts with Nicholas Brooks' study, later in the book, of 'Weapons and armour' (pp. 208–19) in suggesting that the shields used by Byrhtnoth's men to form the shield-wall at Maldon are more likely to have been of the traditional Germanic round type than of the kite-shaped type depicted on the Bayeux Tapestry (p. 149; cf. p. 215). Mark Blackburn's study of 'Æthelred's coinage and the payment of tribute' (pp. 156–69) draws attention to the relatively intense activity of the Maldon mint in the latter part of the period c.991–97, during which coins of the Crux type were produced, but finds no certain connection between this and the raising of the tributes paid to the Vikings, according to the *Anglo-Saxon chronicle*, in 991 and 994. John Dodgson confirms that the causeway leading to Northey Island from the west bank of the River Blackwater at the head of Southey Creek (near Maldon, in Essex) was an altogether likely location for the site of the battle (pp. 170–79).

The book's third part (entitled 'The significance of the poem') opens with a paper by Kathryn Sutherland on 'Byrhtnoth's eighteenth-century context' (pp. 183–95), in which the author discusses the first printed edition of the poem, by

the Oxford scholar Thomas Hearne (published in 1726 and based on the transcript now attributed to Casley), in the light of Hearne's loyalty to the Stuart as opposed to the Hanoverian dynasty, a preference bound up with Hearne's attachment to 'the legend that Oxford University was a Saxon foundation and King Alfred its benefactor' (p. 187). With the second item in the third part, Roberta Frank's essay, already referred to, one first becomes aware (in reading the book from beginning to end) of a slight breakdown in the volume's connectedness; whereas those contributors who have so far quoted extensively from the poem (Keynes, pp. 90–91; Lund, pp. 130, 132; Sutherland, p. 189) follow the wording of Scragg's translation, Frank seems to use her own (witness, for example, her 'undisgraced', p. 199, for Scragg's 'of unstained reputation', p. 21, in translating part of l. 51 of *Maldon*). This would not matter overmuch if it were not for the fact that Frank is here discussing one of her favourite subjects, namely eagles as birds of battle in Old Norse literature, an interest of hers which the *Saga-Book* has been following keenly since 1986 (see vol. XXII:1, 1986, pp. 79–82; XXII:5, 1988, pp. 287–89; and XXIII:2, 1990, pp. 80–83). Reading of what Frank calls (on p. 201) the *ménage à trois* of wolf, raven and eagle in Old English and Old Norse battle poetry, and turning to Scragg's text and translation to check that all three are in *Maldon*, one finds that wolves (albeit looking suspiciously like Vikings, *Maldon*, l. 96) and ravens (l. 106) are there alright, but that the expected eagle, the *earn æses georn* of l. 107, has become 'the bird of prey eager for carrion' in Scragg's translation, presumably because he regards the phrase as parallel to the noun *hremmas* ('ravens') in the preceding line, and thus not to be taken as referring to a different species of bird. Has Scragg been a little too cautious here as translator of the poem, or momentarily a little too careless as editor of the book? Or a bit of both? In general, it must be said, the book does provide careful pointers, where relevant, from one contribution to another, both in cases of agreement (as with Bately, Keynes and Lund; see, for example, p. 132) and of disagreement (as with Abels and Brooks, see p. 215), and this carefulness must surely be mainly due to the editor. Nicholas Brooks' discussion of 'Weapons and armour', already referred to, deals under appropriate headings with different kinds of weapon mentioned in the poem: bows, spears, swords, shields, helmets and byrnies. Gale Owen-Crocker treats 'Hawks and horse-trappings' as 'insignia of rank' (pp. 220–37), with reference, firstly, to the young nobleman who, near the beginning of the poem in its surviving form, lets a hawk fly from his wrist to a wood (ll. 5–8) and, secondly, to Byrhtnoth's horse-trappings, appropriated after his death not only, as Owen-Crocker believes, by Godric, son of Odda, but also by his brothers Godwine and Godwig, when, as she seems to suggest by her use of the plural 'sons' (p. 229), all three of them mount Byrhtnoth's horse to take refuge from the battle in the wood. This view would surely involve taking the *ær[n]don* of l. 191 of the poem as 'galloped', rather than as 'ran off', as Scragg's translation has it (p. 27). Owen-Crocker argues that the proximity of woodland makes the goshawk the likeliest (in the *Maldon* context) of the various types of bird to which Old English *hafoc* (l. 8) can refer, and concludes by stressing the high value placed on horse-harness in late Anglo-Saxon times. Finally in Part III, Margaret Locherbie-Cameron lists 'The men named in the poem' (pp. 238–49) (apart from Byrhtnoth, to whom, with his family, she devotes a separate chapter in Part IV), indicating under each name what may be deduced

from the poem and from other sources about the bearer of the name as a historical figure. Her general view is that 'the names confirm that the poet was writing fact rather than fiction' (p. 239), not least because he calls some of the English warriors by Scandinavian names (such as *Thurstan* and *Wistan*), which he would have been unlikely to do if the warriors in question had been purely the products of his heroic and patriotic imagination. Under *Byrhtwold's* name (p. 243) she comments interestingly on the poem's structure and preservation in pointing out that this old retainer's heroic resolve in a context of pessimism about the battle's outcome, occurring as it does near the end of the poem in its surviving form, and contrasting with the optimistic spirit in which the young warrior turns from hawking to the battle near the beginning, may suggest that not much of the poem has been lost at either end.

Reading the first two items in the fourth part (entitled 'Byrhtnoth and Ely'), by Margaret Locherbie-Cameron and Mildred Budny, on 'Byrhtnoth and his family' (pp. 253–62) and 'The Byrhtnoth tapestry or embroidery' (pp. 263–78) respectively, one feels the need for more editorial encouragement of collaboration between contributors than seems to have taken place. The textile in question, which does not survive, is described as a hanging (*cortinam*) in the *Liber Eliensis* (Book II, ch. 63), according to which it was presented by Byrhtnoth's wife *Ælflæd* to the abbey church of Ely at the time of Byrhtnoth's death and burial, and depicted his deeds. Also according to the *Liber Eliensis* (Book III, ch. 50) Byrhtnoth's granddaughter, *Æthelswyth*, was a weaver and embroiderer of vestments. 'It would have been a pleasing coincidence', writes Locherbie-Cameron, 'had she been able to make the tapestry celebrating her grandfather's life which *Ælflæd* gave to Ely' (p. 256). These past conditionals seem to exclude the possibility that *Æthelswyth* was responsible for the textile. Is this on chronological grounds, or does it have to do with the fact, pointed out by Locherbie-Cameron on p. 255, that *Æthelswyth's* mother *Leofflæd*, daughter of Byrhtnoth, is not mentioned in the will of *Ælflæd*, Byrhtnoth's widow, so that *Æthelswyth*, though Byrhtnoth's granddaughter, may not have been the granddaughter of *Ælflæd*, who donated the textile? If there are good reasons for excluding the attractive possibility that *Æthelswyth* made the textile, they should have been more clearly stated than they are by Locherbie-Cameron, since the information she gives seems to leave this possibility open, if only just; and particularly since all sorts of possibilities are left open by Budny's article, notably as to what exactly the textile depicted (did its subject-matter include the battle of Maldon, or not?), and as to when, how and by whom it was made. Investigation of this last question is not helped by the fact that, in the Index to E. O. Blake's edition of the *Liber Eliensis* (1962, 441), *Æthelswyth* (here spelt *Æthelswith*) is described not as a granddaughter, but as a daughter of Byrhtnoth. Elizabeth Coatsworth's article on 'Byrhtnoth's tomb' (pp. 279–88) aims to trace as far as is now possible the history of the removal from one place to another of Byrhtnoth's remains, which according to the *Liber Eliensis* (Book II, ch. 62) were brought after the battle to the abbey church of Ely by the monks, and buried after the abbot had set a ball of wax in place of the head, which the Vikings had taken. With the help of later sources Coatsworth ventures to follow the remains from their removal in the twelfth century to the north wall of the choir of what by then was Ely cathedral, through their replacement there after another removal in the fourteenth

century, to their further removal, overseen and recorded by the eighteenth-century prebend and antiquary James Bentham, to within the arch over Bishop West's tomb in the south-east corner of the east end of Ely cathedral, possibly their present resting-place. Bentham's information is also used, again with due caution, by Marilyn Deegan and Stanley Rubin in the last article in the book, on 'Byrhtnoth's remains: a reassessment of his stature' (pp. 289–93), in which the authors calculate, on the basis of bone-measurements given by Bentham, that Byrhtnoth, whom the *Liber Eliensis* (Book II, ch. 62) describes as of great physical size, was just over six foot tall—not six foot nine inches, as suggested by Dr Hunter, to whom Bentham refers.

This reviewer has found only a few misprints in the book: 'extent' for 'extend', on p. 81; a blank reference on p. 221 to what should in fact be p. 228; a missing 'c' in 'Scandinavian' on p. 239; the illustrations (as opposed to the letters) (a) and (b) the wrong way round on p. 283; and a superfluous *e* on the end of the word *liv* in the title of Haarder's book, *Det episke liv*, in the Bibliography on p. 298. To Wendy Collier's admirable Bibliography, noted above, and divided into editions, translations and studies, may now be added Gunnar D. Hansson's Swedish translation in his *Slaget vid Maldon och sju elegier. Fornengelska dikter* (1991); the page numbers (96–106) of Roberta Frank's article in the Peter Sawyer *Festschrift (People and places in Northern Europe 500–1600)*, ed. Ian Wood and Niels Lund, (1991), listed in the Bibliography (p. 297) as forthcoming; and Richard North's article, 'Getting to know the general in *The battle of Maldon*', *Medium ævum* 60 (1991), 1–15. One item which seems to have escaped Collier's attention is R. E. Ballard's study, 'The battle of Maldon' in the *British Army review* for August, 1989, pp. 49–51, consisting mainly of a not unsuccessful attempt 'to set the finest and earliest account of an English battle into a rhyme that still rings in the English language' (see Ballard, p. 49; for this reference the reviewer is indebted to Dr Matthew Bennett, of the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst). Further relevant publications will no doubt proliferate in the wake of the battle's millennial anniversary; it is evidently planned, for example, to publish the Proceedings of the millennium conference held at Colchester on 5–9 August, 1991 (see Joyce Hill's report on 'The millennium of the battle of Maldon' in *Medieval English studies newsletter* 25 (December, 1991), 11–12); and Battle of Maldon T-shirts and sweatshirts are now available.

Readers who are deterred by the emphasis of this book on matters other than strictly literary ones would do well to ask themselves, as the present reviewer has done while reading it, if they do not read too much literary criticism, and to bear in mind some words of T. S. Eliot (in 'The function of criticism', 1923; here quoted from his *Selected prose*, ed. John Hayward, 1953, p. 19) which are particularly relevant to the book under review: 'any book, any essay, any note in *Notes and Queries*, which produces a fact even of the lowest order about a work of art is a better piece of work than nine-tenths of the most pretentious critical journalism, in journals or in books.'

THE VIKINGS. By ELSE ROESDAHL. Translated by Susan M. Margeson and Kirsten Williams. *Allen Lane The Penguin Press*. London, 1991. xxiv + 323 pp.

*The Vikings* is the first English edition of Else Roesdahl's *Vikingernes verden*, originally published in Denmark in 1987, and the four-year delay in transmission is perhaps behind some of the shortcomings which are unfortunately apparent in the book. Aimed seemingly at a popular, non-specialised readership, it is a general survey of the field of early medieval Scandinavian studies, covering a wide area both temporally and geographically. A review is perhaps not the place to question the wisdom of such surveys, or to raise the issue of the actual value of studies which try to collect together under one label the experiences and activities of dispersed and not wholly homogeneous peoples. It is certainly much to Dr Roesdahl's credit that she recognises the dangers inherent in making such a study; and, indeed, she opens the book on a note of caution. It is to be regretted that the cautionary note is not everywhere followed through, and this may go part of the way to explaining why *The Vikings* is a rather uneven book.

From the point of view of the popular audience, the book does provide a readable and concise introduction to the so-called Vikings and the world they knew. Divided into clearly labelled sections, the book's presentation of material is attractive, and largely logical (though marred by a total absence of footnotes). The tone throughout is descriptive, rather than discursive, and each topic described is given roughly equal space, with a slight bias towards Denmark over Norway and Sweden, and towards England over Western Europe, the Eastern world and Ireland. Within the genre of popular, portmanteau books, it is an improvement upon other similar works produced in the last decade or so, and goes part of the way towards bridging the gap between the popular conception of Vikings and the academic one. Having said this, however, the book's value as an academic or teaching aid is considerably lower, and in this respect it is a disappointing follow-up to her *Viking Age Denmark* (1982). As is to be expected, Roesdahl's account of the archaeological evidence, both inside and outside Scandinavia, is excellent. She makes complicated material readily and easily accessible; in particular her description of town sites and the evidence of trade networks should be of value to students both of archaeology and of economic history. Similarly, her sections on art history and poetry are clear, concise and helpful, and, like the archaeological sections, form a good basic introduction to these complex subjects. However, the historical sections of the book leave a certain amount to be desired, and their unanalytic, narrative tone serves to let down the high standard of the archaeological sections. Her approach to the written sources lacks rigour; although she is sensibly wary of saga texts, and of later works such as those of Saxo Grammaticus and Dudo of Saint-Quentin, she nevertheless makes use of material from such texts in her historical sections, and the early caveat as to their value is too often forgotten. The lack of footnotes makes it difficult to establish the origin of some of the quotations, and the end-notes provided by the translators are not an adequate substitute. She has a tendency to generalise the contemporary chronicles originating outside Scandinavia, referring to 'The Frankish Annals', 'The Irish Annals', 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle', without always specifying which text is intended, which is at best misleading and at worst inaccurate. To give but one illustration, her description



of the 'fifteenth-century Irish Annals [which] contain a reliable version of the original Viking Age annals' (p. 12) presents a number of problems for the text-based historian. Without devoting overmuch space to the complex interrelationships of the various sets of Irish Annals, it should be noted that even for the ninth and tenth centuries it is unsafe to treat their accounts as necessarily being representatives of a common—or even related—exemplar; the position is not that simple. Indeed, it is hard to say what exactly is meant by 'fifteenth-century Irish Annals'; on grounds of manuscript-date, one can only assume that Roesdahl means the Annals of Tigernach, yet this text is lacunose for the years 766–975, which cover much of the 'Viking Age' in Ireland. The most complete account of Viking activity in Ireland is, arguably, that of the Annals of Ulster, which text Roesdahl refers to by name later in her book; the manuscript of this text is, however, largely sixteenth-century.

The internal political history of the Scandinavian countries is a subject much in need of scholarly examination; Roesdahl's book does not help to fill the gap. The issues of multiple kingship, of royal succession, and of the nature of royal power are all overdue for examination, yet *The Vikings* does nothing to correct the assumptions and misapprehensions which are the legacy of the sagas and legendary histories of the later Middle Ages. The contemporary Carolingian chronicles present us with a picture for Denmark of an area fought over by many claimants, and often held by more than one ruler at a time; Roesdahl speaks of a realm unified before 800 AD and sidesteps the problem of multiple kingship entirely. Her account of succession-patterns overlooks the evidence for inheritance not by sons, but by brothers and nephews. Her account of the political history of Norway and of Sweden is similarly oversimplified and too brief. It is apparent that in writing the historical sections of the book she depended largely upon existing secondary studies, and the result is that shortcomings in secondary works available to her are reflected in *The Vikings*. There is no attempt at discussion or analysis of the historical evidence, which contrasts oddly with the archaeological sections. Her narrative descriptions of events are too basic—her account of Western Europe is so simplified as to be barely comprehensible. The description of the inhabitants of ninth-century Dal Riada as 'Scots' may be an infelicity of translation—'Irish' would be more accurate; however the statement regarding tenth-century Ireland that 'only the abbots of Armagh had authority . . . over the entire island' (p. 223) is not only wrong—there is no evidence to suggest that anyone had such wide-reaching authority in Ireland at that time—but it reflects an antiquarian approach to Irish history which belongs to nineteenth- not twentieth-century scholarship.

*The Vikings* is ultimately a book of variable quality, containing much that is laudable, but juxtaposing it with too much that is inadequate. The use of archaeological material is thorough and illuminating; it is greatly to be regretted that the handling of historical evidence is so weak. This more than anything perhaps reflects the dangers inherent in continuing to treat the peoples of medieval Scandinavia as one group who can be discussed under the common name of Viking.

TOWNS IN THE VIKING AGE. By HELEN CLARKE and BJÖRN AMBROSIANI. *Leicester University Press*. Leicester and London, 1991. xii + 207 pp.

As the authors rightly point out in their introduction to this long-awaited volume, despite a growing interest in all things Viking over the last couple of decades there has been a marked lack of general publications dealing with urbanisation in the early medieval period. Although we have seen numerous site-specific studies, the only synthetic works have resulted from conferences, and the edited proceedings have been almost entirely Anglo-centric (the principal exception being Clarke and Simms's *Comparative history of urban origins in non-Roman Europe*, 1985). As the first general survey covering the whole of Europe (east and west) and Scandinavia, and conceived as a consistent thesis as opposed to an edited volume, *Towns in the Viking Age* may be regarded as having immediately occupied a unique position in Viking studies. As such, the authors' predicament is a precarious one: while avoiding the wilder shores of controversy inappropriate to a general undergraduate introduction to the subject, it is still necessary to inject fresh life into data which have been recycled many times before (Kaupang, Hedeby, York, etc.). For the most part Helen Clarke and Björn Ambrosiani have succeeded in achieving this balance, and if the result occasionally seems a touch bland, this is more a product of the format of such a synthesis rather than any fault of its authors.

The text is organised in a straightforward fashion, divided into eight chapters set out along basic chronological, geographical or thematic lines, each of which can be read as a more or less discrete essay and summary. A scene-setting introduction on the context of Viking period studies, urban archaeology and terminology (ch. 1) is followed by discussions of north-west European towns to the end of the seventh century (ch. 2) and from the eighth to ninth centuries (ch. 3), towns in Scandinavia (ch. 4), the Vikings in Britain (ch. 5), towns in the Slavonic-Baltic area (ch. 6), urban physical structure and economy (ch. 7), and a concluding review of research problems and agendas (ch. 8). Referencing is by footnotes collected at the end of the book, and the volume concludes with an extensive bibliography. Although the print is small, the text is clearly laid out and the book is printed on good quality paper. The chapters on north-west European towns up to the ninth century give a traditionally-framed review of the familiar material, including a well-referenced, though brief, summary of early Continental towns. There is a sensible caution in the use of the word *wic* in a purely urban context, and some well-aimed criticism (for example, of the rather blinkered interpretation of the Northampton 'palaces'). This pattern is repeated in the succeeding chapters on Scandinavia and Britain, with incisive interpretations of environmental influences on urban settlements, and good general coverage of the main sites without undue emphasis on the 'famous names'. A particular bonus is the inclusion of the most recent material and discoveries, such as the Trelleborg-type enclosure found at the southern Swedish site of the same name in 1989, and the new proto-urban centre excavated at Fröjel on Gotland. Chapters 2-5 suffer slightly from an unfortunate concentration on England and Sweden—not surprising considering the authors' backgrounds—but this does not unduly detract from the overall integrity of the arguments, though some issues are somewhat simplified. There is little discussion, for example, of what the Five Boroughs actually

are in economic and administrative terms, and the debate as to the direction of influence in urban development (from Britain to Scandinavia or vice versa) is side-stepped. Similarly, one or two rather odd interpretations creep in, as when the back yards of the Coppergate tenements are described as working areas for craft activity when the artefact scatters there are clearly the result of rubbish dumping (*Jórvík* is also strangely spelt *Jorvic* on p. 92); such glitches are, however, inevitable in a survey on this scale. Chapter 6, on eastern Europe and Russia, is particularly important as it presents the material from a large number of recently excavated Slavonic and Baltic towns for the first time in English, together with an excellent list of basic references. For many people, the summaries of towns such as Wolin, Menzlin and Kołobrzeg will in themselves justify purchase of the book. There has obviously been a clear division of the volume into two sections, chapters 2–6 presenting the data, and chapter 7 (on ‘physical structure and economy’) discussing the issues they raise. It is in this chapter that the two major faults of the book lie. The first of these rests with the choice of illustrative material (more on the quality of the figures below). Almost every town described in the regional chapters is illustrated by a topographical map of the site in its environmental context, but *none* of them has an excavation plan of the settlement itself, or of individual structures. This might be expected to be remedied in chapter 7, perhaps by a separate discussion of town planning and building design, but only Hedeby is treated in this way. The implications of this omission are wide-ranging: the book cannot possibly be used in isolation as a standard work of reference because other publications will always be needed to provide the detailed plans required. A slight shift in illustrative emphasis could easily have overcome this problem. The second difficulty lies in the scope of the debate which the authors have chosen to outline to their readers. Chapter 7 presents excellent summaries of town–hinterland communications and the physical aspects of trade routes and supply (using the latest data from waterfront excavations), and includes interesting ideas on the nature of urban institutions, town defences and the interpretation of urban cemeteries. However, although some of this material is skilfully linked to the wider issues of the roots of Viking expansion and the structure of Scandinavian society, there is a gap at the heart of these arguments. At no point do the authors mention the work on urban origins, gateway communities, peer–polity interaction and core–periphery exchange begun by Richard Hodges in the early 1980s, which has attracted much subsequent research into its orbit and been taken up by large numbers of medieval archaeologists. Whether or not one agrees with Hodges’s controversial ideas, the omission from the bibliography of his *Dark Age economics* (1982) and related papers, and Klavs Randsborg’s *The Viking Age in Denmark* (1980) is quite staggering. This omission is not enough to invalidate the volume or its contribution to Viking scholarship, but it introduces an unnecessary bias into the material presented. *Towns in the Viking Age* concludes with a well-reasoned suggested agenda for future research and some firm, controversial statements on the process of urban development in early medieval Europe.

A final word must be said on another aspect of the problematical illustrations mentioned above. While the writing and production of the text can be judged elegantly clear and incisive, regrettably the same cannot be said of the figures. In general, the line drawings are poorly executed and obscure, the plates so badly

reproduced as to be almost opaque, and the editing of figures reprinted from other publications notable by its absence. It is sad when such a broad generalisation actually *is* applicable to the whole book, and doubly surprising when one considers that a decision has obviously been made to produce a well-illustrated volume (there are 95 figures and photographs). Each section begins with a map showing the location of places mentioned in the text, with further plans of individual towns, artefact drawings and photographs as appropriate. None of the maps exhibits any standardisation of symbols or conventions, apparently being reproduced directly from their original publications, sometimes with a key that is quite irrelevant (this is seen particularly clearly in fig. 5.1, showing Anglo-Scandinavian York, where the accompanying caption actually tells the reader to disregard the site numbers because they refer to the text of Moulden and Tweddle's volume in the *Archaeology of York* series). The exception to this is the set of town plans and area maps specially commissioned for the book. Although these are most welcome in theory, being in many cases the only illustrations of these sites in an English-language publication, they are in practice very difficult to use. The problem stems from the lack of any distinction, either in tone or symbol, between areas of sea and land. When mapping places with heavily indented coastlines or chains of islands, this can be unbearably frustrating; thus in fig. 6.2 the island of Rügen is shown as a writhing black line on a blank white background, with 'The Baltic' written helpfully to one side, making the differentiation of sea, coastal islets, inland lakes and inlets almost impossible. Similarly in fig. 7.3, the portage route at Södertälje is drawn using exactly the same type of line as the coast (again, black against white sea and white land). Poor quality reproduction has effectively removed the modern streets from the map of Dublin (fig. 5.4), and the walls of the Hedeby house have disappeared (fig. 7.13). Nor do photographs escape: the antler combs of fig. 7.22b have vanished into the fog, and the Birka hoard (fig. 7.27) appears to have been photographed at night, to choose only the most obvious examples. In a class of their own are a (thankfully small) number of drawings illustrating building construction techniques (figs. 7.9 and 7.11 a and b). These are so bad as to resemble the sort of scribbles one makes on the backs of envelopes; they should certainly never have been published in a scholarly textbook. Given that the text itself is excellent and a credit to its authors, such quibbles *should* be minor (and are, in any case, probably not the responsibility of the authors). However, the numerous illustrations may well have contributed to what will be the first thing most readers will notice about the book—its cost. Leicester University Press have priced the volume at an extraordinary £41.50, thus effectively ruling out its purchase by the very student readership that it serves so well. This is a good book, and one which amply fills a long-vacant gap in Viking studies. Let us hope that it gets the early paperback edition, and revised illustrations, that it deserves.

NEIL S. PRICE

SOCIAL APPROACHES TO VIKING STUDIES. Edited by ROSS SAMSON. *Cruithne Press*. Glasgow, 1991. xiv + 240 pp.

The papers contained in this volume were initially presented at a conference held in Glasgow in September 1988, and the relatively speedy publication of the papers is to be applauded. The presentation of the volume is of a high standard and it is certainly priced competitively. It is hoped that this new publisher, Cruithne Press, is able to continue this high standard. The range of papers presented is great, as would be anticipated from the generalised title of the volume, and there are several fascinating contributions. There are five main sections, 'Literacy', 'Gender and sexual relations', 'Exchange and society', 'Political and social power' and 'Ancient ethnicity and modern nationalism'. Within each, there is a variety of approaches, ranging through social anthropological, historical and archaeological. Inevitably, this variety means that for individual readers some parts of the volume are more approachable than others. There is, what has now unfortunately become commonplace, the proverbial tub-thumping concerning the perceived inability of medieval scholars to utilise 'modern, multi-disciplinary approaches', but this is not entirely justified; it is a relief to be able to read a coherent presentation of factual information alongside more generalised critiques. The papers present several interesting approaches, although some are extremely difficult to read. Common themes of social structure and gift exchange echo throughout the volume; virtually everyone manages to extract something from a saga source, and not always in an uncritical manner. However, this is complemented usually by the presentation of new work and thoughts on old topics and certainly gives cause for rethinking many traditional opinions. I presume this is the aim of the volume, and in this it is successful.

The role of women in the Viking period is dealt with in the papers on 'Gender and sexual relations', and I have to confess that to me these are the strength of the book. Torben Vestergaard and Margaret Clunies Ross take Scandinavian mythology and sagas as inspiration for their studies, Anne-Sofie Gråslund, Liv Helga Dommasnes and Anne Stalsberg concentrate on archaeological evidence to consider such major developments as the acceptance of Christianity and the power base provided by women of the period, particularly in trade. These papers are complementary and provide much in the way of stimulus for further work. In the 'Exchange and society' section again there are stimulating pieces, although Samson's confidence that his arguments 'explain the phenomenon of hoarding' may bring a smile to the faces of those who have worked on this problem in recent decades. However, his paper does have much to offer and one feels that perhaps he ought not to have exercised his editor's prerogative quite so freely for this is the second—and by far the stronger—paper he contributes to this section. Märit Gaimster's paper provides much valuable information, building on the work already published by her as Thurborg. The 'Political and social power' section includes two papers of more conventional historical approach, one on slavery and a fascinating paper on witches by Gísli Pálsson. It is the final section in the volume which draws on the much wider and crucial context of the Vikings, by examining Saami evidence (Inger Zachrisson), Russia (Thomas Noonan) and North America (Birgitta Wallace). This wider framework is welcome, including as it does information not always readily available in English. Noonan's plea that

the end of single-person study of the Viking period should be giving way to cooperative multi-disciplinary studies comes a little late however; this approach has been well established in the last decade, particularly in the study of the Viking expansion through the North Atlantic regions.

This is a valuable contribution to Viking studies, enabling new approaches to be presented by several up-and-coming scholars, although there are some established names represented. It is well edited by Samson and has few typographical errors (although see pp. 60–61, captions to Figs 1 and 2). Perhaps a little more illustrative material might have been incorporated. I end with a comment on the Introduction: this is extremely funny, but not appropriate to this volume. Read this last, and preferably somewhere where you can laugh out loud, i. e. not in a University library.

COLLEEN BATEY

NÄR SVERIGE BLEV SVERIGE. By PETER SAWYER. Translated and revised by Birgit Sawyer. *Viktoria Bokförlag*. Alingsås, 1991. vi + 106 pp.

The most recent in the series of short monographs published by the Sawyers' Viktoria Bokförlag is a translation into Swedish and revision of Peter Sawyer's work *The making of Sweden* published in English two years earlier. The principal difference in contents between the two books is that the more recent version includes an appendix of modest length (about 4,000 words) by Birgit Sawyer on rune-stones as a historical source. This too represents a modification of the position she proposed in her earlier work in the same series, *Property and inheritance in Viking Scandinavia: the runic evidence* (1988; review by the present reviewer in *Saga-Book XXII*:7, pp. 470–73), an essay which had attracted considerable interest and criticism. The declared purpose of this series of monographs is to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas concerning research into the Middle Ages, and the background of the current book illustrates in what way the series is playing a role in contributing to debate and to the refinement of ideas.

The current study is presented in a very concise manner. The 'Sweden becoming Sweden' of its title means the process of unification of Götaland and the kingdom of the Svear in the Mälars region (which I shall call 'Sveariket') into a single kingdom, and the focus of the book lies on the late Viking Period and the early Middle Ages; above all on events of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. At the heart of Peter Sawyer's chosen approach lies the proposition that the history of Swedish kingship in this period can be elucidated by a more broadly based and more clearly documented model of the development of kingship in medieval Europe; he thus offers a formula that is meant to be able to make sense of the fragmentary surviving evidence for Sweden and to fill in the gaps. Surprisingly, though, this formula is never clearly set out in abstract terms, at least not fully so; rather it is accumulated, element by element, alongside the 'facts' of Swedish history, as we may think we know or can infer them, examined in the light of comparable situations elsewhere in Europe (mostly in Denmark and Norway, or the British Isles), case by case. This method is appropriate in respect of one line

of the author's argument, which is to restrict any sense of a historically inevitable process of evolution taking place in Sweden and conversely to emphasize the role played by individuals, the decisiveness of their acts and their policies. Consequently, the title of the Swedish version of the study is particularly precise: this is a study of *when* Sweden became Sweden, rather than *why* Sweden became Sweden. But despite this avoidance of abstract generalization, the major factors in the process as seen by Peter Sawyer can be extracted and enumerated. I would summarize his underlying thesis as being that the unification of Götaland and Sveariket was driven by external pressures in the form of models of overlordship and the spread of Christianity, which were responded to by ambitious rulers within the territory, whose most successful stratagem for consolidating power seems to have been alliance by marriage. Peter Sawyer presents an informative picture of the separation of and the cultural differences between Götaland and Sveariket down to the twelfth century. In contrast to the simple common view of a powerful Sveariket eventually annexing a somnolent southern neighbour, he presents a case for the impulses towards unification as a kingdom running largely from the south-west (from Denmark and Götaland) into Sveariket.

Although there is a determined effort on Peter Sawyer's part to recognize the contribution that archaeology can make and to take account of the evidence this source affords—mostly, for him, in the form of rune-stones and coins, archaeological material that carries written texts—his section of the book remains very much a historian's work. The second chapter of the book is a straightforward and acutely critical review of the historical sources, including coins. The third chapter is a sketch of Sveariket, with a useful though very brief observation of the existence of economic central places at Uppsala, Birka and Västerås, and references to Åke Hyenstrand's and Björn Ambrosiani's researches into the social and territorial organization that appears to have accompanied these. Chapter 4 offers a synopsis of what is known and what can be inferred about a series of kings of the Svear from Olof Skötkonung (d. 1022) to Knut Eriksson (d. 1195 or 1196). The final two chapters are called 'New perspectives' and 'The unification of the kingdom', and this is where Peter Sawyer interprets the history of kingship in central Sweden in this period in terms of the model sketched above. It is in chapter 6 that I find the most stimulating engagement with material of broader geographical and methodological significance: an attractive analysis of Canute's power in Sweden, using the occurrence of the terms *þægn* and *drængr* on rune-stones; a consideration of Danish interests in Sweden generally, and of the relevance of Swedish involvement in Finland; and finally a reasoned statement of what perhaps one should call the historical good sense of *Ynglingasaga*, which also, of course, is a historical study looking at Sweden in a perspective that recognizes the importance of relationships with the south-west. Birgit Sawyer's essay on the rune-stones also shows a move away from inductive analysis of the inscriptions towards a larger historical model. Now, as a 'hypothesis', the inscriptions are interpreted as a *krissyptom* (a 'symptom of crisis')—a grossly over-worked concept in cultural history generally, though that does not necessarily mean that Birgit Sawyer is wrong to use it—reflecting in various ways the conjoint pressures for a change of faith and a change of political system in the early Middle Ages in Sweden.

As has briefly been noted, Peter Sawyer appeals to external models in an attempt to reconstruct what was going on at certain dates in Sweden rather than making more general statements about the evolution of Germanic kingship, which, after all, if his analogies hold, he could as well generate by consideration of the analogues as by duplicating or reduplicating the results by applying them to Sweden. But it is precisely where he is setting out the more general model, in his first chapter, that he becomes most controversial, and simplifies matters rather too much in order to reduce events in Scandinavia to a basic formula. Is it really simply a fact that needs only to be stated that Danish kings dominated Scandinavia for a majority of the period 800–1040? (So I interpret ‘under större delar av perioden’: if the phrase is used colloquially, i. e. meaning ‘for considerable stretches in this period’, it should not have been so used in this context.) Can we accept that the exceptional political development of Iceland in the period covered by the book was due to Iceland being quite free of external pressure? The Icelandic sources would seem rather to show that Icelandic difference and independence was maintained for centuries despite considerable external pressure to fall in with the mainland Scandinavian system. Turning to Norway, the limitations of a historical approach and a concentration on the Viking Period and the two or three centuries following become more apparent. A speculative suggestion that political organization in Vestfold in the early ninth century was one of territorially overlapping chieftdoms within an area whose unity resided in the shared identity of the native inhabitants as a particular *folk* is based on a few words in *Annales Regni Francorum* s.a. 813, without any reference to—for instance—the work of Bjørn Myhre in identifying centralized chieftdom territories in southern Norway from as early as the fourth to sixth centuries (see, for instance, his ‘Chieftains’ graves and chieftdom territories in South Norway in the Migration Period’, *Studien zur Sachsenforschung* 6, 1987, pp. 169–87). Of course the situation could have developed with an erosion of central power between the Migration Period and the Viking Age—results from the current Borre project, coupled with a reassessment of the great Vestfold ship graves of the early Viking Period, it is to be hoped, will throw more light on this—but once again here we see the old failure of communication between archaeologist and historian rearing its head. It is not, of course, only historians who neglect the other side; it is reasonable enough, for instance, to cite the lack of support from historical sources as a counter-argument to a current enthusiasm for identifying a powerful and centralized Danish kingdom that included Jutland as being in place from at least the earlier eighth century, an enthusiasm which relies on a combination of the predictions of a very general model of state-formation and dendrochronological dates for the construction of part of the Danevirke in southern Jutland, near Hedeby, and the Kanhave canal on Samsø, off the east coast of Jutland (cf. Lotte Hedeager, forthcoming, *Iron-Age societies: from tribe to state in Northern Europe 500 BC to AD 700*, Blackwell: Social archaeology, and Ulf Näsman, 1991, ‘The Germanic Iron Age and Viking Age in Danish archaeology. A survey of the literature 1976–1986’, *Journal of Danish archaeology* 8 (for 1989), pp. 159–87). Curiously, Peter Sawyer here follows—or even outbids—the historical reconstructions of current archaeological fashion by telling us that in Ohthere’s time, ‘as in the sixth century, the political centre of the Danes lay in



Jutland'. And to make a final point (more could be raised from this first chapter) it is an extraordinarily mundane and reductive reading of skaldic verses, including *Vellekla*, and of ideology in Norway towards the end of the Viking Period, to state that the title *jarl*, as opposed to *konungr*, was used by the Hlaðjarlar simply because they recognized Danish 'kings' as overlords.

For a specialist in other periods than that which is central in this monograph, and in the other parts of Scandinavia that are cited as models, there is a strong sense that the wider perspective has been poorly represented if not distorted. The strange thing is that since this is a model used as an image-enhancer for early Swedish history, it does not have to be entirely true and accurate to be methodologically valid, only to be plausible. As a general and abstract historical statement of the processes of the development of kingship in Scandinavia, the essence of the model is acceptable, even if the factual details of what was happening were probably much more complicated. And the point remains that this study is a clear, pointed, original and useful monograph on its central topic: Swedish kings and kingship in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Scandinavian prehistorians (the Viking Period is a twilight zone between prehistory and history in the Scandinavian scheme) are taking to historicism in the reconstruction of Scandinavian Iron-Age social structures and developments, and need to be controlled by what written sources can tell us. The Sawyers' efforts at integrating archaeology and history should be emulated. The Norwegian Borre project has been mentioned; Sigtuna, the site of very recent and unexpectedly fruitful and even puzzling excavations is teasingly introduced in the last paragraph of Birgit Sawyer's appendix. This little book may before long be drowned in a deluge of reassessments of its subject-matter, but it unquestionably offers a timely contribution to a debate that will be the better conducted the wider its range, and the broader the participation in it, as long as real efforts are made to reach cross-disciplinary understanding and integration.

JOHN HINES

IL TEMA DEL VIAGGIO NELLE ISCRIZIONI RUNICHE. By CARLA CUCINA. *Studi e ricerche di linguistica e filologia*, 2. Gianni Luculano Editore. Pavia, 1989. x + 796 pp. + 42 plates.

In her study of the theme of sea-travel in the runic inscriptions of chiefly Viking-Age Scandinavia, Carla Cucina takes primarily a literary approach, although she also uses historical, archaeological, linguistic and iconographic evidence. After analysing over 260 stones mentioning, or simply implying, sea-travel, she concludes that this theme is above all seen as 'the desire and motive for glory for oneself and for one's relations, the model image of a world that looks towards the outside, that does not fear adventure or—as in the case of the archetypal hero of Germanic tradition—death' (p. 2, my translation). *La gloria* looms large in Cucina's exposition of these inscriptions.

The book is split into four parts. The first (pp. 5–26) discusses two pre-Viking-Age inscriptions: those of Kårstad and Schretzheim. The guts of the book is however the second part (pp. 27–486), examining Viking-Age and early

mediaeval inscriptions. Sea-travel is broken down into three main types: the journey planned; that begun; and that completed. Each of these three is then split into headings and sub-headings. 'The journey begun', for example, is first discussed under the heading 'Life lost in the course of the journey', and then under six sub-headings such as '(Life lost) at a stopping place' or '(Life lost) in a fight'.

The third part (pp. 487–542) examines the language of the inscriptions, in particular the metres used in poetical inscriptions. Part four looks at the iconography used on certain stones (pp. 543–62), concentrating on representations of ships and horse-riders. In an appendix Cucina lists all the inscriptions cited in the first two parts, laying them out with transliteration, standardized Old Norse version and modern Italian translation, followed by comments on difficulties of interpretation (pp. 569–740). Unfortunately this entails a fair amount of repetition, since most inscriptions are discussed in some detail in the main text. There is also an English translation of the book's conclusions on pp. 741–44.

Cucina's aim is to avoid what she sees as the usual preoccupation with runic inscriptions as historical sources above all else. She prefers to see them as literary texts, celebrating essentially heroic ideals. Her conclusion is that Viking-Age runic inscriptions glorify sea-travel and display the ideals of Old Norse and Anglo-Saxon heroic literatures, which are characterized as the search for gold (for oneself or for one's heirs); family pride; heroism that scorns the dangers of the deep and aspires to a death in battle; and loyalty to one's leader, friends and allies (cf. p. 565). In many instances Cucina is on fairly sure ground, such as when discussing inscriptions raised for those who died in battle, where some notion of glory must be assumed. A good example is Sö 338 (pp. 180–84), commemorating Þorstæinn, who died fighting in Russia, or Sö 179 (pp. 215–18), celebrating those who fed the eagle in the east. The Eddic and scaldic parallels cited for eagle-feeding are certainly apt, but as often as not Cucina seems to make too much out of her material.

Typical of Cucina's approach is her discussion of U 539, raised by the surviving brothers of one Svæinn, who died in Jutland on his way to England. Cucina argues that 'young' Svæinn had gone to Jutland to join a military expedition to England, and was probably headed for one of the fortified camps in the area, such as Fyrkat. But Svæinn died before he could sail and the sole glory left to him is that of the rune-stone, glory springing from a desire for adventure, thwarted in this case but nonetheless worthy of celebration in heroic culture (pp. 30–36). Obvious objections can be raised. Why is Svæinn necessarily young? Could he not have been a merchant? Was glory of the literary-heroic kind the real motive for raising the stone? Cucina seems not to consider that such stones as U 539 were raised for more practical purposes, perhaps as notification of death for legal reasons (e. g. inheritance). The inscription also ends with a prayer to God and Mary to have more mercy on Svæinn's soul than he deserved. The tone is redolent of humility rather than glory. Another example of this incautious extrapolation is the discussion of U 455 (pp. 58–59). The inscription says simply that Ingifastr raised the stone for his mother and father, who both drowned. Cucina rightly says that we do not know where they drowned, or what the object of their journey was—whether for trade or even pilgrimage. Yet she goes on to talk of the 'glory' that Ingifastr brings to his parents' reputation by commissioning so well-executed an inscription. The upward direction of the inscription's text

and decoration, even the shape of the very stone, lifts the memorial, Cucina argues, towards 'the higher regions of glory after death, those regions to which both the Germanic hero and the Christian in their different ways aspire' (p. 59, my translation). As noted above, Ingifastr could have had more mundane intentions, touching inheritance for example, especially as there would have been no bodies and so no burial to make transfer of ownership clear.

On the positive side, Cucina's use of the physical positioning of text and decoration on certain rune-stones to shed light on the content of inscriptions is always interesting. On pp. 344–48, for instance, she discusses Sö 164, raised for Guðmarr, who died in the west. A cross and ship adorn the stone. Cucina first discusses the part of the inscription in *fornyrðislag* (Guðmarr *Stoð drængila i stafn skipi / Liggr vestarla of hulinn sar do*) purely from a literary angle. She notes how each part of the second line contrasts with the first: Guðmarr once stood, now he lies (buried); the ship is exchanged for the grave. More striking, to Cucina's mind, is the arrangement of text and decoration on the stone. While noting that in most cases the two elements have little to do with each other, she argues that here the ship, with its mast blossoming into a cross, somehow combines the Christian notion of the *peregrinatio* with pre-existing Norse ideas linking ships and death (cf. Naglfar). The Christian idea is accepted, Cucina argues, because it struck a chord with ancient Norse belief. Thus Guðmarr continues to sail, indulging his native desire for sea-travel, but now under the eternal protection of the cross. Similar discussions can be found throughout the book (e. g. pp. 140–41, 296–98).

The overall impression of this book is of material being stretched to fit the theory. The author has decided that if sea-travel is undertaken it necessarily implies heroic ideals such as honour and glory. In many instances, however, one surely has to admit that the inscriptions are too laconic for us to know with certainty what inspired them, apart from the obvious wish to notify a death. No one can doubt Carla Cucina's enthusiasm for her subject, but a dose of caution might not have come amiss.

CHRISTOPHER JACKSON

ALTNORDISCHE KOSMOGRAPHIE. STUDIEN UND QUELLEN ZU WELTBILD UND WELTBESCHREIBUNG IN NORWEGEN UND ISLAND VOM 12. BIS ZUM 14. JAHRHUNDERT. BY RUDOLF SIMEK. *Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde*, 4. Walter de Gruyter. Berlin, 1990. 643 pp.

This is a massive and ambitious book. It examines most of the extant writings in Old Norse that contain descriptions of the physical world from a cosmographical, geographical or ethnographical point of view in relation to their sources in order to assess the extent of knowledge in medieval Iceland and Norway of the medieval Latin tradition of cosmography. Some texts are by design excluded, though one might have preferred that they had not been; for instance the geographical passages in *Historia Norwegiæ* (only referred to on p. 324 n.), the descriptions to be found in the Vinland sagas and some Family Sagas, and the cosmology of the Eddas and of the heathen period generally, though the prologue

to *Snorra Edda* and the geographical introduction to *Heimskringla* are included. Besides considering treatises and encyclopaedic writings that include descriptions of the world, the author also examines some of the narrative works that seem to contain passages derived from them. The conclusion is that all these texts are in the tradition of medieval Latin encyclopaedic writings going back to classical origins, though specific Latin sources are rarely identifiable (much of the material is ultimately derived from well-known Latin writers both of the early Middle Ages and of the twelfth to thirteenth centuries, such as Bede, Isidore, Honorius Augustodunensis; a previously unidentified source who appears quite frequently is Lambertus Audomarensis, c.11 20). They are eclectic and compilatory and treat their originals with freedom. Even taking into account the possibility that texts either in Latin or Icelandic have been lost, the variety of the extant texts indicates that a lot of activity in translating, copying and compiling cosmography and geography took place in Iceland in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, though while Icelandic writers seem quite up to date in continental encyclopaedic writings until the fourteenth century, no new material of this kind seems to have reached Iceland in later centuries. It seems that a variety of Latin cosmographical texts were known in Iceland, though of course once the material was available in the vernacular, the appearance of such material in a Norse text does not necessarily mean that the author had access to the Latin originals. Indeed some geographical descriptions, like perhaps that in the prologue to *Snorra Edda*, may be derived from a map or diagram of the world rather than from an ordinary verbal text. Others may be based on oral accounts of the contents of Latin manuscripts, or, of course, on florilegia. In fact the lack of close correspondence between the vernacular cosmographical writings and those in Latin suggests that few Icelandic and Norwegian writers in the Middle Ages had direct access to Latin books.

The study is avowedly not diachronic, that is, it does not attempt to trace changes in the world-picture of Icelanders and Norwegians in the Middle Ages, though the discussion of the history of the manuscripts and the source-criticism implies some alteration of that picture from the time before Latin texts became available until the time of the fullest development of Norse encyclopaedic writings. In this the book is a great contrast to Kirsten Hastrup's *Culture and history in medieval Iceland* (1985), which is much concerned to trace changes in the Icelanders' world-picture from heathen times to the time after the fall of the Republic. There is the same implicit problem with both studies, however, as to how far the sources chosen for examination actually reflect the world view of ordinary Icelanders in the Middle Ages, and to what extent they reveal only the attitudes of a select literary minority; indeed it is difficult to know whether the texts represent 'beliefs' about the real world at all, since they may be just formal reproductions of school learning without necessarily having been adopted even by the compilers of the manuscripts. Neither book really addresses the question of whether it is proper to assume the existence of a single coherent world view attributable to the populations of Iceland and Norway in the Middle Ages at all. Scribes were after all still copying pre-Christian texts in the late Middle Ages as well as texts derived from medieval Latin sources. It is interesting that almost the only narrative texts that show clear evidence of being influenced by the geographical and cosmographical treatises are late *fornaldarsögur* and romances.

The author's treatment of the relationships of the various texts he discusses is detailed, and contains lengthy quotations, usually with translations and summaries. These discussions and comparisons precede the presentation of the texts themselves, and tend to be rather laborious and indeed repetitive, while there is in fact no line-by-line commentary on the actual texts, and there are some surprising omissions. The account of the descriptions of the division of the world after the Flood (pp. 222–28) lacks any reference to the passage in the version of the Prologue to *Snorra Edda* in Codex Wormianus that deals with this topic. The quotations from cosmographical writings in the discussions are difficult to identify and locate because they are not accompanied by references, and the lack of an index (other than one of ancient authors and texts) makes the book very difficult to use (there is an index of manuscripts, but without page references, so that it is virtually useless). The bibliography of primary sources does not even include *Snorra Edda* and *Heimskringla*, though these are among the texts discussed (in the bibliographical details of *Heimskringla* on p. 426 the dates of Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson's edition are given incorrectly).

But it is in the editing of the Icelandic texts themselves and the translations of them that the real limitations of the book lie. The author says he has re-edited most of these texts from the manuscripts with the exception of the extracts from *Snorra Edda* and *Heimskringla* (in the case of *Snorra Edda* the extract is inexcusably taken from Finnur Jónsson's edition of 1900, which is far from being reliable, and the list of manuscripts includes Finnur's (unpublished) transcription of Codex Trajectinus but not Codex Trajectinus itself). Some of the texts reproduced have not been edited before, it is claimed, and unfortunately the author reveals that he is not competent to undertake this kind of work. There are numerous examples of expansions of manuscript contractions that betray a totally inadequate grasp of Icelandic grammar, orthography and palaeography; for instance: 'sua segir ymago mundi at heimsinn se uaxinn sem egg . . . sua er elldin umhuerfum heiminn . . . id huita eggri er' (p. 397); 'skvrnill [MS skvrml] er vm egg . . . a notutenne (the MS has 'notvtenne' with 'v' subpuncted) . . . yfir irdvni (MS yfer íorddvne)' (pp. 397–8); 'þau bigdi borgina salfin er seirnameir var kaulud Irlin . . . Iparsta nafn og hofdingskapir' (translated 'die erbauten sich selbst die Stadt, die seither Irlin heißt . . . von höchstem Namen und Ansehen', p. 463); 'Austur jardtriknir' (translated 'Der Osten der Erde', p. 501); 'af odri tveim þriðingum . . . byrgdr aptir' (pp. 334–5); 'gogg sonr iaphets noa sonr . . . stendr fiallz þat . . . kyn kams noa sonr . . . til merks huer hann kom framaz . . . þar standa þui enn . . . orkneyar er bygdar xxv' (p. 446); 'af Drottningu eirn . . . J þeim partr heims . . . þangad má eingum komast . . . engi hagl . . . Gnorki granda Angur nie elli . . . sem vmhuerfis gangur . . . aunnur aim . . . hann hafdi drepid sinum brodrum . . . Þar Heitir rijkr Media . . . J þessu erir babilon, Caldea . . . af sialfan Gudi . . . postolur paule . . . amarr hlutir gangur' (pp. 474–5). Some of these may be uncorrected printing errors, of which there are plenty anyway ('engi byggvr', p. 425; the headers on pp. 375 and 377–81 'Hausbók'; 'synri bygd' [MSS Synnri bygd, transcribed 'Synnri bygd' p. 407], p. 320), but their frequency, especially in the texts which are not available in printed editions, suggests incompetence, and the texts edited in this book must be regarded as quite unreliable. The translations in many places contain quite ludicrous misunderstandings of Old Icelandic grammar and vocabulary, e. g. 'Sá [sc. hafsbotn] skilr

heimsþriðjungana' is translated 'So teilt man die drei Kontinente ein:' (pp. 426–7); 'nær meir rás hennar [sc. sólar]' becomes 'näher ihrem Aufgang' (p. 404); 'hofudborgum huerso þar [sic] hafa ifystu [min]daz [v. II. smidaz, syndaz] til þat [sic] at liosara uerdi lefanda manni edr til hliðannda' is rendered 'die Hauptstädte, die dabei am meisten erwähnt werden; damit den heute Lebenden deutlicher wird und sie aufmerksam gemacht werden' (pp. 436, 442); the roman numeral 'C' is rendered '1000' (p. 501); '.l. oc .cc. . . . . íj. oc .xx. . . . .vi. mínna en .cccc.' become '70 . . . 33 . . . 396' (pp. 459, 462; the numbers are given correctly on p. 220, where the author rather comically points out how medieval scribes frequently make errors in reproducing roman numerals); 'enn bland' is translated 'ein schwarzes Land' (pp. 459, 462); 'personu' is translated as a plural (which it probably ought to be) and 'voldum' ('choice') as 'vielen' on p. 265; 'Svo hefir almatigvyr gvd saman bvnddet eld & iord himen & votn at iordin mundi [brenn]a ef ef være vatnít en sokva ef ef [sic]ei være elldrin' is translated 'So hat der allmächtige Gott Feuer und Erde, Himmel und Wasser verbunden, damit die Erde nicht verbrenne, wenn es kein Wasser gäbe, und ertrinke, wenn es kein Feuer gäbe' (pp. 398–9); 'taka þar til . . . um stundar sakir at' becomes 'dort beginnen . . . vor einer Weile . . . weil' (pp. 446–7); 'to' (altered from 'tolf') is rendered '2 [recte: 12]' (pp. 399–400); 'fellr J sio kuijslir' becomes 'fällt in einem Delta . . . ins Meer' (pp. 474, 476); 'þar heitir nije [presumably an error for 'vin'] Landid goda' is rendered 'dort spricht man von guten neuen Ländern' (pp. 475, 477); 'Audug Af Løgum [for 'Løgum'?]' is translated 'berühmt wegen der Gesetze' (pp. 475, 477); but the most hilarious misunderstandings come in the translation of a passage about monstrous races, who are made even more monstrous than in the medieval text: 'sem alla kuödu forðum hafa': 'wie alle alten Gedichte sagen'; 'biugir sem fenudr': 'gekrümmt wie ein Bogen'; 'skiotir sem dýr': 'schneller als Tiere'; 'éta þa ath erfi sino': 'essen sie zum Andenken'; '& ohęginndi': 'ohne sie zu erschlagen'; 'þath er enn edli kuenna sumra ath eitt megu barn ala allz æt fi': 'Dort ist ein Frauenvolk, von denen einige ihr ganzes Leben Kinder gebären können'; 'þeir menn ero enn er lodnir ero sem dyr & hafa eigi fot': 'Es gibt auch welche, die behaart sind wie Tiere und keine Füße haben' (pp. 470–3). These elementary mistakes cannot all be due just to carelessness; they imply fundamental ignorance, and to my mind entirely vitiate whatever value the study of the texts in this volume might otherwise have had; since such an investigation demands close knowledge of the meaning of the texts under discussion, the work as a whole must be regarded from a scholarly point of view as very unreliable—some might even say valueless.

ANTHONY FAULKES

HELLAS OG NORGE. KONTAKT, KOMPARASJON, KONTRAST. EN ARTIKKELSAMLING. Edited by ØIVIND ANDERSEN and TOMAS HÄGG. *Skrifter utgitt av Det norske institutt i Athen, 2. Klassisk institutt, Universitetet i Bergen*. Bergen, 1990. 280 pp.

The volume under review contains a number of papers which were originally delivered in a discussion-group of Norwegian scholars at the Norwegian Institute at Athens in December 1989, reworked for publication. The occasion for the original meeting in Athens was the founding of the Institute earlier in 1989 and

the handsome gift to it of about forty thousand volumes, comprising the library of the Greek emeritus professor of ancient Greek and Roman law, Johannes Triantaphyllopoulos. The papers address themselves to a variety of subjects in the cultural histories of Norway and Greece from ancient times down to the present day, being chronologically partitioned into three fields of discussion: 1) 'Saga, epic and poetry', 2) 'Norway and Byzantium', and 3) 'National formation and politics'. Thus the first part covers some of the oldest literature of Norway and Iceland (prose and poetry) and Greece (epic poetry), the second the cultural and historical ties between the northern lands and the Eastern empire of Greece in the Middle Ages, and the third the rise of national consciousness in 19th-century Greece and Norway and the emergence of socialism in the two nations in modern times, with a short coda on the political shenanigans of Papandreou and his socialist party.

The subtitle to this collection—'contact, comparison, contrast'—affords us a preliminary set of criteria by which to judge its general value. Summarily, one may say that where there were real contacts between Greece and Norway, as in the Middle Ages, the contributors to part 2 are in a position to make solid contributions to their subjects; but where little or no contact existed, as between the literatures of ancient Greece and medieval Norway, or the later political developments of modern Greece and Norway, the contributors to parts 1 and 3 are thrown back on comparisons and contrasts which are apt to strike us as artificial and forced. Since at *any* time in the histories of the two lands the differences between their cultures and peoples are always bound to be greater than the similarities, the comparisons seem particularly feeble, as in part 1. One of the editors, Øivind Andersen, has tried in the introduction ('Like and unlike') to remedy the weakness of the comparisons by juggling terms with 'near' and 'far' comparisons (p. 11), which supposedly will do justice impartially to the similarities and dissimilarities in Greek and Norwegian cultural phenomena, but this terminological jugglery cannot disguise the lameness of his comparisons between the Homeric and Old Norse-Icelandic civilizations, which, he tells us, were cradled on islands or in fjords and were naturally seagoing, raised cattle, sheep and goats, had small populations, rivalrous chieftains and warriors highly sensitive to honour, etc., etc. (more of the same in Bjørn Qviller's paper, pp. 46–48). All superficially true, but quite trivial. What actually individualizes the Achaeans or the Vikings is lost sight of among these trivia—for example, the fact that the Vikings could design boats which were equally suited to shallow-draft and deep-sea navigation, while the maritime peoples of primitive Greek civilization were largely confined by their less innovative naval architecture and seamanship to coastal voyages or *periplōi*.

The papers themselves, which we shall summarize and appraise individually in their respective parts of the collection, do not bring anything very new to light, but tend to synthesize previous scholarship on their subjects. The happy as well as unhappy exceptions to this synthesizing tendency occur in part 2 where the ground is firmer for historical investigations, and one can venture to be more independent, not to say more wayward, in one's researches. But as it stands the collection seeks overall to put together a representative scholarly picture of Greek and Norwegian-Icelandic literature and culture in major historical epochs, using current American and European theories of e. g. oral and literary composition,

cultural anthropology and feminism. The theoretical framework is frequently 'paradigmatic' in the Kuhnian sense, and erected unquestioningly as being standard equipment, but we need not be so uncritical ourselves in reckoning with the literary and cultural orientations of the contributors.

(I) *Saga, epic and poetry*. The leading essay in this part is that of the scaldic poetry specialist, Bjarne Fidjestøl, 'Icelandic saga and court poetry: literature and society in archaic Norse culture' (pp. 21–44). The term 'archaic', with connotations of the 'archaic period' in early Greek literature, was chosen to denote an early medieval period of orally-composed scaldic poetry, between c.700 and 1100, before Old Norse literature began generally to be written down in the Latin alphabet. This chronological demarcation between the oral and the literary would appear to be more or less superfluous in regard to the basically oral composition of scaldic poetry throughout the Middle Ages, and it intersects with but a small slice of the corpus of Eddic poetry. Fidjestøl consigns the oldest Eddic poems (he does not say which, p. 24) to the obscurity of pre-archaic times, during the Germanic migrations, but he fails to note that the bulk of the Eddic corpus falls chronologically after his 'archaic period' (cf. *Old Norse–Icelandic literature*, ed. Carol J. Clover and John Lindow, 1985, 93, and Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Íslenzkar bókmenntir í fornöld*, 1962, 228–29). Furthermore, though the end of the 'archaic period' also marks the beginnings of prose writing in Old Norse, the written sagas that emerge in Iceland will have been in size and shape most unlike the oral saga-like stories (*frásagnir*, *þættir*) that preceded them. Fidjestøl admits the non-identity between the oral and written saga (p. 25), but finds some theoretical comfort nonetheless in Carol Clover's rather metaphysical idea of the 'immanent saga' in Icelandic story-telling (*Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 101, 1986, 34), which pervades the scattered *frásagnir* or *þættir* of oral tradition and lends them a kind of unity of context.

Fidjestøl's proposal of a quasi-Greek period of 'archaic' oral poetry for Old Norse literature is not a stepping stone but a stumbling block to the interpretation of that literature. Saga prose had its gestation period in oral story-telling doubtless, but scaldic and Eddic poetry would usually have been composed entirely orally, whether the resulting poems were to be recorded in writing or not. The composition of Eddic poetry, however, is still a mystery, despite much initial searching for oral formulae in it. Few instances of the recitation of Eddic poems have come down to us, as in the legend of Norna-Gestr (on which see Lars Lönnroth in *Speculum* 46, 1971, 4–8), and they are hazy and indefinite.

When Fidjestøl comes to the interpretation of Old Norse court poetry and the Icelandic sagas he reduces it to a schema of *rex* and *lex*, inasmuch as *drottkvæði* were centred in Norway on the king (*dróttinn*) and the Icelandic sagas on the law. Under this schema scaldic poetry fares better than the sagas and Fidjestøl's expertise in the court poetry of the scalds is displayed to advantage here. The sagas and the law, however, are another matter. The centrality of law in the sagas is not in question, but not content with the remarkable preoccupation of both the sagamen and the persons of the sagas with the law, Fidjestøl attempts to discover in the laws themselves of Norway and Iceland the seeds of saga narrative. Thus he educes the origins of the story-telling of the sagamen from law cases (as in *Gulapingslög*) and medieval reasoning by *exempla* (as in *Konungs skuggsjá*) (p. 38). This tack will not lead us very far into the sagas.



Another, more inconclusive approach to the sagas and the Eddic poems is taken by Else Mundal in 'The Norse epic tradition' (pp. 65–80), a postscript to her book on the scholarly controversy over the oral and/or literary evolution of the sagas (*Sagadebatt*, 1977). Mundal's bibliography of names and works that have refuelled this controversy since the late sixties is deficient, however, in several particulars. Like Fidjestøl she is chiefly attracted to the Andersson/Clover lines of thought about saga evolution, but she overlooks Andersson's latest reflections prefaced to his and William I. Miller's translations of *Ljósvetninga saga* and *Valla-Ljóts saga* (Theodore M. Andersson and William Ian Miller, *Law and literature in medieval Iceland*, 1989, 64–98), on the double texts of the first saga and their bearing on saga composition. As for Clover's two works, *The medieval saga* (1982) and 'The long prose form' (*Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 101, 1986, 10–39), Mundal does not fully realize that Clover, like Lars Lönnroth, passed through two distinct phases of the saga controversy—one literary, the other oral—which are irreconcilable with each other. 'The long prose form' breaks completely with the older philological conception of the saga in *The medieval saga* as a repertoire of European medieval literary conventions. Nevertheless, the hypothesis of an 'immanent saga' in this article, which is much cited in *Hellas og Norge* and elsewhere, surreptitiously extends an idea of audience reception to the realms of authorial creation, but does not thereby bridge the gap between oral story-telling and literary narrative; instead, it circumvents it by making the Icelandic community at once the repository and the creator of sagas—a modernist version of the Romantic tenet, 'das Volk dichtet'.

Mundal brings in Eddic poetry, as the alternative 'epic tradition', to illumine the social unity of context which integrates the isolated poem or *þáttur*, according to Clover. Just as the killing of Gunnarr of Hlíðarendi was a part of the 'immanent saga' of the burning of Njáll, known to Icelanders from oral tradition, so the murder of Sigurðr Fáfnisbani in the different *Sigurðar kviður* was spun off the epic cycles of poetry current about him throughout the Germanic world. Even the kennings of Eddic and scaldic poetry will testify to the shared knowledge that the Norsemen had of their literature *in extenso*, since otherwise the individual kenning-elements of their poetry would have been unintelligible to them without this wide context. So far, so good. But when Mundal in conclusion wants to correlate the 'epic tradition' of Eddic or scaldic poetry with that of the prose sagas she wavers between them uncertainly. On the one hand, she sidesteps (p. 75) inexpediently the large body of evidence which has been thoroughly sifted, *inter alios*, by Oskar Bandle in 'Isländersaga und Heldendichtung' (*Afmælisrit Jóns Helgasonar*, 1969, 1–26), to reveal the literacy and cultural ramifications of Eddic poetry in saga prose; on the other, she has only a weak grasp of the function of the scaldic *lausavísur* in saga prose, which to her are mere narrative links in the sagas ('ein lekk i forteljninga', p. 77), and therefore she gratefully acquiesces in the suggestion of Clover (after Lönnroth and Peter Buchholz) that saga prose and scaldic verse could have been composed simultaneously together as in other literatures of the world. The oral intercalation of scaldic verse in saga prose bespeaks, Mundal feels, the cultural sophistication of the audiences of the sagamen before the advent of writing.

The two surveys of Old Norse literature by Fidjestøl and Mundal are matched by a corresponding couple of overviews of Homeric and archaic Greek culture and

literature by the classicists Bjørn Qviller and Øivind Andersen. Qviller's paper, 'Poetry and political power in archaic Greece' (pp. 45–64), recreates the political and cultural ambience for the recitation of early Greek epic and lyric poetry at palace banquets, symposia and temple festivals, while Andersen's longer piece, 'Singing and writing' (pp. 81–115), confronts the 'Homeric problem' of the composition of the ancient Greek epics, which for many classical scholars, especially the Americans, has been finally resolved by the 'oral-formulaic theory' of Milman Parry and Albert Lord. At this point in part 1 of *Hellas og Norge* the conjunction of the problems of saga evolution and Homeric-epic improvisation, and the oral solutions thereto, begin to reproduce the scholarly situation of a century ago when the *Lieder* theory of Karl Lachmann sampled successively the Homeric Greek and Middle High German epics, and (with A. U. Bååth, *Studier öfver kompositionen i några isländska ättsagor*, 1885) the Icelandic sagas.

Qviller's paper, though it does well enough for the natural association of feasts or festivities and song, rests on dubious assumptions about the political side of Greek feasting and poetry. This classicist believes (p. 45) that Homer and Hesiod, or the rhapsodes that went under those names, inhabited epochs (9th to 8th centuries BC) that were in the process of repudiating Bronze-Age theocratic Mycenaean palace culture and ushering in the more 'democratic' city-state (i. e. 'a collectivity of citizens on an equal footing', p. 45). Homer appears to him to be the more politically conservative of the two, since this poet unqualifiedly upholds the rule of one man (as in *Il.* ii. 204 f.), whereas Hesiod, the voice of the small farmers of Boeotia, does not bow to a king without warning him (in *Works and days*, 248 ff.) that the gods will see to it that he shall dispense justice. Besides these references (quoted pp. 57–58), Qviller offers archaeological evidence from excavations of the temple of Hera Limenia of Perachora (pp. 60–61), which he thinks discloses a separation of political deliberations from religious auspices in early Greek public life of the 7th century BC. In other words, the Hera Limenia temple was not really a temple with a presiding priest but simply a building which housed the local *prytaneion*, 'where the elite in the region took their meals and drank wine together' (p. 60), and talked politics freely, unmonitored by any priest. Hence this site approximates closest of all to the 'relatively secular' atmosphere of the classical Greek *polis*.

No classicist of my acquaintance would go along with this tendentious argument in favour of the incipient democratization and secularization of Greek politics from the 'dark age' to the archaic period. There is no epigraphical hint as to the social or political purpose of the temple of Hera Limenia, which can only be guessed at from the layout of the building. Hesiod, the small farmer and critic of kings, is not more progressive than Homer, and Homer himself took over his model of kingship with a wealth of epic materials from theocratic Mycenaean palace-culture. Indeed, his indebtedness to that culture was so great that it has been said that '... Homer depicts a state of affairs which is not only closer to the Mycenaean age than to any other but can actually be identified with the Mycenaean age in some crucial respects' (J. T. Hooker, 'From Mycenae to Homer', in *Studies in honour of T. B. L. Webster*, 1986–88, II, 59). So much for the alleged repudiation of Mycenaean palace-culture at the end of the 'dark age'.

In the Homeric epics the feasting of the heroes was orchestrated as a social form of entertainment among aristocratic equals, or of glorification of their royal

hosts, or else of reconciliation of opposing enemies—but beyond these aims it could not be described as really political. Telemachus (in *Od.* i. 372–75) sharply distinguishes for Penelope's suitors their gluttonous feasting from the *agorē*, the political assembly where serious business is to be transacted, and in the opening scene of the second book of the *Iliad*, the *agorē* and the *boulē*, the council, are the two institutions convoked for the Achaean consultations on the prosecution of the war against Troy. Quviller has not extricated the right implications of the *daitai eisai* or 'equal feasts' (*Od.* xi. 185) in the Homeric epics—their purely social significance, as above—but he correctly relegates the political significance of Greek banquets to the later symposia of the archaic period, as e. g. in Alcaeus's circle on Lesbos, though one should not, with Quviller, pretend that these symposia were 'early city-councils' (p. 60). Neither the remains of the temple of Hera Limenia nor a stray passage on the origins of the *polis* from Strabo's *Geography* (9. 3. 5, quoted pp. 59–60) will warrant that inference.

The complementary paper of Andersen on the 'Homeric problem' first gives a résumé of the most prominent features of Homer's versification and oral style of composition and performance (for Parry and Lord one and the same thing), before posing the problem itself, to which it provides several solutions in the end, without endorsing any one of them very strongly. These last are so many 'positions' taken by the author from theoretical standpoints toward oral composition and the transcription of the Homeric epics. Throughout the paper the Parry/Lord paradigm overshadows the argumentation, up to the closing discussion of writing, in which Andersen leans more heavily on the bold thesis of H. T. Wade-Gery (*The poet of the Iliad*, 1952) and Barry B. Powell (in *Classical antiquity* 8, 1989, 321–50; cf. now his book, *Homer and the origin of the Greek alphabet*, 1991), namely that the Greek alphabet was purposely designed by one man to record hexametric poetry. Wherever he can, Andersen slips in (pp. 86, 99) some contrasts between Homeric verse and saga prose and scaldic verse, but these are no improvement on his initial comparisons in the preface between ancient Greek and medieval Scandinavian civilizations, and may be more or less disregarded. When, however, he cites (pp. 97–98) Clover's 'immanent saga' as something analogous to the traditional material in the Homeric epics, we see how her oral theory can be hitched to two very different literatures; but more commonly among mediaevalists it is the oral-formulaic theory that is transferred to the Poetic Edda and the verse epics of the Middle Ages.

The Homeric problem has always been involved with the illiteracy of the so-called 'dark age' from the second millennium to the eighth century BC, the century in which 'Homer' is supposed to have flourished, or to put it another way, in which the texts of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, whether oral or written, assumed definitive form. Nobody imagines that before 'Homer' the *oidoi* or the rhapsodes (as in fragment 265 of the Hesiodic corpus) could have done otherwise than compose their songs of Troy or Thebes orally, without a Greek alphabet at their disposal, but when by the eighth century the earliest Greek inscriptions, often hexametric, are attested here and there (inventory of these in P. Kyle McCarter, *The antiquity of the Greek alphabet*, 1975, 65–75, and Powell's article cited above), it is only reasonable to ask whether our Homer could not have availed himself of writing too, or been affected by it one way or another. The true-blue oral-formulaic theorists, like John Miles Foley (*The theory of oral composition*,

1988), do not bother their heads with the written redactions of the Homeric epics, which lie outside their narrow interests, but Andersen to his credit has multiplied the possible solutions to the Homeric problem by taking account of the hexametric Greek inscriptions of the eighth century. Unfortunately, under the Parry/Lord paradigm the performer/creator and the scribal recorder of the Greek epics can never be one and the same man, since each of them had a highly specialized mentality of his own. Hence at best by this division of labour one can only conceive of Homer as dictating his poems to a scribe newly equipped with the Greek alphabet (so Andersen, p. 104). Secondly, as Andersen points out (p. 103), the surviving quotations from or allusions to Homer from the archaic period, as on the cup of Nestor, do not run to more than a line or two of verse. Finally, his will-o'-the-wisp, Powell, has pushed the Wade-Gery thesis to such lengths as to rob it of all probability; not only must the Greek alphabet be the invention of one man for the purpose of recording hexameter verse of restricted circulation (within aristocratic circles), but the verse must also be first and foremost that of the celebrated *aoidos* of the day, Homer, and, furthermore, the inventor of the alphabet who was also Homer's recorder was the only one who could read the texts of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, to begin with (Barry B. Powell, *Homer and the origin of the Greek alphabet*, 1991, 231–33)! The hexametric inscriptions of the eighth century compel us to rethink the relation of written script to oral song in Homer's epics, but not thus, assuredly.

Andersen's own thoughts about these matters are summed up in four 'positions' on the Homeric problem (pp. 106–11). 1) *Large-scale epic composition presupposes writing generally*. Though scholars of the stature of Albin Lesky and Jan de Vries have adopted this position, Andersen complains that it is 'rarely established' by anyone (p. 106). 2) *Writing may have inspired the aoidoi to such sustained composition*. Parry's son, Adam Parry, advanced this view (in *Yale classical studies* 20, 1966, 216), which Andersen rejects because it contravenes the Parry/Lord division of labour between poet and scribe. 3) *The large scale of the Homeric epics may on the contrary have prompted the invention of writing* (so as to record them). Acceptable to Andersen on the whole because it chimes in with the Wade-Gery/Powell thesis. 4) *Large-scale epic composition dispensed with writing altogether*. Also acceptable to Andersen because conformable to the Parry/Lord paradigm for oral-formulaic composition. The notes of scholarly orthodoxy are struck audibly ever louder in the last three 'positions'.

(II) *Norway and Byzantium*. The second part of the collection traverses the historical terrain whereon 'Norden' and the Eastern empire in the Middle Ages became acquainted with each other. As I have said before, the historical foundation for their mutual acquaintance exerts a steadying effect upon the contributors to part II, aside from one or two scholarly truants who lose themselves in unfounded speculation. How vast the terrain was, yet how pervasive to trade from late Roman times on (4th to 8th centuries AD) is outlined for us by Bente Magnus in a paper on the contacts between Scandinavia and the East Roman empire before the Viking Age, 'The route to and from Miklagarðr' (pp. 119–38). The author takes proper stock of the archaeological finds of Roman and German glass, Byzantine jewellery (especially the exquisite 'face-beads'), Arabic coins and native runic inscriptions which circumstantiate the foreign-trade contacts and the eastern travels of the Scandinavians up to and through the Viking Age. Just how

far those who travelled the *austrvegr* in the Viking Age managed to get in the Near East is not ascertainable from our western sources, but one early Arabic source in the compilation of Harris Birkeland (*Nordens historie . . . etter arabiske kilder*, 1954, 11) tells of the camel-trains of Russian goods that the Kievan Scandinavians led down to Baghdad from the Caspian Sea and sold in the souks of the Persian capital. The nearest to the eastern caliphate most Scandinavians would have got, however, would probably have been by the Volga waterway to the western shores of the Caspian, where, trading and raiding, they became embroiled with the Khazar kingdom.

The principal population of Scandinavians in the east, beginning with the Swedes, accumulated in the course of the ninth century in the depôts of Ladoga, Novgorod and Kiev, comprising loosely the khaganate of the Rus. In the *Russian primary chronicle* of the 12th century that foreign body of Scandinavians is named 'Varangian' in an entry under the years 860–62. As is well known, the historical development of the name 'Varangian' itself is wrapped in clouds of scholarly controversy (see e. g. Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *History of Russia*, 1984, ch. 3). Predictably, therefore, the linguistic and geographical provenience of the name and the identity of the 'Varangians' are attacked in part II by a historian, Håkon Stang, linguistically trained in Russian and Arabic and bristling with novel etymologies. It is the contention of Stang in his paper 'From Novaya Zemlya and Varanger to the heart of the world' (pp. 139–52) that the Varangians mentioned in the *Primary chronicle* did not yet exist (p. 140) but that the name was, in Greek form, a Byzantine coinage around the year 1000 (p. 149: 'Navnet *Varanggoi* stammer fra Bysants'), which in Russian form with the secondary meaning of 'merchants' was borrowed and then generalized by the twelfth-century Russian chronicler to encompass several ethnic groups of people in Bjarmaland who traded in walrus tusks and other Arctic commodities with the Scandinavians and the Arabs. Two objections immediately check this derivation of *væringi/varyag*: first, the *Primary chronicle* refers under *varyag* explicitly to the 'foreign' (i. e. Scandinavian) Rus, who are said to have imposed tribute on the Chuds and the Ves of Bjarmaland, but secondly and more importantly, as Stang has inconveniently forgotten, *væringi* is from a Common Germanic word (\**wēragangian*) with the underlying meaning of 'så sem gengur í tryggðasamband' (so Ásgeir Blöndal Magnússon, *Íslensk orðsifjabók*, 1989, 1156), or 'sworn retainer', which of course was its primary meaning when the Byzantines employed the word in reference to the Varangian guard. Since Stang is rather unfamiliar with the Old Norse side of the linguistic equation he can persuade himself that Old Norse *væringi* is seldom used in the Kings' Sagas ('navnet . . . knapt brukes i norrøne kilder', p. 139), and that the sagamen are mysteriously silent about any *væringjar* in Garðaríki, though the Russian chroniclers denominate the foreign Rus Varangians (p. 140). One wonders how he thinks the Byzantines and then the Slavs ever came to speak of *hoi Baranggoi* and *varjazi* respectively, in the absence of an Old Norse substrate.

In the eyes of Sverre Bagge, the political historian of medieval Norway, the Varangian guard of the Byzantine emperors was personified in their Norse leader, Harald the 'Tough-Minded', 'han er eksempelet på et alment fenomen' (p. 169). Hence Bagge's paper, 'Harald Hardrada in Byzantium: two stories, two cultures' (pp. 169–92), can spotlight him and his Norse and Byzantine biographers as

exponents not only of the role of the Varangian guard in Byzantine society but also of the historical reactions of two cultures in the North and Near East to him and the guard. This is a laudable project but it is not implemented very well by a diffuse impressionistic essay. Although the author cites the fundamental study of the Varangians by Sigfús Blöndal (as translated and revised by B. S. Benediktz as *The Varangians of Byzantium*, 1973), he does not even take the trouble to corroborate his impressions with the firm convictions of Blöndal who had steeped himself for twenty-five years in the multilingual materials of Varangian history in the eastern Mediterranean world. Thus Snorri's biographical notices of Harald in Byzantium (*Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar*, chs 1–15), which have a pronounced 'anti-Byzantine' bias in Bagge's opinion (p. 175), represent him nonetheless as what Bagge chooses to call a 'robber-chieftain' (p. 176). The chief Byzantine witness to Harald's career in Byzantine service—the anonymous *Logos nouthetē tikos pros basilea* (ed. B. Wassiliewsky and V. Jernstedt, 1896)—spoke of him with the greatest respect, however, even though he served as an example of how foreign mercenaries should *not* be rewarded too much for their just deserts by the Byzantine emperors. Furthermore, the fact is that Snorri likewise spoke in the highest terms of Harald, as at the end of his saga, and the cause of this praise was, as Blöndal has observed (*The Varangians of Byzantium*, pp. 101–02) and Bagge has not, that Harald was very friendly and helpful to the Icelanders while he was king of Norway (cf. *Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar*, ch. 36: 'var hann . . . vinr þeira mikill'). Probably Bagge's impression of Harald as a robber chieftain is founded, if on anything historical in the king's Byzantine career, on the wealth he amassed either from his campaigns with the city guard or more likely from the imperial revenues themselves, out of which he was accused of misappropriating funds (on this moot charge see Blöndal again, *The Varangians of Byzantium*, pp. 77–87).

Snorri and Harald's scalds, if not Harald himself, occasionally overstate their hero's role and rank as a military commander, as when Snorri makes him out to be temporary commander-in-chief of Jaroslav's army in Kiev while he was en route to Byzantium (*Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar*, ch. 2; cf. Blöndal, *The Varangians of Byzantium*, pp. 54, 62, 75). Bagge has a curious explanation for these overstatements, which he attributes to the Icelanders' rugged individualism, which, he holds, would never tolerate any subordination of oneself to the dictates of another, even in a military hierarchy. Consequently, Snorri's life of Harald was intended 'to keep at arm's length every suspicion that his hero was subject to the orders of someone else' ('et forsøk på å fjerne enhver mistanke om at Harald var underlagt noens kommando', p. 180). In this explanation a theory of national character substitutes for a better reading of a text.

The dirty work of the Varangian guardsmen, in which Harald was also involved, bespatters both the poetry and the biography about him, most heavily as regards the blinding of Emperor Michael V at his deposition. This horrible but routinely Byzantine operation has been laid in this case to the charge of Michael's murderous stepmother, the empress Zoe, by Bagge (p. 176) and the Byzantinist Robert Browning (*The Byzantine Empire*, 1980, p. 92) but as an eye-witness of the blinding, Michael Psellos (*Chronographia*, ed. E. Renauld, 1926–28, V, 36–51) inculpates if anyone Zoe's sister and co-empress Theodora, or else the city-prefect Nicephorus Campanaras who dispatched the Varangians to capture and blind Michael (cf. Blöndal, *The Varangians of Byzantium*, p. 93).

When Bagge has sketched in the ups and downs of the Byzantine career of Harald and the decadent imperial history in which he participated, he proceeds to examine some of the historical principles on which the Old Norse and Byzantine accounts of Varangian adventurism hinged. Here again intellectual anomalies crop up in his essay. Of Old Norse historiography he seriously entertains the idea that the stories of the kings of Norway might have been cast in 'epic verse' were it not for the prosaic influence of European (Latin) chronicling on the Kings' Sagas (p. 182). Among the Byzantine historians, furthermore, he singles out Michael Psellos (1018–78) and Anna Comnena (1083–1153) for comparison with Snorri, two historians of whom Psellos is delineated, strangely, as a man who set great store by religion but was attentive like Snorri to political behaviour also, and Anna as a woman with a 'worldly perspective' (p. 184). Anyone who has the least knowledge of the vain, witty, irreligious Byzantine man-of-letters Psellos and the lachrimose, dutiful and devout Anna will barely recognize them from these profiles of Bagge's, which really would have to be switched around to make much sense at all. Stranger still is his assertion that there was no bureaucratic machinery in the troubled Byzantine state during Psellos's lifetime which would execute the autocratic commands of the ruling power (p. 186; but cf. W. Ensslin's chapter on Byzantine administration in *Byzantium*, ed. Norman H. Baynes and H. St L. B. Moss, 1948, ch. 10).

What Bagge finds, with more plausibility, that unites the historiography of the Norse and Byzantine historians of the high Middle Ages was a late-antique Graeco-Roman stylism for the description of the physical persons and psychological personalities of historical figures—namely, 'iconism', which was essentially a summation device for rendering the characteristic physical and mental qualities of some outstanding individual. In late Antiquity when historical biography had usurped the form of history, this stylism became stereotyped (Hilde Vogt, *Die literarische Personenschilderung des frühen Mittelalters*, 1934) and passed into the mainstream of early medieval historical writing, to be conveyed to Latin hagiography and history, to the biographical histories of Old Norse Christian literature, and to the historical portraiture of saints and kings in Byzantium and Arabic biography (Gustav E. von Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam*, 1953, pp. 278–79). Stereotyped in telegraphic descriptive phrases, iconism often could not catch the subtler psychological reflections of personality, from the 'soul', unless the biographer were a perceptive *Menschenkennner* like Psellos or Snorri. Bagge has disputed that Snorri and the sagamen were ever interested in 'soul' (p. 189), Christians though they were, but one has only to recall Snorri's iconistic portrait of Egill Skalla-Grímsson (in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*) to be reassured that the most skilful sagamen probed for something very like 'soul' beneath personal appearances.

The faults of Bagge's essay are superficial—diffuseness and impressionism—but there is something methodologically wrong with Marina Mundt's essay, 'Was Byzantium a port of transit?' (pp. 153–68), an error which is more fundamental. Since the publication of Margaret Schlauch's classic study of the oriental sources of the *riddarasögur* and *fornaldarsögur* (*Romance in Iceland*, 1934) Scandinavianists have, like other students of medieval European culture, been prone to regard the East/West traffic in material and cultural goods as all going one way, to the West, like the proverbial course of empire. Thus, in Mundt's title phrase,

Byzantium was a 'transithavn' through which the riches of the orient flowed westwards. I have written (in *Speculum* 59, 1984, 509–23) against this one-sided misconception of East/West relations in the Middle Ages but to little effect, apparently. One does not have to be told (as by Stang, p. 150) of the lone Frankish sword named 'Constantine' that was unearthed in the northern Urals to know that the material and cultural residues of the Western infiltration into Russia and Byzantium, culminating in the Crusades, were far from negligible or sporadic. Scholars, however, who have fixed their eyes, as Mundt's eyes are fixed, on Byzantine traces in Western literature will only need to detect certain similarities between some European or Scandinavian text and a Byzantine, Old Russian or Near Eastern text to decide that the preponderating influences are oriental. This in essence is the thrust of Mundt's method of source-criticism, a method which leaps impulsively in one direction from A to Z without dwelling upon the intervening steps of transmission between the two extremes. Indeed for some of the oriental influences that she wants to foist upon the *fornaldarsögur* the intervening steps from eastern source to northern saga are quite untraceable, but that rather facilitates than hinders the big leap from the one to the other.

Under the illusion that the Norse travellers to the East wandered all over the Near East looking at Egyptian and Assyrian monumental statuary and listening to versions of the *koinē* Greek epic *Digenis Akritas* and the Persian epics of Firdausi and Fakhr Ud-Din Gurgani, Mundt is perfectly convinced that mental images of grotesque statues and literary reminiscences of the Greek and Persian epics would have found their way north with the Norsemen and been deposited by oral retelling in the Icelandic *fornaldarsögur*. This is as much of the transmission process as she vouchsafes to us (pp. 155–56). The more likely sources of inspiration, however, for such monsters and marvels as a giant bird, a bird-beaked or a dog-footed man, a magical horse or a centaur-like creature, etc., in the *fornaldarsögur* are concentrated in the Alexander story, especially the fictive letter of Alexander to Aristotle on the wonders of India, and are also distributed in a reservoir of Biblical and late antique lore about monstrous races surrounding the *oikoumenē* of the Graeco-Latin and Christian world (see John Friedman, *The monstrous races in medieval art and thought*, 1981). *Fornaldarsögur* authors did not have to work up their calculated grotesqueries from travellers' tales. Those twice-told tales at any rate will seem pretty nebulous to us, for the bearers of them had neither the languages to understand the epic originals, nor any taste that we are aware of for monumental statuary. It must have been a very garbled final version of the macabre ending of *Digenis Akritas*, where the hero squeezes his wife to death as he dies, that could, according to Mundt (pp. 164–66), be a model for the scene in *Heiðreks saga* (ch. 8) in which King Heiðrek unceremoniously dumps his queen into a river, so that she breaks her back and drowns. But sooner than stretch our imaginations to tie these unrelated scenes together we should more naturally think that the sagaman had never heard of the death of *Digenis Akritas* at all.

After so much nay-saying it is a pleasure to be able to praise without qualification the last three contributions to this section of *Hellas og Norge*, viz. Jan Ragnar Hagland's essay, 'Legends from Byzantium about St Olaf' (pp. 193–210), Henrik v. Achen's 'Emperor Heraclius in Nedstryn' (pp. 211–20), and especially Tomas Hägg's 'A Byzantine visits Bergen' (pp. 221–28). These pieces



are distinguished by careful research, a precise focus on one subject or problem, and a pleasing style of presentation.

Hagland investigates the Varangian source of two types of legend about St Olaf which tell (a), of the saint's sword, that, on being taken to Byzantium by a Swedish Viking, it manifested miraculous power, which moved it about on the ground for three consecutive nights without its being touched by its possessor; and (b), of a blind (Byzantine) ruler beset by barbarian attackers, that he prayed to the saint for assistance, vowing to build him a church if the prayer was granted, which it is when St Olaf himself materializes as a ghostly standard-bearer to lead the unseeing sovereign and his army to victory. Of these types of legend (a), with an admixture of (b), is contained in Einarr Skúlason's *Geisli* (stt. 43–50) and Snorri's *Hákonar saga herðbreiðs* (chs. 20–21) in his *Heimskringla*, while (b) on its own is preserved in the Norse Latin acts and miracles of St Olaf (*Acta Sancti Olavi regis et martyris* and *Passio et miracula beati Olavi*). This Old Norse and Norse Latin literature was generated from the middle of the 12th century, beginning with Einarr's poem, to the first quarter of the 13th century, ending with Snorri's saga of Hákon. On the Byzantine side, two historians, John Kinnamos (fl. second half of 12th century) and Niketas Choniates (d. c.1213), recount in their histories a climactic battle at Beroë (i. e. Stara Zagora in Bulgaria), in 1122 or 1123, which the emperor John II Komnenos fought (with unimpaired vision) against the Turkish Pechenegs, to win the victory which re-echoes in the Norse sources.

Since one Eindriði, 'the young man', is cited in Einarr's poem (st. 45) as the authority for the legends of the sword and its yet more glorious royal owner, and since the young man is mentioned again in *Orkneyinga saga* (ch. 85) as someone who had gone out to Constantinople and could tell amusing stories of his adventures, it seems in good order to identify him, as Hagland does (p. 205), as the intermediary transmitter of the legends to Einarr the poet. The events of the Battle of Beroë, in which the Varangians had participated, may have already been transmuted among the guardsmen into legends of the (b) type, on which the Northern church set its *imprimatur*. The (a) type legends of St Olaf's sword, however, were welcome to Einarr and Snorri. Thus, by a precise identification of the intermediary between the historical Byzantine sources and the Norse legends in verse and prose, Hagland has made good a deficiency in the English scholarship on their relationship: 'Bortsett frå det å konstatera at vi her har eit "ekko" . . . frå Bysants i norrøne sagaer, har lite vore gjort for å finna ut kva veg dette stoffet har hatt inn i vår boreale litteraturtradisjon' (p. 193). Mundt could justly be reproached with these words for her incomplete research into the orientalism of the *fornaldarsögur*.

Henrik v. Achen's essay on the frontal altarpiece decorations from the churches at Dale, Luster, Sogn and Nedstryn, Nordfjord, is an equally successful art-historical study of a legend told in *Maríu saga* of an apotropaic Turkish head and an anachronistic bit of history from the seventh century about the Emperor Heraclius's recovery of the true cross from Jerusalem, together with the respective representations, c.1300, of these subjects on the altars of the Dale and Nedstryn churches. The legend of the Turkish head tells of a ghostly head which was at the disposal of a Turkish potentate who frightened away or slew his Christian enemies by the mere sight of it on the end of a pole. The 'bishop' of

Byzantium countered its deadly force with an image of the Virgin, which caused it to fall with a scream into the Bosphorus and sink, and thus rescued the besieged city from the Turks. This legend patently dramatizes the steady encroachments of the Turks around Byzantium c.1300 in the wake of the disastrous Fourth Crusade which devastated the imperial capital at the beginning of the thirteenth century and effectually dismembered the empire between Latins and Greeks. The Turks were themselves subjugated by the Mongols in 1242, but from the middle of the thirteenth century on, the come-back of the Turkish peoples was relentless; 'by 1300 almost the whole of Byzantine Asia Minor had been lost to the Turkish *ghazis*' (Robert Browning, *The Byzantine Empire*, 1980, p. 169).

The story of Heraclius's recovery of the true cross in 627 from the Sassanid dynasty of Persia—an anachronism rather than a legend in the time-frame of the 1300s—is considered by v. Achen, in its representation on the altar-front from the Nedstryn church, inscribed with Old Norse captions, as a piece of ecclesiastical propaganda to promote a Hospitaller crusade among the Norwegian nobility. This crusade did not get under way from Rhodes until 1365, but, as Stephen Runciman remarks, 'though soldiers for a Crusade were lacking [at the end of the 13th century], the feeling that Christendom had been shamed [by the expulsion of the Western Christians from Outremer] produced a new wave of propaganda' (*A history of the Crusades*, III, 1954, 430), of which the Nedstryn frontal's representation of Heraclius as a crusader may have been a northern ripple. It is perhaps worth while remembering in connection with this piece of propaganda that at the end of the Fifth Crusade, in 1221, the returning crusaders could not bring home with them the true cross from Jerusalem, for at their departure it had somehow disappeared from the holy city (Runciman, *A history of the Crusades*, III, 170). Only the great Byzantine defender of the faith, Heraclius, could have recovered it, the Nedstryn frontal reaffirms.

The last essay in this second part is very concise, and arguably the best in the whole book, if we have envisaged rightly the objectives of *Hellas og Norge*, which are to entertain and instruct educated Norwegian readers who, whatever their own specialities, have some intellectual curiosity about Greek and Norwegian literature and culture, old and new. Tomas Hägg, it seems to me, has balanced nicely high standards of scholarship against the general expectations and capacities of such readers, with his charming and informative essay, 'A Byzantine visits Bergen'. He has reproduced for them a short report, in translation, of one Laskaris Kananos, who fifteen years before Constantinople fell once and for all to the Turks travelled thence to Scandinavia, probably along the old Viking *austrvegr*, and from Norway sailed over to England and then out to Iceland—the last perhaps no more than a traveller's boast—before continuing by ship down the Atlantic coastline to the Mediterranean. Hägg has furnished his readers with a sensible commentary on this Byzantine text and explicated as far as possible the geography, purpose and scope of Kananos's travels. The enterprising traveller was not an official ambassador, more likely a merchant looking for new markets in the west, if not a mere tourist on a western junket; in any case a rare bird in northern climes. Here, then, is an intriguing figure whose Scandinavian *periploos* and travel notes constitute an excellent subject for an essay in a volume with the title *Hellas og Norge* and a good corrective as well for 'a certain one-sidedness' (p. 221) in that volume, which, as Hägg says, stresses in essay after

essay the eastern over the western movement of peoples and goods between Scandinavia and Byzantium in the Middle Ages.

(III) *National formation and politics*. The third and last part of *Hellas og Norge* comprises three essays on social and political questions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The feminist paper of Brit Berggreen, 'Heroines in Greece and Norway' (pp. 231–46) engages in a rather helpless Plutarchian *synkrisis* or comparison of two very different national 'heroines', the Norwegian authoress and proto-feminist Camilla Collett (1813–95) and the Greek ship-owner and revolutionary Laskarina Bouboulina (1770–1825). On the one hand, we have an Ibsenesque heroine of well-to-do family, aspiring to personal independence and equality between the sexes, but smothered in the stuffy and provincial bourgeois society of 19th-century Oslo, which did not even let her publish her writings under her own name, or attain to any public recognition; on the other, 'hē Bouboulina', a woman of the people, twice widowed by Algerian pirates but capable of commanding her husbands' ships and heading them into battle against the Turkish fleet in the Greek War of Independence. What could these two women really have in common? The comparison is only made more awkward by a theory of national character, propounded by a Norwegian sociologist in the eighties, which categorically divides the peoples of forty countries into those who have 'tough' national characters (oppressive, among others, of women) and those who have 'gentle' ones (being tender towards humanity and life in general). Alas, for this theory and Berggreen's feminist comparison, Greece, which is classified theoretically as 'tough', has elevated women like Laskarina Bouboulina to the heights of admiration, while Norway, theoretically 'gentle', has 'oppressed' them socially and been slow to recognize the literary talents of Camilla Collett. Berggreen does not resolve this self-created paradox but devotes the rest of her paper to the function of hero-worship in the formation of nationality, as symbolized by flags, holidays, anthems and memorial images of famous men and women. Since the faces of Collett and Bouboulina have both been commemorated on the bank notes of their respective countries they help to promote ideas of nationality, albeit very different ideas—one of inner rebellion to social tyranny, the other of outer resistance to the overlordship of the Turks. The two women come no closer to each other than this as they circulate nationally with the currencies of their countries.

The remaining papers of part three take up political and social questions about Norwegian and Greek socialism in the 19th and 20th centuries and Greek cultural attitudes to politics today, viz. to the political regime of Papandreou. Peggy Jensen's survey of the political growth of socialism or social democracy in Norway and Greece, 'Greek and Norwegian Socialism' (pp. 247–59), starts out with the inquiry, 'to what large extent are theoretical notions about the old Scandinavian social democracy applicable to PASOK [the Pan-Hellenic socialist party] as a representative of the Mediterranean's modern socialistic parties?' (p. 248), but soon splits up into a series of historical parallels between the Norwegian Workers' Party (DNA) and PASOK, shifting back and forth over a long period from the inception of the former in the last decade of the nineteenth century to the establishment of the latter in the last quarter of our century. As a result of this double-tracking ('parallelstille'), Jensen's theoretical viewpoint gets out of focus, and her tame conclusion does not answer her opening query:

'PASOK carries on the legacy of the liberal climate of opinion in the sixties. Strife is forthcoming in the doctrine of class-war, but compromises entered into with other factions of Greek society have transformed PASOK into a people's party without a special platform for action of its own', etc. (p. 258). Jensen, in a word, has given us the empirical details of the growth of socialism in twentieth-century Norway and Greece but she does not in fact tell us how far the normative side of northern European socialism in Norway can be expanded to parallel that of Mediterranean socialism in Greece (see the section 'A theoretical approach', pp. 248–49). All the empirical evidence would suggest that PASOK has not been around long enough to convert its interactions with the historical process into a permanent structural core of principles and norms (slogans apart), and hence in its brief existence it has been continually buffeted by the winds of chance, and easily manipulated by the well-known particularism of Greek politicians, notably Andreas Papandreou.

Just what this particularism (not 'individualism') means in Greek affairs is well stated in Vibeke Knudsen's essay, 'Political culture in Greece' (pp. 261–71), the best essay of the three in this part. As first secretary to the Norwegian ambassador to Greece she has had a front-row seat in the theatre of Greek politics from which to watch the extraordinary performances of Andreas Papandreou and ponder his equally astonishing popularity which none of his antics could diminish. Divesting herself of the ethical prepossessions of her own culture, she has been able to penetrate the traditional motivations for his behaviour as head of PASOK and for the solidarity of his constituents, who are bound to him in the age-old dependency of clients on a patron. This dependence releases patron and clients alike from every obligation except their paramount loyalties to the group. Political patrons also have fringe relationships with the family—the so-called *koumbaria* relations—which permit them to become in-laws and god-parents to favoured family groups. So strong is the social validity of the group in Greek life that, Knudsen asserts (p. 262), there is no concept in modern Greek society for private life. Strong as the group is, however, it is usually dominated by yet stronger personalities—like Papandreou's—which hold it together by patronage and favours. Patrons control everything politically and socially desirable, and as Knudsen says (p. 263), little or nothing can be done in present-day Greece without personal contacts. Group solidarity and personal ascendancy—these, then, are the hallmarks of Mediterranean particularism that stamp the Greek variety, and render intelligible the outrageous behaviour of Papandreou and his fellow politicians, who seem to Western eyes neither to be able to cooperate together nor ever to tire of slandering and defaming each other in public, while lying about their own activities freely.

Looking back over this lengthy review, one can only commiserate with the contributors to this volume, who were recruited to pay equal tributes, one way or another, to the cultures and literatures of Greece and Norway throughout their histories. A handful of scholars proved altogether up to the task—Bente Magnus, Jan Ragnar Hagland, Henrik v. Achen, Tomas Hägg and Vibeke Knudsen—but the rest did not, among them some eminent names. The burden of having expertise in two cultures was clearly too great to be borne for several contributors.

HEIMUR HÁVAMÁLA. By HERMANN PÁLSSON. *Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóðs*. Reykjavík, 1990. 300 pp.

This work is the latest salvo in Hermann Pálsson's long campaign to play down the archaic, native, pre-Christian element in Old Norse literature and place it instead in the context of medieval European learning, cosmopolitan, biblical, latinized. 'This little book' he begins, 'has been put together with the aim of bringing to light the roots of *Hávamál* and considering their relationship to other early writings.' (For purposes of this review, I have taken the liberty of translating Hermann's Icelandic, and take responsibility for the result; I also follow his modern spelling in quotations.) It is characteristic of Hermann's approach that the last seven words of his opening sentence thus pre-empt the whole enquiry, whose manner is not one of setting out the facts, such as they are, neutrally and then seeking to draw reasoned inferences therefrom; rather, it is his humour to begin with his conclusions. These are as follows. *Hávamál* is a fusion of five older poems: 'Wisdom', stt. 1–83; 'Mankind', stt. 84–110; 'Advice', stt. 111–137; 'Torments and runes', stt. 138–45; and 'Incantations', stt. 143–63; with st. 164 rounding off the whole collection. The compiler of our text, who brought together discrete fragments and added much new matter of his own composing, was a learned, thoughtful man, the product of a medieval schooling, widely read, literate in Latin, who worked in the period 1150–1250. The first three sections of the poem show considerable influence from Continental learning, which reached Iceland from the eleventh century onwards in the form of Latin writings, which were partly Christian but also partly derived from pre-Christian Rome. Yet (and here Hermann differs from most other recent 'medievalizing' critics) the poem, especially in its last two sections, contains a fair amount of matter (*töluvert af efni*) from Norway, ancient lore deeply rooted in paganism; it seems very likely that the original poems (*frumkvæði*) which the poet made use of were Norwegian, and though he himself was 'probably' Icelandic, he clearly had first-hand experience of the life and landscape of Norway. The *málhátttr* catalogues of things to be wary of, between stt. 81 and 90, are doubtless popular wisdom long antedating the poet (contrast von See's view that they reflect medieval Christian teaching on 'die Unsicherheit alles Irdischen', cf. my edition of *Hávamál*, 1986, p. 23). The poem is not the product of the Viking Age, as Nordal believed; its wide views and interest in travel reflect the experiences of Norse pilgrims on the Continent in the twelfth century. It is likely that the poet was familiar with *Hugsvinnsmál* (the anonymous free rendering, dated by Hermann to the late twelfth century, of the *Disticha Catonis*) and indeed it is tempting to suppose that both poems were created at the same cultural centre and that both bear the marks of their common background.

These introductory conclusions are followed by two chapters, comprising two thirds of the volume, in which this picture of the poet as erudite, travelled, bookish, is filled out. First, 195 proverbs, or proverb-like sentences, are listed in alphabetical order, most of them direct quotations, of from one to six lines, from the poem, but some made up by Hermann, as *Fár er vamma vanur* or *Hvað skal trúa tryggðum Óðins?*, whose existence is taken to be implied by stt. 22 and 110 respectively, and others cited from other texts, as *Fár hyggur þegjanda þörf*, which comes from *Sólarljóð* 28 but 'manifestly' was in the poet's mind when he composed st. 104. Many (though by no means all) of the 195 'proverbs' are followed by commentary in which obsolete words and obscure phrases are (sometimes) clarified and

more or less parallel sentiments are adduced from Norse prose and poetry, from Cicero and Ovid, Horace and Vergil, from medieval Latin writings, and also from relatively modern Icelandic texts, such as the 17th-century hymn-writer Hallgrímur Pétursson. Except of course for this last category, where *Hávamál* is often no doubt the model, the constant implication is that these parallels, and especially the Latin and scriptural ones, are not just evidence of some human tendency to generalize in roughly similar ways in different societies, but actually constitute the source, direct or indirect, of the lines in *Hávamál*. Then comes a ninety-page catalogue of 'Concepts' (*Hugmyndir*), listing alphabetically 89 concepts or themes treated in the poem (as *árvegni*, *daði*, *gestir*, *heimska*, *tunga*); we are reminded what *Hávamál* has to say about each of these, and this is often, though not always, expanded into a little essay in which the theme in question is traced through other writings, Norse and foreign. Some of the lengthier essays (seven pages on *manvélar*, 'wooing wives', for instance) wander rather a long way from the poem and some of the shorter ones too, like *nám og nytsemd*, 'study and utility', or *samkunda*, 'social intercourse', seem but loosely attached.

The book is essentially concluded at this point, but three short chapters follow, treating mainly of the poem's inheritance from native antiquity: 'Archaic relics', 'Torments and runes' and 'Incantations'. There is little here that is not in the standard handbooks on Norse paganism and in the commentaries on the poem (pp. 241–43 are notably close to pp. 29–33 of my edition), but it is of course helpful for Icelandic readers to have these matters presented in their own language. The final chapter is another alphabetical list, this time of 275 Latin gnomes and phrases that have been referred to earlier; each is translated, but there is no discussion.

By and large, Hermann writes as though in a vacuum; there are no footnotes, and the alternative hypotheses advanced by other scholars are rarely referred to and even more rarely argued against. How persuasive is his general thesis? In the Introduction to my edition, and also in *Skandinavistik* 19 (1989), 127–41, I have tried to show that the whole notion of *Hávamál* as a learned, bookish, latinate, fairly sophisticated work from twelfth- or thirteenth-century Iceland confronts great difficulties. The rather disjointed and rambling impression given by the text, with its mixtures of metre and strophe-length and its frequent lack of any clear structure, is more compatible with the traditional notion of *Hávamál* and especially of 'Wisdom' (to use Hermann's name) as transmitted, orally and imperfectly, from pagan Norway than it is with his notions of lateness and book-learning, and the quite numerous Norwegianisms in the poem (not only material, whose presence Hermann admits, but also lexical, which he ignores) are more naturally explained in the same way than as the fruits of twelfth-century tourism. An even stronger pointer in that direction is provided by the great quantity of textual and exegetical scholarship the poem has occasioned for over a century; it is simply not credible that the kind of work postulated by Hermann could contain so many rare and puzzling words and turns of phrase, so much matter for academic controversy and speculation. Then there are, on the one hand, the archaisms, cremation, *bautarsteinar*, the *pulr*, and on the other the complete absence of anything at all that is unquestionably Christian, particularly noteworthy in a poem that has so much to say about proper behaviour, ethics, morality, true and false values. To adduce comparisons with *Hugsvinnsmál*, as Hermann (like von See) repeatedly

does, seems to me to point in exactly the opposite direction: here we do have a poem about behaviour which certainly is of bookish, latinate origin and which few have ever doubted comes from twelfth- or thirteenth-century Iceland, and here there is a great deal of Christian reference and next to nothing in the way of textual difficulty; also, there are several references here to books (*Bækr ok rúnar nem þú blíðliga* st. 12, *á fornum bóku stendr til flests ráð* st. 57; text from Finnur Jónsson's *Skjaldedigtning*); why is there nothing like this in *Hávamál*, if that too comes from the world of book-learning? A recurrent polemical device of Hermann's is to depreciate the pre-Conversion North in the strongest terms: surely, he insists, we cannot believe that *Hávamál* is the product of 'Norwegian cotters, Norse Vikings or primitive Germanic tribes' (p. 9), or 'Icelandic fugitives from Norway' (p. 39). Hermann certainly holds his remote forefathers in low esteem; it is 'sheer absurdity' to suppose that 'Norwegian chawbacons' could have thought up for themselves the idea that one ought to *gjalda lausung við lygi* (st. 45); no, this must derive from Ovid's *fallite fallentes* (p. 135). He is much possessed by the notion that a 'heathen Norseman' would have had little to say about 'courtesy, knowledge, poverty, wooing wiles' (p. 28, cf. p. 145). I wonder whether it is entirely fanciful to attribute the vogue which views like Hermann's have enjoyed in recent decades to the enormous decline in the knowledge of Greek among the educated in the past seventy years; for every reader of the *Odyssey* knows that a European society may be non-Christian, materially and socially simple, primitive, even barbarian, and yet be informed by a subtle and sophisticated code of manners. Living as we do in a culture deeply conditioned by the Christian church for well over a millennium, it is very hard for us (quite irrespective of our own beliefs, or lack of them) to shake free from the assumption that what is Christian is civilised and learned and what is pre-Christian is necessarily ignorant, boorish and crude.

To textual problems Hermann takes a lofty attitude. In st. 151 he reads MS *rás* as *hrás*; true, this fails to alliterate, but 'we need not lose any sleep over that' (p. 252). He prints *þægi* and *jarðar* as the final words respectively of st. 39 and 107 (pp. 216 and 225), thus breaching 'Bugge's Law' that a *ljóðahátt* 'full line' may not end in a trochaic disyllable (cf. my edition, p. 87). Elsewhere he emends the text silently, as in st. 21 *mál*, st. 75 *af aurum*, st. 125 *við þér* (pp. 79, 91 and 117), yet he is not even consistent in this, for at p. 256 it is indicated that *þær* in st. 155 is an emendation (for MS *þeir*). The last line of st. 18 (MS *sá er vitandi er vits*) cannot be a separate sentence, as Hermann punctuates it on p. 103, unless the second *er* is omitted; he prints it again on p. 174, now punctuating differently. The last line of st. 53, *Hálf er öld hvar* (as Hermann prints) has caused much difficulty to others, but for him 'the meaning is clearer than day' (p. 76). This turns out to be 'Everywhere men are imperfect,' a sense of *hálfur* not evidenced in Old Norse and only dubiously present in the modern language (Björn Magnússon Ólsen denied it existed, cf. my edition, p. 100).

Yet—*að hárum þul hlæðu aldregi*—it is difficult to feel irritated with Hermann for long. Even if at times it is over-obvious that he was under no pressure from his publishers to write with concision, one is half-captivated by his genial tone: discursive, ingenuous, unbuttoned, eupeptic, mildly humorous, mildly eccentric. Not every recent writer on the poem has achieved as much.

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## INTERTEXTUALITY IN *BJARNAR SAGA HÍTÐÆLAKAPPA*

BY FREDRIK J. HEINEMANN

WORKS like *Landnámabók* (a chronicle), Snorri's prose *Edda* (a treatise on religion and poetics), or *Bjarnar saga Hítðælakappa* (a family saga) differ from each other in so many ways that we normally do not think of them at the same time. Yet aside from their common language, their narrative passages resemble each other in one respect: the narrative voice is one and the same, the reticent, so-called objective narrator who poses as the sole authority for the information imparted. If we restrict our attention merely to this one aspect of narrative rhetoric, we must admit that the authors of these works apparently knew only one way to tell a story. Wherever it came from—oral tradition?—Icelandic writers stuck to it through thick and thin. In contrast to the variety of narrative modes developed hundreds of years later in novels, the narrative voice so often praised by Icelandic scholars does at times seem decidedly monotonous.

Such thoughts merely acknowledge that all narrative styles have their limitations. Now it is clear that sagas are more than their narrators profess them to be, namely naturalistic records of the settlement of Iceland, the history of kings and bishops, contemporary accounts of feuds, fantastic stories of mythical heroes, and so on. Equally clearly, the meanings we draw from sagas are not restricted to those transmitted by the literal sense of the narrative, for sagas as works of fiction additionally communicate a coded (and a perhaps more important) message the unscrambling of which requires the reader's willingness to hold in suspension a number of elements that achieve significance only in relation to each other. The saga code, like all literary codes, derives its meaning from a narrative tradition. Because sagas can be read in relation to their tradition, each saga has a dimension extending beyond itself. As many readers have remarked, sagas consist of stereotyped characters, a limited stock of actions, and a fixed repertoire of conduct (Allen 1971, 95–127; Andersson 1967, 31–64; Clover 1974, 57–83; Heinemann 1974, 102–119; Lönnroth 1976, 42–103). The reading process consists of *déjà lu* experiences in which characters and events—many of which cannot properly be understood apart from the tradition—are weighed against the composites drawn from the corpus at

large. We may call the interrelations among sagas *implicit intertextuality*, a saga's mostly unconscious relations to other sagas.<sup>1</sup> In what follows I will analyse how implicit intertextuality informs Chapter XI of *Bjarnar saga Hítðelakappa*. Specifically, I will argue that the narrative code in the chapter (here quoted in full from Nordal's edition, *Borgfirðinga sögur* 1938, 136–38) communicates a message that contradicts the literal sense of the text:

Nú er þat sagt, at Þórðr spurði Oddnýju, hvé ráðligt henni þætti at bjóða Birni til vistar, (1) ok kvazk eigi vilja, at menn gengi milli þeira ok rægði þá saman, — (2) 'ok vil ek svá reyna skap Bjarnar ok trúlyndi við mik.' Hon latti, kvað þat óráð at því orði, sem áðr lék á. Þórðr lét eigi letjask ok (I) **fór í Hólm í Hítardal;** (II) **hann reið einn saman í blári kápu.** En fjall stendr at húsbaki í Hólmi, ok gengr hryggr sá niðr af fjallinu at húsunum heim. Þat höfðu þau at sýslu þann dag, Björn ok móðir hans, at þau breiddu niðr lérept ok þurrkuðu, er vát höfðu orðit. (III) **Hon tók til orða: 'Maðr ríðr þar,' segir hon, 'í blári kápu ok er alllíkr Þórði Kolbeinssyni, ok hann er ok,** (IV) **ok mun hans ørendi óþarft.'** (V) **'Eigi mun þat,' segir Björn. (I) Þórðr kom þar.** Þeir kveðjask ok spyrjask almæltra tíðenda. Síðan mælti Þórðr: 'Þat er ørendi mitt hingat, at vita, hvárt þú vill halda sættir við mik, þær er konungr gerði milli okkar, ok skuli nú hvárgi eiga qðrum sakar at bæta, ok er þat merkiligt, er skilríkr maðr hefir samit milli okkar; en var mér þat í hug um hríð, at vit myndim ekki sættask.' Björn kvað þat einsætt, at halda sættir, þat sem þeir höfðu um mælt. Þórðr mælti: (3) 'Ek hefi þann hluta haft mála, er vegligri þótti, ok mun ek nú þat sýna, at ek vil, at vit sættimsk heilum sáttum; ek vil bjóða þér þangat til vetrvistar til mín, ok skal ek vel veita þér; vænti ek ok, at þú munt svá þiggja.' Þórðr fór þar um fögurum orðum. (VI) **Þórdís mælti: 'Þat mun sýna, at ek mun ekki mjök talhlýðin. Hugðu svá at, Björn,' segir hon, 'at því flára mun Þórðr hyggja, sem hann talar sléttara, ok trú þú honum eigi.'** Þá kemr Arngeirr at ok spyr, hvat þeir ræði. Þórðr segir honum. 'Svá sýnisk mér,' segir Arngeirr, 'sem sá sé þeim meiri vinr, er þessa fýsir, ef þeir væri þá sáttari en áðr, ok fýsa vil ek Björn at fara, ok mun Þórðr þat efna, sem hann mælir'; ok stenzk heldr í móti með þeim hjónum. Björn mælti: 'Þat hefi ek ætlat, at vera með fōður mínum, ok mōrgum mun kynligt þykkja heimboð þetta sakar orðróms manna.' Þórðr mælti ok kvað, at Björn væri honum eigi trúr, ef hann þægi eigi boðit. Ok nú hét Björn at vera þar nokkura stund ok kvazk þó mundu dveljask fyrst með fōður sínum. Þórðr reið heim ok segir Oddnýju, hvert hann hafði farit um daginn, ok kvazk nú hafa þat ørendi fengit, er hann vildi. 'Hvert er þat?' segir hon. (4) Hann segir, at þangat hafi hann boðit Birni, ok kvazk þat hafa gort til yfirbóta við hana. 'Þat hygg ek,' segir hon, 'at nú ljúgir þú, ef þú kannt það.' Þórðr segir: 'Eigi verðr einn eiðr alla.' Skilja þau nú hjalit.

Now it is said that Þórðr asked Oddný how advisable she thought it to invite Björn for a visit, and said he did not want people spreading slander-

ous stories back and forth between them. 'In that way I want to test Björn's mettle and his loyalty to me.' She tried to dissuade him, said it was unwise in view of all that had been said before. Þórðr did not let that deter him, and he set out for Hólmr in Hítardalr. He rode alone in a blue coat. Now a mountain stands behind the house at Hólmr, and a ridge leads down from the mountain to the farm. Björn and his mother were busy that day spreading out linen to dry that had become wet. She spoke: 'A man is riding there,' she says, 'in a blue coat and is very like Þórðr Kolbeinsson, and that's who it is, and his purpose will prove harmful.' 'No, it will not,' says Björn. Þórðr arrived there. He and Björn exchange greetings and ask each other about the commonly known bits of news. Then Þórðr said: 'It is my purpose here to learn whether you wish to keep the settlement with me that the king made between us. Now neither of us has to compensate the other, and the settlement that a judicious man has made between us is a significant one, for I thought for a time that we would never reach a settlement.' Björn said the only course was to keep the settlement that they had agreed on. Þórðr spoke: 'I got what seemed the more honourable terms in the case, and I will now show that I desire that we settle our differences once and for all. I wish to invite you to be my guest over the winter, and I will entertain you well. I expect also that you will accept in like spirit.' Þórðr presented his proposal in glowing terms. Þórdís spoke: 'It will be seen that I am not easily persuaded. Think, Björn,' she says, 'the smoother Þórðr speaks, the more deceitfully he is thinking, so do not believe him.' Then Arngeirr arrives and asks what the two men are talking about. Þórðr tells him. 'It seems like this to me,' says Arngeirr, 'that he who urges this is their better friend, if they become more reconciled than before, and I wish to urge Björn to go, and Þórðr will honour what he says,' and man and wife were rather at odds. Björn spoke: 'I was intending to stay at my father's, and many would think this invitation strange because of the rumour going round.' Þórðr spoke and said that Björn would not be acting in good faith towards him if he did not accept the offer. And now Björn promised to be there for a time and said though he would stay first with his father. Þórðr rode home and tells Oddný where he had been that day, and said that he had achieved his aim. 'What is that?' she says. He says that he has invited Björn to visit them and said that he had done that to make amends to her. 'I think,' she says, 'that you are now lying if ever you knew how.' Þórðr says: 'One broken oath does not invalidate all others.' They now end the conversation.<sup>2</sup>

The chapter's literal sense, despite the linguistic difficulty of much of this passage, is sufficiently plain. Before embarking on his venture, Þórðr asks his wife what she thinks of his plan to invite Björn for the winter, to which she responds sceptically. Unpersuaded, he rides over to Hólmr and extends the invitation, which Björn reluctantly accepts in the face of conflicting advice from his mother and father. Þórðr returns

home and informs Oddný of the impending visit, which, he claims, he has arranged to please her. She accuses him, not for the first time, of lying. Readers who respond only to the literal sense of this passage tend to accept virtually everything at face value. One such reader, Laurence de Looze,<sup>3</sup> interprets Þórðr's invitation as a gesture of reconciliation, and Theodore M. Andersson (1967, 138) views Björn's acceptance as a token of 'good faith'. Further, the ensuing action becomes either an attempt to resolve differences, or 'polite feuding' gotten out of hand, or deadly conflict caused by abusive poems (Andersson 1967, 139). The latest editors of the saga also find no fault with Þórðr's motives (*Sígildar sögur* I 1986, 84). Finally, literal-minded readers may even find the saga deficient where it is most subtle. Nordal, for example, regards chapters 10–26 as 'mjög í molum, óskipulegt og samhengislaust' (*Borgfirðinga sögur* 1938, lxxvi).<sup>4</sup> By failing to pick up the signals the code imparts, such readings almost certainly miss part of its message.

As I understand the code in Chapter XI, Þórðr's invitation is a challenge that Björn accepts to renew their feud. Björn recognises, as an initiated reader ought to, that Þórðr's plan (which Björn terms the *kynligt heimboð*) will enable them to conduct the feud without fear of outside interference. Correctly interpreting this passage influences how we see the rest of the saga, both what comes before Chapter XI and what happens afterwards. If it is true that 'of all the sagas, *Bjarnar saga* comes nearest to the pure conflict pattern' (Andersson 1967, 137), then perhaps the saga will seem more consistent if we regard Björn in the beginning as an appealing and clever young man, but one who, as a result of his dealings with Þórðr, has become insatiable in his desire for revenge.

Before we examine the intertextual topoi operating in Chapter XI, remembering the scene's context will cast light on the two enemies' motives in spending the winter together. Þórðr Kolbeinsson is introduced as a great poet whose craft has won him favour abroad among royalty but unpopularity with the homefolk, especially with those whom he bullied with scurrilous verse.<sup>5</sup> He may not exactly be an *ójafnaðarmaðr mikill*, but he can certainly be unpleasant to those whom he dislikes. Björn, on the other hand, comes equipped with virtually all the charm a saga can give a young hero (*Björn var snimma mikill vexti ok rammr at afli, karlmannligr ok sæmiligr at sjá*, p. 112 — 'Even as a boy Björn was large, strong, manly, and handsome'). Trouble begins in earnest, as often in the sagas, over a woman. Björn

agrees to allow Þórðr to deliver a pledge of love to Oddný. Þórðr deceives Oddný, first, by claiming that Bjørn has authorised Þórðr's marriage to her if Bjørn dies or fails to return and, second, by having people spread rumours of Bjørn's death, and, third, by asserting that he has heard of Bjørn's burial. Bjørn's retaliatory attack on Þórðr in Norway—he spares Þórðr's life out of deference to the king—causes King Óláfr to settle the dispute. A temporary cessation of hostilities follows. Now some saga grievances are scarcely resolvable short of violence or some other drastic form of reprisal (see Meulengracht Sørensen 1983). In such a situation an arbitrated settlement forced upon the disputants by more powerful forces scarcely ever proves lasting. Peaceful composition is even less likely when the guilty party cannot be forced to relinquish the fruits of his offence. Such is the situation prior to Chapter XI. Now back in Iceland their decision to spend a winter together suggests that they are either deceiving themselves or are playing at some clandestine game, for neither has reconciled himself to the forced settlement, as Þórðr implies when urging Bjørn to accept his invitation. The loss of his betrothed still rankles Bjørn, especially when he must now experience Þórðr in possession of Oddný's wealth and body, whereas Þórðr has also lost face (and money) in acceding to the king's wishes. More immediately, Þórðr requires a means of working off the effects of Oddný's stinging rebuke delivered when she learns of Bjørn's unexpected arrival in Iceland ('*Víst eru þat tíðendi, segir hon; ok enn gørr veit ek nú, segir hon, hversu ek em gefin; ek hugða þik vera góðan dreng, en þú ert fullr af lygi ok lausung,*' p. 135—'Indeed this is news; I now realise more clearly how I am married; I thought you were a man of honour, but you are full of lies and deceit'). In addition to branding him a liar, she perhaps implies a preference for Bjørn. Thus, the narrative situation in which Chapter XI occurs makes it highly unlikely that either Þórðr or Bjørn desires reconciliation or seeks the other's friendship, and the scene is bound to puzzle those who accept it as naturalistic.

In addition to the narrative context several unique features of the text give us the feeling that whatever Þórðr and Bjørn say to the contrary, their agreeing to spend the winter together was never designed to increase mutual esteem or trust. Anyone who doubts that Þórðr is lying ought to consider the following. The four reasons he offers for extending the invitation are as follows (underlined thus in the chapter quoted above and numbered consecutively in Arabic numerals): (1) to prevent third-party slander from driving a wedge between the two of

them; (2) to test Björn's mettle and loyalty; (3) to rectify an imbalance in his favour in the settlement already reached; (4) to please Oddný. None of them is convincing. The first argument, in itself plausible in another's mouth, loses all force by being uttered by Þórðr. Aside from its challenging nature—the best way to lose a friend's loyalty is to test it gratuitously—the second argument lacks credibility because of Þórðr's niggardly conduct later as host. The third requires giving back something acquired dishonestly and enjoyed excessively. As to the fourth, Oddný so forcefully squelches it that we can give it no credence. Perhaps most important of all, like Oddný and Þórdís, we believe Þórðr incapable of uttering the truth.

Admittedly, demonstrating Björn's participation in Þórðr's charade requires more subtlety, because the saga in general demands our faith in his frank probity but in this chapter requires our acceptance of, without accounting for, his incongruous posing. The literal level characterises Björn as conciliatory and even naively foolhardy. How could he refuse his mother's shrewd advice? (How the text establishes the quality of her advice will be dealt with below.) We must move beyond the naturalistic and recognise Björn's stated motives for accepting the invitation as cold-blooded and duplicitous rather than simple-minded. He, like Þórðr, plays a role staged for the benefit of the community at large. We cannot believe that Björn has swallowed his old enemy's slick arguments, for he himself labels them 'strange'. Moreover, this scene echoes an earlier one (in Chapter III) in which Þórðr dupes Björn for the first and, we may believe, last time. While drinking together with Björn (*váru þeir þá drukknir báðir, ok þó Björn meir*, p. 117—'they were both drunk, but Björn more'), Þórðr feels him out as to his plans for the summer. Björn explains that he hopes to go raiding. Þórðr urges him to return home in order to claim his bride, but when Björn insists on his undertaking, the dialogue continues as follows (pp. 118–19):

Þórðr mælti: 'Send þú þá Oddnýju, festarkonu þinni, hringinn jarlsnaut ok fá mér í hönd, því at þá veit hún enn górr elsku þína ok alvöru til sín, ef þú sendir henni þvílíkan grip, ok mun henni þú þá enn hugkvæmri en áðr, ok þér því síðr afhuga verða; en ef þú kemr til Íslands út, sem vér væntum, þá tekr þú bæði hring ok konu ok allan fjárhlut, er þér var með henni heitit; ok satt er þat,' segir Þórðr, 'at slíkt kvánfang getr eigi á Íslandi, sem Oddný er.' Björn mælti: 'Satt segir þú þat, Þórðr, at Oddný er in sœmiligsta kona ok fullboðin mér í alla staði, ok hefðir þú jafnvel verit til mín, þá er vit várum á Íslandi, sem nú, þá mynda ek þetta allt gera, sem nú beiðir þú; en vant ætla ek, at mér verði at trúa þér, ok þat mun mælt, at ek halda laust jarlsgjöfinni, ef ek læt hringinn koma þér í hendr.' Þórðr bað hann vitja

ráðsins. Björn kvezk hafa setta menn til þess at gæta, — ‘ok seg þú, Þórðr, satt til um ferðir mínar, er þú kemr út; en ek þykkjumk enn of lítt reynt mik hafa í framgöngu ok óvíða kannat hafa góðra manna siðu, en ef ek fer þegar til Íslands, þá mun ek eigi nenna at fara svá skjótt frá ráðahag mínum.’ Þórðr het því, — ‘en því beiddumk ek gripa, at sanna sögu mína, ok eigi þarftu, Björn, at gruna mik, því at ek skal þér trúv vera.’ ‘Til þess skal nú ok hætta,’ segir Björn, ‘um sinn; en ef þú bregzk mér, þá trúi ek þér aldri síðan á mína daga.’ Fær nú Björn hringinn jarlsnaut í hendr Þórði ok bað hann færa Oddnýju. Þórðr hét því ok talaði þá allfagrt við Björn ok hét allgóðu um at vera honum trúv ok reka vel hans ørendi; skilðu þeir Björn talit at sinni. Ok þá er Björn var ódrukkinn, þóttisk hann nógu mart fyrir Þórði talat hafa ok honum of vel trúat hafa.

Þórðr said: ‘Send Oddný, your betrothed, the ring Jarl’s Gift—let me have it—because if you send her such a treasure, she will more clearly appreciate your love and sincerity towards her. You will be dearer to her than ever before and she will be thus less likely to lose interest in you. And if you return to Iceland, as we expect you will, then you will have the ring, the woman, and all the wealth promised to you with her. For it is true,’ says Þórðr, ‘that there is no match like Oddný in Iceland.’ Björn said: ‘You are certainly right, Þórðr, that Oddný is a most honourable woman and a fitting match for me in every respect. Had you always been as kind to me in Iceland as you are now, then I would do all that you now request. But I find it difficult to bring myself to trust you. And people will say that I do not value the Jarl’s gift if I entrust the ring to you.’ Þórðr urged him to see to his marriage. Björn said he had authorised men to look after it—‘and, Þórðr, tell the truth about my expedition when you get back home. I think I have too little tested my valour and too little experienced the customs of honourable men, but if I return immediately to Iceland, then I would not care to leave so soon after my wedding.’ Þórðr promised to do so—‘which is why I requested tokens, to confirm my story. Björn, you need not suspect me, for I shall be true to you.’ ‘The risk must be taken for now,’ says Björn, ‘but if you fail me, I will never believe you again all the days of my life.’ Björn then hands the ring Jarl’s Gift to Þórðr and requested him to present it to Oddný. Þórðr promised to do so and was kindness itself in the way he spoke to Björn and promised earnestly that he would be true to him and carry out his mission faithfully. They ended their discussion for the time being. But when Björn was sober, he thought he had said quite enough to Þórðr and had trusted him too much.

In some respects this deception-scene mirrors Chapter XI. That is, in the first scene Þórðr, by means of fraud and flattery, prevails upon Björn to adopt an obviously ill-judged course of action. In Chapter XI he embarks on a similar undertaking, to persuade Björn to risk visiting him for the winter. The earlier scene also dramatises Þórdís’s charge (the glibber Þórðr’s language, the more pernicious his lies) and predis-



poses our acceptance of her accusation. Moreover, the drinking scene provides another key to the code in Chapter XI by programming the reader to respond to Þórðr's sweet reasoning, no matter how plausible, with the greatest of scepticism. We come to learn that whatever Bjørn decides when confronted by Þórðr at his most appeasing, acceding to his request is fraught with danger. Bjørn arrives at the same conclusion after his inebriation subsides, but too late to ward off disaster. This brief suspension of his inherent suspicion of Þórðr causes a loss that no one would be likely to forget.

But the contrast between the two scenes perhaps tells us more than do the similarities. In the earlier scene the two are alone (*ekki vissu menn gořla tal þeira Þórðar ok Bjarnar*, p. 119—'no one knew for sure what they had said to each other'), whereas later they perform in front of an audience which keys our responses. (More on this point below.) Most important, Bjørn in Chapter XI is no longer the untried, inexperienced, drunk and gullible eighteen-year-old of Chapter III. His bitter experience has made him a wiser man, and he is eager to even the score and no longer receptive to Þórðr's blandishments. Besides, he has apparently learned that the more he objects, the subtler Þórðr becomes.

So far in my discussion, I have been posing as the ideal reader who has cracked a code without demonstrating how I pulled it off. The key to the code is to be found in the saga's intertextuality. The most prominent intertextual topoi operating in Chapter XI that contribute to dramatic irony are the following (printed in bold type **thus** in the chapter quoted above and numbered consecutively in Roman numerals): (I) an inauspicious visit to a neighbouring farm; (II) a rider dressed in a blue coat; (III) the description of an approaching rider; (IV) predictions of doom; (V) the hero's denial of impending danger; and (VI) the garrulous woman's wise counsel. The first of these is perhaps best known from *Njáls saga* where Gunnarr visits Otkell's farm or from *Hænsa-Þóris saga* where Blund-Ketill visits Hen-Þórir. Naturally, not all visits to neighbouring farms end disastrously, for there are, of course, numerous examples in the sagas of neighbours visiting each other back and forth who do not engage in strife. Only a saga's narrative requirements determine how a visit develops. Indisputably, Þórðr's visit to Hólmr, on the literal level, does not seem to involve hostility—aside from Þórdís's acid tongue. But topos II signals that Þórðr, in Acker's phrase (1988, 209), is in a 'killing mood'. While he attempts to kill no one, his blue attire betokens his frame of mind and portends conflict. Instead of directly attacking his physically supe-

rior enemy—a virtual suicide mission—Þórðr chooses as his weapons deceit and falsehood. Perhaps the most important indication that we ought to shift to the ironic level, this *topos* alerts us to the ambiguous character of this scene. For a reader who misses such signals, the sagas lose much of their charm and narrative brilliance. Moreover, they shed meaning.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, when Þórðr appears dressed in blue on the mountain ridge, Þórdís, Björn and the reader recognise his hostile intention. Her description of Þórðr's approach (*topos* III) reinforces our apprehension, as does her prediction of doom (*topos* IV). There is often a difference between the narrator's and a character's descriptions of another character's movements about the community, especially when the rider approaches the speaker and when predictions of doom follow. Björn's gratuitous denial (*topos* V) of his mother's forecast adds further cause for suspicion, for even without knowledge of the tradition we would surely wonder how he can be so sure. Experienced readers, on the other hand, recognise that such comments serve more as invitations to question characters' motives than as insights into their thinking. Such denials tend to verify the assertions they negate; here we automatically upgrade Þórdís's estimate of impending trouble from the probable to the virtually certain. She has not misread Þórðr's hostility, but, unfortunately for Þórðr and Björn, has made it public. This, we must understand, is why Björn quickly contradicts her. In effect, by politely silencing her (and at the same time tacitly agreeing with her), he wishes to preserve a façade of secrecy in which his negotiations with his enemy can take place. Now while it is obvious that Björn cannot read Þórðr's mind, the blue clothes announce that the visit bodes trouble. Björn bides his time until the nature of Þórðr's scheme becomes clear. Indeed, neither adversary wishes the true nature of their discussion to become public, for as Arngeirr makes clear, all interested parties in the feud would immediately intercede should they suspect Þórðr and Björn's true motives. Feuding may well satisfy various inner needs of those at the centre of the storm, but those on the periphery usually attempt to avoid its destructive winds. Moreover, neither party wishes to be seen breaking a settlement made by a king, for although King Óláfr has no official power in Iceland, his arm reaches further than that of normal men. Thus, both participate knowingly in a charade whose true purpose is to provide them with a theatre for the next round of feuding where they will not have to endure interruption from well-meaning intruders.<sup>7</sup>

In choosing his own farm as feud-arena, Þórðr hopes to renew his *spott ok áleitni* ('scorn and abuse') so vexing to his adversary in his youth, while devising additional rules to the game in the expectation that Björn, bound to stay the winter, must sit and take what is dished out. And what better audience than his own wife to whom he can demonstrate his imagined superiority. On the other hand, Björn has an even greater score to settle, his loss of Oddný. For this reason, Þórðr's unexpected invitation can be easily fitted into Björn's plan, no doubt as yet unformed, to get even. Whereas as an untried youngster he was forced to submit to Þórðr's insults, Björn has in the meantime acquired the power of poetry, the means of striking back. Moreover, his increased experience abroad has added self-confidence to the many positive qualities he displayed as a promising young man. We can imagine that, as the returning hero whose masculine lustre shines brighter than ever, he welcomes the opportunity to parade his added charms before Oddný. Although she was blameless in marrying Þórðr, nothing in Björn's character suggests the modesty necessary to restrain an overwhelming impulse to demonstrate the enormity of her error in choosing the wrong man. Thus, both men, in competing for Oddný's favour, have reason to keep their conflict dark. Björn can best annoy her by feigning indifference, at least to begin with, whereas Þórðr cannot afford to betray his anxiety at Björn's return to Iceland. We might wish to view these two adversaries as if they were courtly lovers in that the objects of their desires, in this case a woman *and* revenge, must be pursued, under the veil of secrecy, by enacting an elaborate ritual. The winter of discontent at Þórðr's farm provides the venue for such an exercise.

One final note on how intertextuality points the way out of a potential ambiguity. We can imagine a naive reader's perplexity at the contradictory advice mother and father give their son. Þórdís cautions her son not to believe a word Þórðr says, and Arngeirr applauds the plan as a fitting means to preserve the peace. How do we know that Þórdís is right? To be sure, when she maintains that the slicker Þórðr's arguments, the corrupter his motives, the cogency of her judgement sways us, as we have seen. Moreover, contentious women in the sagas are seldom shown to be mistaken, whatever their motives. Þórdís's function (topos VI) contrasts with the usual role of the goading woman—see Clover 1986 and Jesch 1991, 182–191—for she urges deliberation rather than headlong action. Of course, she fears for her son, not unjustly as the course of the saga shows. Arngeirr, on the other hand,

simply fails to understand what is going on, and voices the standard litany on how to keep the peace. Arngeirr apparently believes Þórðr, but the saga has already implied the father's fecklessness in helping his son against Þórðr (see note 5). Here, as so often when men and women disagree, a woman's assessment of a situation is shown to be the more reliable.

What does the code teach us that we need to know in interpreting the saga? Recognising the function of Chapter XI alters the notion propagated by some readers—can we posit a standard reading of the saga on the basis of the remarks of Nordal et al.?—that Björn is drawn willy-nilly into the conflict. On the contrary, he seeks the opportunity for revenge as passionately and deviously as Þórðr does. Björn's desire for revenge explains his feeding his dog at table and spoiling the hay set aside for his horses: it is to provoke Þórðr and escalate the feud. What then happens occurs by their design, not by narrative accident. Before Chapter XI Þórðr is clearly the offending party, but as to who bears more responsibility for breaking the peace, there is little to choose between the two. The saga portrays feud, what ignites it, what feeds it, and what ends it. Moderation, if this virtue can be said to play any role in this saga at all, serves merely as a tactic to win a temporary advantage. What counts is humiliating, injuring, and finally destroying one's opponent.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> For an excellent discussion of the various meanings of intertextuality, see Hans-Peter Mai (1991); see also Vésteinn Ólason (1985, 92), Erhard Reckwitz (1990), and Joseph Harris (1990, especially 237, where he quotes Culler's identification of intertextuality and code; and also note 26 on the same page, where he provides a thumbnail sketch of the history of the term). By implicit intertextuality I refer to the relationships of any one saga to all other sagas that can be dated before, say, 1400. For the purposes of my analysis and *only* for these purposes, I assume that all sagas were written in the year 1, by the same author, in the same place. That is, I assume no stylistic development from one saga to another, no conscious indebtedness of one saga to another, and no copying of one saga by another author. While it is reasonable to assume that sagas do have a relative chronology, such dating is too vague to allow a rigorous discussion of the development of saga style. One saga has simultaneously the same style as all others, while differing in many respects from all the others. The differences must be demonstrated in each case.

<sup>2</sup> Translations in this article are my own; but I would like to thank Christopher Sanders, Helle Degnbol and Sigrún Davíðsdóttir for saving me from numerous blunders and howlers before I read a version of this article at the Eighth

International Saga Conference in Gothenburg (August 11–17, 1991). The editors of *Saga-Book* have also made useful suggestions. Finally, Magnús Fjalldal of Háskóli Íslands vetted the final translation. None of these people is responsible for any remaining infelicities in my translation of this unusually difficult text.

<sup>3</sup> Laurence de Looze (1986, 483) believes that ‘Oddný even refuses to believe her husband when he *is* telling the truth—as, for example, when Þórðr has (strange as it may seem) invited Björn to stay with them in order that the two men might be reconciled (Ch. 11)’. De Looze implies that Oddný’s accusation refers to the reasons Þórðr gave at the beginning of the chapter before he invited Björn—where it might be inferred that his stated motive is reconciliation (but see my later discussion)—whereas she, in fact, brands him a liar because he pretends to have had her wishes in mind (*kvazk þat hafa gort til yfirbóta við hana*). She might be thinking that her husband is incapable of considering her interests, given his deception of her in the past. De Looze’s thesis, that Þórðr and Björn’s conflict is ‘presented as an opposition between two attitudes toward language’ (481), though attractively argued, must be rejected. Both Þórðr and Björn seem to agree that poetry makes a fine weapon. Once de Looze begins to analyse the text after Chapter XI, especially where he discusses the poetry, his discussion greatly improves.

<sup>4</sup> I encountered another kind of objection to the saga when I presented the paper in Gothenburg. Following the session an Icelander, celebrated both for his wit and his scholarship, confided to me that my enthusiasm for the saga was misplaced for two reasons: (1) no respectable Icelandic hero would ever dream of asking his wife’s advice, as Þórðr does; (2) nor would a real hero help his mother with the laundry, as Björn does. Behind this witticism there may or may not lurk an aesthetic theory that accounts, in part, for an older generation’s relative indifference to the saga.

<sup>5</sup> The original beginning of the saga has been lost. What now comprises the first four and part of the fifth chapters is preserved in a version of *Óláfs saga helga* contained in *Bæjarbók*. See Nordal’s discussion (*Borgfirðinga sögur* 1938, lxiii–lxiv and xcv–xcvii). This textual history may account for some of the peculiarities at the beginning of the saga. Aside from the saga’s unusual use of first-person narration (see quotation below), Björn’s meetings with Oddný, as Nordal (*Borgfirðinga sögur* 1938, 113) points out, cause none of the usual censure. In addition, the narrator’s statement that the early quarrels of the two poets do not belong in the saga may have been appropriate to *Óláfs saga helga* but is here distinctly out of place (p. 112):

Björn hafði enn sem margir aðrir orðit fyrir spotti Þórðar ok áleitni; var hann því með Skúla, frænda sínum, meðan hann var ungr, at hann þóttisk þar betr kominn sakar áleitni Þórðar Kolbeinssonar en hjá fõður sínum. En því get ek eigi þeirra smágreina, sem milli fóru þeira Bjarnar ok Þórðar, áðr Björn kom til Skúla, at þær heyra ekki til þessarri sögu.

Like many others Björn had suffered Þórðr’s scorn and abuse, and thus he lived with Skúli, his kinsman, while he was young, because he thought he

was better off there than at his father's in view of Þórðr Kolbeinsson's abuse. But nevertheless I won't mention the trifles that occurred between them before Björn came to Skúli's, because they do not belong in this saga.

I would gladly hear more of these *smágreinir*. Alison Finlay (1991, 167) mentions 'some give-and-take of offence rather than a completely one-sided quarrel; nevertheless, it is made clear that Þórðr is the instigator and that Björn, fifteen years his junior, is, like others, victimised by his *spott* "mockery" . . . and *áleitni* "malice"'.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Recently, Roberta Frank (1991, 102) makes a point about Germanic legend in Old English poetry that applies equally well to sagas: 'Explicitness was not a virtue in the poetry of Germanic legend; reticence was. But reading too much into this verse is probably less dangerous than reading too little. Poets give clues when they are responding to something outside their texts, when they want us to know that they mean more than they say . . . A useful working principle for the student of Germanic legend is that all details in the text are capable of explanation, even at the cost of oversubtlety and error.'

<sup>7</sup>Miller (1991, 275) speaks of the community's desire to reconcile the litigants, 'if for no other reason than to avoid the vexations of being expected to separate combating disputants, of suffering the depredations of outlaws on their livestock . . . or of having the outlaw's dependents become a charge on the district.' Miller also discusses a third party's obligation to make peace between feudants; cf. 'Breaking Up Fights', pp. 260–67. For excellent studies of, among other matters, dispute-settlement and revenge-taking, see the articles and the book by Miller listed in the bibliography. What Þórðr and Björn want to avoid can be imagined if we look at Chapter 27, p. 180, where we are told: 'En er menn kómu af þingi um sumarit, þá heldu menn vörðu á sér, ok tókusk af mjök heraðsfundir, ok vildu menn nú varir um vera, at þeir fyndisk miðr en meir, Þórðr ok Björn, en þá er nú kyrrt' ('When in the summer people returned from the þing, they became especially vigilant, and the local þings were greatly reduced in number, for people wanted to be careful that Þórðr and Björn met much less often, and things were now quiet.'). At this later stage in the saga, of course, increasing amounts of blood have been spilled, so that the community obviously fears that matters will get completely out of hand. Nevertheless, in a more limited sphere—family and close friends—the reaction to Þórðr's invitation, and Björn's acceptance, would also be negative if their real purpose were suspected.

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## PILGRIMAGE AND PRESTIGE IN THE ICELANDIC SAGAS

BY JOYCE HILL

THE PURPOSE of this article is to examine the way in which some saga-writers exploited pilgrimage as a prestige-motif, but since contrasting examples can sharpen our perceptions of and responses to narrative conventions, I begin by considering the documentary record of an actual pilgrimage, Nikulás of Þverá's journey to Jerusalem, undertaken, as we deduce from internal evidence, before the Crusaders captured the port of Ascalon in August 1153.

At the time when he made the pilgrimage, Nikulás was a monk of the Benedictine monastery of Þingeyrar. Apparently without companions, he crossed to Norway, went thence to Denmark, and travelled south to Rome by river and on foot, traversing the Low Countries and Germany, passing through the Alps by the Great St Bernard Pass, and then following the well-established pilgrim route south through Vercelli, Pavia, Piacenza, Lucca, Siena, Bolsena, and Viterbo to Rome (Hill 1984). After staying in Rome for some unspecified time, he travelled, via old Roman roads, to the Adriatic port of Bari, calling at Benedict's own monastery of Monte Cassino on the way. From Bari he took coasting vessels through the eastern Mediterranean, eventually reaching Cyprus and from there the Holy Land, which he entered through what was then its chief port of Acre. Once in the Holy Land he visited sites in Galilee, Jerusalem and the surrounding Holy Places, Jericho and the river Jordan, which was geographically the easternmost point on his journey and which he regarded as his final goal, since it was from there that he described his return, in more summary form than the outward trip.

Nikulás's great pilgrimage must have been undertaken for reasons of piety—a true pilgrimage. It is difficult to conceive of any other impulse, however much weight we give to the other necessary factors of curiosity and a spirit of adventure. Yet, in its way, as one might well expect, it gave Nikulás prestige of a kind and a posthumous reputation. In 1155 he was elected abbot of the newly-founded Benedictine monastery of Þverá (Eiríkur Magnússon 1897), and the account of his journey to Jerusalem, dictated to an amanuensis a few years later, had achieved authoritative status by the fourteenth century, if not earlier,



for it was embedded in an encyclopaedic miscellany of 1387 from western Iceland, AM 194 8vo (Kålund 1908; for Nikulás's account see also Riant 1865, Kålund 1913, Magoun 1940 and 1944, Gelsing 1972, Kedar and Westergård-Nielsen 1978–79, Hill 1983, Lönnroth 1990). The closing words testify to Nikulás's prestige as the amanuensis saw it, and gave him an enduring reputation (Kålund 1908, 23):

Leidar-visir sea ok borga-skipan ok allr þessi frodleikr er ritinn ath fyrir-sogn Nicholas abota, er bæði var vitr ok vidfregr, minnigr og margfrodr, ráðvis ok rettordr, ok lykr þar þessi frasogn.

But Nikulás's narration is not a saga, nor were his prestige and reputation measured in saga terms. The account of his journey, whilst it gives us several clues about the personality and interests of the pilgrim, is a documentary record, at times nothing more than a list of sites. The impulse, as noted above, must be presumed to have been piety, not the seeking of prestige in itself, and the reputation and prestige that did accrue to him were a reflex of his ecclesiastical milieu: elevation to an abbacy, fame because of his pilgrimage, a reputation for wisdom, truth and scholarship, and the posthumous reward of his personal history achieving encyclopaedic status within a written, scholarly tradition. Nikulás cannot be left out of account when considering the question of pilgrimage and prestige in medieval Iceland, but he provides a contrast with the interaction of pilgrimage and prestige in the sagas and thus helps to define the literary motif by throwing it into relief.

In the sagas themselves pilgrim journeys must be seen in the context of journeying as a whole, which often has an important part to play in the course of the narrative and the establishment of prestige (see Davidson 1976 and Blöndal 1978 for journeys to the eastern Mediterranean; see also Gelsing 1972, 164 note 40). Commonly in *Íslendingasögur* the journey is to the court of the Norwegian king and the narrative purpose, as clearly exemplified in *Laxdæla saga*, is to provide dramatic proof of the hero's moral and physical prowess. Kjartan distinguishes himself from his companions in matching up to King Óláfr better than any other Icelander present; he equals him in swimming and he asserts his moral superiority in planning to burn the king in his house and then owning up to it afterwards. As Kjartan says (ch. 40; 1934, 119):

Engis manns nauðungarmaðr vil ek vera . . . þykki mér hinn kostr miklu betri, ef maðr skal þó deyja, at vinna þat nokkut áðr, er lengi sé uppi haft síðan.

Only then, with his independence, courage and prestige well established and publicly recognised by the king, is Kjartan prepared to accept a relationship with him, a relationship in which, paradoxically, the hero then gains further prestige from the glory of the royal association.

Earlier in the same saga Óláfr pái, already distinguished by virtue of his mother's lineage, remarkable behaviour, beauty and exotic history as a slave-princess, confirms that distinction for himself by his visit to his grandfather King Mýrkjartan in Ireland, where again the acceptance of royal—and in this case also family—favour is balanced by an assertion of independence which establishes equality. A device used in this scene and later in Bolli Bollason's return from Byzantium is to measure the prestige in terms of dress and accoutrements. Óláfr, for example, standing with defiant courage at the prow (ch. 21; 1934, 55),

var svá búinn, at hann var í brynju ok hafði hjálm á höfði gullroðinn; hann var gyrðr sverði, ok váru gullrekin hjóltin; hann hafði krókasþjót í hendi höggtekit ok allgóð mál í; rauðan skjöld hafði hann fyrir sér, ok var dregit á leó með gulli.

Bolli Bollason, returning from his travels, 'var svá mikill skartsmaðr . . . at hann vildi engi klæði bera nema skarlatklæði ok pellsklæði, ok öll vápn hafði hann gullbúin' (ch. 77; 1934, 224–25).

Bolli ríðr frá skipi við tólfta mann; þeir váru allir í skarlatklæðum fylgðarmenn Bolla ok riðu í gyldum sǫðlum; allir váru þeir listuligir menn, en þó bar Bolli af. Hann var í pellsklæðum, er Garðskonungr hafði gefit honum; hann hafði ýzta skarlatkápu rauða; hann var gyrðr Fótbít, ok váru at honum hjólt gullbúin ok meðalkaflinn gulli vafiðr; hann hafði gyldan hjálm á höfði ok rauðan skjöld á hlið, ok á dreginn riddari með gulli . . . Bolli varð frægr af ferð þessi.

Other examples include Eyvindr in *Hrafnkels saga*, who is killed by the status-conscious Hrafnkell because he poses a threat, that of an equal in prestige, instantly assessed as such on the basis of his successful travels, themselves symbolised by his coloured clothes and bright shield (ch. 8; *Austfirðinga sögur* 1950, 125–27; see Nordal 1958, 49–50). In this saga too it is significant that when the challenge to Hrafnkell's standing is made at the outset, the one who takes the lead is Þorkell Þjóstarsson, a traveller who had not long since returned from service with the emperor in Constantinople (ch. 4; *Austfirðinga sögur* 1950, 111).

In *Íslendingasögur*, then, as these examples show, travels and notably the return of travellers precipitate action, giving travels and travellers a prestige within the plot which interacts with the prestigious reputation that the travels themselves have established or confirmed. In

*Heiðarvíga saga* the bloodfeud is special because it is executed in Constantinople (ch. 11; *Borgfirðinga sǫgur* 1938, 243). In *Grettis saga* Þorsteinn likewise carries vengeance for Grettir as far as Constantinople, which both elevates the vengeance and gives Þorsteinn the chance of earning wealth and glory (chs 85–86; 1936, 271–73), and in the *Spesar þáttur* episode, the story is made to draw to a close with a pilgrimage to Rome (chs 91–92; 1936, 288–89). In *Finnboga saga* Finnbogi pursues a debt on behalf of Earl Hákon as far as Constantinople and there, in admittedly exaggerated fashion, he establishes his reputation as well as recovering the debt (ch. 19; *Kjalnesinga saga* 1959, 287–88). In *Njáls saga*, Kolskeggr's journey to Constantinople and ultimate death after a prestigious life is the other side of the coin to Gunnarr's outlawry, for Gunnarr, setting out with Kolskeggr, fatefully changes his mind, stays at Hlíðarendi, and thus accepts his inevitable death (chs 75–78, 81; *Brennu-Njáls saga* 1954, 181–94). In *Njáls saga* too, the long sequence of revenge after the Burning, once it has reached the stage of exhaustion, is brought to the necessary point of reconciliation after Flosi has established an honourable reputation at the court of Earl Sigurðr in Orkney and both he and Kári have made separate pilgrimages to Rome (chs 158–59; *Brennu-Njáls saga* 1954, 460–64).

Such journeys are plausible but are not, of course, necessarily historical. The Lady Spes episode in *Grettis saga* is a case in point; Eyvindr and Þorkell probably never existed (see Nordal 1958, 9–13, 19–20); Kolskeggr may likewise be fictional (see *Brennu-Njáls saga* 1954, 53–54, note 7, and Blöndal 1978, 196–97); and Finnbogi, though historical, would have been an unusually early visitor to Constantinople, if the account of his journey were true (Blöndal 1978, 196–97). But this simply confirms the point being made: that journeys are essentially elements within the prestige mechanisms of the created narrative. Pilgrimages in the *Íslendingasögur* are a sub-group within this journey motif, though they are limited in occurrence and degree of detail partly because of the period within which the events are set and partly because of the geographical and cultural orientation of the narratives.

In sagas about the rulers of the Scandinavian world, however, there is no such chronological limitation, and it is in these texts that pilgrimage is developed as a major prestige motif through which the heroes are glorified in worldly terms. Thus, even in sagas about Sigurðr Jórsalafari, Røgnvaldr of Orkney and Eiríkr of Denmark (discussed in Blöndal

1978, 136–40, 154–57, 131–36 respectively), who actually did undertake pilgrimages to Jerusalem, the imaginative focus is on episodes in which secular values prevail, as the Scandinavian heroes are challenged in ways which test their ingenuity, pride and extravagant disdain of wealth. In these respects such journeys are not functionally different from other, less ambitious travels in *Íslendingasögur*. But they have their own distinction, nonetheless, because the very distance lends prestige, as does also the exceptionally high status of the foreign rulers who are shown to accept the Scandinavian visitors as equals. A measure of this reinterpretation of pilgrimage is that more space may be devoted to events in Constantinople than in Jerusalem, and that the point of return—and hence the implied climax of the journey—may be assessed by different criteria from the ones we would expect to operate in a genuine pilgrim account. On the one hand we have the example of Nikulás, the true pilgrim, for whom the river Jordan is the point of return; on the other we have the example of Sigurðr, whose more extensive narrative treats his return as beginning not from the Jordan—which for him as for Nikulás was the easternmost point—but from Constantinople, following his subsequent climactic encounter with the world's most prestigious ruler.

The chronological sequence of the pilgrimages of the three rulers so far mentioned is as follows: Eiríkr died in Cyprus in 1103 whilst still en route for Jerusalem, Sigurðr arrived in the Holy Land in 1109 and left in 1110, after assisting King Baldwin in the capture of Sidon, and Rǫgnvaldr's visit is datable to 1152. But the compositional sequences and lateral influences which underlie their surviving narratives are much less clear, not least because they share a network of prestige motifs which suggest that borrowing and imitation took place amongst texts anterior to the earliest now extant. A further possibility is that as additional copies were made there was the potential for yet more borrowing to take place in order to embellish the narrative, though investigation of developments in this area is handicapped by the fact that not all recensions have been fully edited. The intricacies of textual history are beyond the scope of this article, but attention will nevertheless be drawn to thematic relationships between the narratives of Sigurðr, Rǫgnvaldr and Eiríkr because their existence confirms that their pilgrim-journeys, as narrated in the written texts, evolved as literary constructs, and that their primary motive was the establishment of prestige, not simply within the narrative, but also between narratives as one Scandinavian ruler is shown to be as good as another Scandinavian

ruler in a recognisably similar situation: in other words, the heroes gain prestige not only by proving themselves to be the equals of the foreign rulers, but also by proving themselves to be the equals of each other—a comparison which some versions of some sagas explicitly recognise.

Although Sigurðr Jórsalafari's journey was not the earliest of the three, it is the most suitable starting point because it is the most famous, the most elaborately narrated and the best served by modern printed texts. The earliest extant accounts are Theodoricus's *Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagiensium*, written between c. 1177 and 1187, and the anonymous *Ágrip af Nóregskonunga sögum* from the 1190s, which drew upon the *Historia* as a major source. But these are synoptic chronicles and thus, although they show an awareness that Sigurðr gained worldly prestige through his travels (Kalinke 1984, 154), they do not display the essentially literary features that are the subject of the present discussion. Our attention must therefore be confined to the extended narratives in *Morkinskinna* (*Útferðar saga Sigurðar konungs*), *Fagrskinna* (chs 86–92) and *Heimskringla* (*Magnússona saga*), attributed to Snorri Sturluson (Whaley 1991, 13–19). As will be noted below, these accounts differ from each other in a number of important ways, but they all interpret the expedition as a prestige-enhancing journey, and since they deploy many of the same narrative episodes to give expression to their interpretation, they will be examined concurrently. The anthology of *konungasögur* transmitted in *Morkinskinna* is thought to be the earliest of the three, compiled between c. 1217 and 1222, but the extant text dates from the latter half of the thirteenth century and it is evident that it includes accretions and interpolations which cannot now always be distinguished from the original. Its version of *Sigurðar saga* is 'a conflation of history and fiction, the work of a first-rate exegete of history possessed of a raconteur's penchant for vivid characterisation and intense drama' in which the author shows himself to be 'well versed in the learned and narrative traditions of his time' (Kalinke 1984, 153). *Fagrskinna*, much inferior to *Morkinskinna* in literary merit, was probably written soon after 1220 and drew heavily on *Morkinskinna* in its later chapters, but it is clear that the text of *Morkinskinna* which it used was older and purer than the one now extant (Turville-Petre 1953, 218–19). *Heimskringla*, which is more sophisticated than *Fagrskinna* and more restrained than *Morkinskinna*, cannot be precisely dated, but Snorri perhaps began to write his kings' sagas in the period between 1220 and 1235, after his return to Iceland from Norway. His sources were diverse but he obvi-

ously made substantial use of materials which underlie *Morkinskinna* and *Fagrskinna*, though we cannot take either of these manuscripts as an exact witness to the narratives which he consulted.<sup>1</sup>

That the focus of Sigurðr's Jerusalem journey is on prestige in all three accounts is evident in individual episodes, as we shall see, but it is also apparent from the differing scale of attention given to the various stages of the journey. It is true that in *Morkinskinna* a leaf is missing at the point where Sigurðr is actually in the Holy Land (1932, 348), and that in *Fagrskinna* there is a lacuna which begins part-way through the subsequent visit to Constantinople (1984, 320), but since these two texts and *Heimskringla* are closely related, it is possible to make the confident generalisation that the relatively little space given to Sigurðr's visit to the Holy Land was part of the established response to the journey. In *Magnússona saga* in *Heimskringla*, for example, thirteen of the thirty-three chapters are devoted to the expedition, but the visit to the Holy Land takes up only chapters 10–11. Most space here, as in *Fagrskinna* and *Morkinskinna*, is given over to Sigurðr's two years of piratical adventures en route, as he travels with his fleet of warriors around Spain, through the Straits of Gibraltar and across the Mediterranean, visiting on the way two significant rulers, Henry I of England and Roger of Sicily. In *Heimskringla* and in *Fagrskinna* (allowing for the lacuna), the visit to Constantinople is given approximately the same amount of space as the visit to the Holy Land; in *Morkinskinna*, if we make a reasonable guess about the content of the lost leaf, the visit to Constantinople was the more detailed of the two.

The emphasis given by the narrative structure is supported by internal assessments of the journey's significance. Neither *Fagrskinna* nor *Morkinskinna* expresses an initial motivation, but Snorri establishes one in the first chapter of his *Magnússona saga*, and this ensures that the audience shares his understanding of the journey as being about prestige rather than piety (*Heimskringla* 1941–51, III 238):

Þá er synir Magnúss váru til konunga teknir, kómu útan ór Jórsalaheimi ok sumir ór Miklagarði þeir menn, er farit höfðu út með Skopta Ogmundarsyni, ok váru þeir inir frægstu ok kunnu margs konar tíðendi at segja, en af þeim nýnæmum girntisk fjöldi manns í Nóregi þeirar ferðar. Var þat sagt, at í Miklagarði fengu Norðmenn fullsælu fjár, þeir er á mála vildu ganga. Þeir báðu konungana, at annarr hvárr þeira, Eysteinn eða Sigurðr, skyldi fara ok vera fyrir því liði, er til útferðar gerðisk. En konungarnir játtu því ok bjoggu ferð þá með beggja kostnaði. Til þeirar ferðar réðusk margir ríkismenn, bæði lendir menn ok ríkir bændr. En er ferðin var búin, þá var þat af ráðit, at Sigurðr skyldi fara, en Eysteinn skyldi hafa landráð af hendi þeira.

Later, in chapter 21, when Sigurðr interprets the significance of his travels in a quarrel with his brother, the emphasis is on the expedition being ‘heldr hofðinglig’, judged principally with reference to success in battle, the acquisition of treasure and the earning of esteem from men of highest status. The Holy Land is mentioned only because Sigurðr swam across the Jordan and tied a knot in the thicket on the far bank (*Heimskringla* 1941–51, III 261):

ok mæltu ek svá fyrir, at þú skyldir leysa, bróðir, eða hafa elligar þvílíkan formála sem þar var á lagðr.

Snorri was here obviously following an established interpretation, since the point-scoring quarrel, including the taunting use of the scene at the river Jordan, is found also in *Morkinskinna* (1932, 383), although the description of the event as it occurred would have been on the leaf now lost. The quarrel is not recorded in *Fagrskinna*.

Sigurðr’s arrival in the Holy Land was through Acre, which was then the Latin kingdom’s chief port. Jerusalem is of course named but there are no references to any holy sites within it and the only other holy place specified is the Jordan, and again no religious associations are made. In *Heimskringla* the rest of the visit is revealingly structured as a status-enhancing gift-exchange of a rather unusual kind. Baldwin gives a splendid feast for Sigurðr and bestows on him many sacred relics, in particular a fragment of the True Cross.<sup>2</sup> Sigurðr then assists Baldwin in the capture of Sidon and subsequently, as Snorri puts it, ‘gaf Baldvini konungi alla borgina’ (ch. 11; *Heimskringla* 1941–51, III 250–51). The implication is that Sigurðr was on equal terms with Baldwin, that he was generous in a suitably lavish fashion, and that he thus satisfactorily brought to a close the reciprocal cycle of gift for gift among equals, an exchange in which a gift of war (the city of Sidon) was deemed a fitting return for the gift of relics. Snorri’s manner of presenting this event harmonises with the skaldic verses of Halldórr skvaldri and Einarr Skúlason, which Snorri quotes and which also elevate Sigurðr. But in fact, however important Sigurðr’s ships might have been to Baldwin, the city was not really his to give. At best he could be said to have surrendered a half-share in it, but in truth he was only a temporary ally of the king to whose territory Sidon would geographically belong. *Fagrskinna* presents the events in the same way as Snorri, likewise following Halldórr skvaldri in stating that Sigurðr gave the city to Baldwin. No doubt, then, in the light of this agreement and the fact that the interpretation was already established in verse, it is reasonable to suppose that the missing leaf in *Morkinskinna* would

have dealt with this aspect of the visit to the Holy Land in a similar fashion. It is possible that its account also included the prestige-enhancing episode in the *Hulda–Hrokkinskinna* version of *Saga Sigurðar Jórsalafara*, ch. 9, in which Baldwin tests Sigurðr by ordering costly clothes to be spread on the roads (*Fornmanna sögur* 1825–37, VII 87):

ef hann ríðr réttan veg at borginni, ok lætr ser lítið umfinnast fyrirbúnað várn, þá virði ek svá at hann mun slíkri virðing vanr í sínu ríki; en ef hann snýr af veginum, ok vill eigi ríða á klæðin, þá þykki mér ván, at lítill mun vera ríkdómr í hans landi.

Sigurðr, needless to say, rides over the clothes with great disdain and orders his men to do the same, an act which dramatically justifies his being received by Baldwin as an equal. The episode is not in *Fagrskinna* or *Heimskringla* though it is found in other versions of *konungasögur* (see *Heimskringla* 1941–51, III liii).<sup>3</sup> It could well be an embellishment by internal imitation of the similar scene, commented on below, when Sigurðr enters Constantinople, but if that is so, it simply confirms that the transmitters of the Sigurðr narrative responded to the visit to the Holy Land as an event governed by the prestige culture characteristic of the sagas rather than the religious culture of the medieval Church.

For the journey to Constantinople and the arrival, the lacuna in *Morkinskinna* obliges us to continue focusing on *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla*. In *Fagrskinna* (ch. 90; 1984, 319) we read simply that Sigurðr goes directly to Constantinople and that he sails into the sound (the Golden Horn) with his sails fore-and-aft so that they could be seen from the shores, since they are made ‘af pellum’, some kind of costly fabric. The Emperor Alexius (Alexis Comnenos I, emperor 1081–1118) then opens the Golden Gate and has precious cloth laid on the road in front of Sigurðr, who orders his men to disregard it and proceed in the normal way. The account is clearly designed to emphasise Sigurðr’s pride and extravagance, but it is told in the rather unimaginative way characteristic of *Fagrskinna*. It was undoubtedly more vivid in *Morkinskinna*, as it is also in *Heimskringla* (*Magnússon saga* chs 11–12; 1941–51, III 252–53), where more is made both of the careful arranging of the sails and of the arrival. According to Snorri, Sigurðr sails first to Cyprus and then crosses to Greece, where he moors the whole fleet at Engilsnes.<sup>4</sup> There he waits for two weeks, not because there is no suitable wind to sail on to Constantinople (the necessary wind blew daily, as Snorri carefully points out), but in order to have a side-wind so that the sails can be set fore-and-aft. The immediate



reason given, not paralleled in *Fagrskinna*, is that it is for the benefit of those in the ships, who are thus able to admire the costly fabric on both sides of the sails. Only then are we told of Sigurðr's spectacular entry into port when, as in *Fagrskinna*, although with a little more circumstantial elaboration, Snorri describes how those on shore saw a dense assembly of spread sails with no space between them. The initial reason given for the arrangement of the sails is not superfluous, however, since it increases Sigurðr's status by suggesting that, although his action has the effect of impressing others by creating the overlapping effect apparent to those on land, this is incidental to the act itself; Sigurðr, in other words, is shown to be motivated by his own innate sense of status, pride and generous attention to his own followers, and not, in this instance, by calculations about how to create a good impression amongst strangers. Admittedly these details may already have been present in Snorri's source, corresponding to the missing portion of *Morkinskinna*, but this does not invalidate the comparison with *Fagrskinna*, since it is the fact of the enhancement of prestige and the means employed to achieve it which are important in the present context, not whether the enhancement is attributable to Snorri or his source. Snorri's account of the entry into the city agrees with *Fagrskinna* in recording the opening of the Golden Gate and the strewing of the streets with costly cloth, but the status of Sigurðr is enhanced by the explanation that this is the gate through which the emperor rides when he has been away from Constantinople for a long time, and when he returns victorious. In *Morkinskinna* the scene was further embellished by the account—not in *Heimskringla*—of how Sigurðr fitted golden shoes to his horse and arranged for one to be cast along the way, with instructions that no one should attempt to retrieve it. The lacuna in *Morkinskinna* in fact deprives us of the first part of this extra incident, but where the text resumes (1932, 348) the remaining part of the final sentence is enough for us to see that it was identical with the incident fully recorded in other manuscripts.<sup>5</sup> In common with the embellishment of the arrival in the Holy Land, it has the same effect of confirming how Sigurðr's journey was understood.

What follows are further demonstrations of Sigurðr's prestige. *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla* begin immediately with the Emperor presenting the choice of a vast quantity of gold or the transitory (though equally costly) display of games in the hippodrome. Sigurðr rises to the occasion and chooses the games. The lacuna in *Fagrskinna* comes at this point. Snorri comments briefly on the games and then

proceeds directly to Sigurðr's reciprocating gift of all his ships. Special mention is made of the fact that his own ship had gilded heads and that these were placed on St Peter's church (located between Hagia Sophia and the Great Palace). The Emperor gives him many horses in return and Sigurðr begins his journey home, leaving a great many of his men in military service with the Emperor. *Morkinskinna* (1932, 348–51) is much more elaborate, but has the same end in view: the testing of Sigurðr to demonstrate that he is the equal of the great Kirialax (Alexis). The tests begin with a sequence of three lavish gifts: purses of gold and silver, coffers of gold, and finally a costly robe, more treasure and two rings. Sigurðr pays no attention to the first two sets of gifts but orders the treasure to be distributed to his men, thus earning approving comments from the Emperor who, on hearing of this, naturally judges him to be extremely wealthy. On the third occasion, however, Sigurðr puts on the rings and thanks the Emperor (in Greek!) for his generosity. The outcome is that Sigurðr is treated as an equal, and it is at this point in *Morkinskinna* that the Emperor makes the offer of more treasure or games in the hippodrome. After this Sigurðr, in an appropriate act of reciprocal hospitality, prepares to feast the Emperor and Empress and, discovering that there is no wood available, orders his men to burn walnuts, a phenomenal demonstration of lavish extravagance (Riant 1865, 210 note 2). But it turns out that this is yet another test, which Sigurðr passes with flying colours, since the shortage of wood had been arranged by the Empress. The visit concludes with the same exchange of gifts as in *Heimskringla*.

As Kalinke points out (1984, 158–59), the walnut-burning episode is a folklore motif. We can also readily recognise that *Morkinskinna*'s initial triple challenge is another: three similar tests, with variation in response to the third. We do not know whether the walnut episode was included in *Fagrskinna* because of a lacuna at this point, but it seems that the initial triple test was not, since this would presumably have preceded the games-or-gold test, as it does in *Morkinskinna*, and so would have come before the lacuna. It is possible, then, that Snorri's source did not have the initial triple test either and that it may have been an addition to the *Morkinskinna* version of the narrative in order to reinforce the interpretation of Sigurðr's journey as a prestige-enhancing event. The walnut test is likewise not in *Heimskringla*, but we cannot tell whether this is because it was not in Snorri's source, or whether he chose to omit it as being unnecessary and perhaps somewhat frivolous. There is a similar though less well-motivated incident

in *Morkinskinna*'s saga of Haraldr harðráði (1932, 65–66), but again this is not in Snorri's corresponding *Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar*. If the omission of the walnut-burning episode in *Magnússona saga* were Snorri's own choice, it would be explicable in the context of his rather more sober approach and as a judicious authorial assessment that the episode reiterated, but did not add to, the essential points already made: that Sigurðr was the equal of the Emperor, generous in gifts, lavish in display and disdainful of wealth. Clearly, whichever account one reads, it is prestige not piety which motivates the telling of Sigurðr's pilgrimage, and it is literary tradition which shapes it, regardless of the text's imaginative quality, narrative style or stage of transmission.

The Jerusalem pilgrimages of Earl Rognvaldr and King Eiríkr as narrated in *Orkneyinga saga* and *Knyttlinga saga* respectively must similarly be understood in literary rather than historical terms. In themselves the journeys contribute to the heroes' prestige using techniques that have already been identified in this article, but it is important to notice that a further source of prestige in both these cases is the reflected glory of association with Sigurðr's prestigious journey, signalled by overt comment in each saga and by imitation of status-enhancing motifs.

The possibility of a journey to Jerusalem is first introduced in *Orkneyinga saga* in chapter 85 (1965, 194), when Rognvaldr is urged to go to the Holy Land by Eindriði, who has just returned from Constantinople. The sole reason advanced is that the journey will enhance Rognvaldr's prestige:

Þat þykki mér undarligt, jarl, er þú vill eigi fara út í Jórsalaheim ok hafa eigi sagnir einar til þeira tíðenda, er þaðan eru at segja. Er slíkum mönnum bezt hent þar sakar yðvarra lista; muntu þar bezt virðr, sem þú kemr með tignum mönnum.

There is a delay in starting the expedition but, once begun, it mirrors that of Sigurðr: extensive adventures en route as the fleet sails around Spain, through the Straits of Gibraltar, and across the Mediterranean (chs 86–88); arrival in the Holy Land through the port of Acre and a relatively brief account of the visit, with focus on the Jordan (part of ch. 88); and a journey on to Constantinople (parts of chs 88 and 89), from where the return journey begins. The ruler of the Holy Land was Baldwin III, but he is not named; the Byzantine Emperor, named in ch. 89, was Menelaus (II 43–80).

The adventures along the way confirm Rognvaldr's prestige as a ruler and a warrior both by sea and by land, but when he reaches Acre

this secular value-system is reasserted, for we are told that they ‘gengu þá upp með þrís miklum ok fararblóma þeim, er þar var sjaldsénn’ (1965, 229). It is stated that they ‘sóttu alla ina helgustu staði á Jórslalandi’ (1965, 231), but no details are given and no religious associations are mentioned; as with Sigurðr’s narratives, the only places specified are Jerusalem and the Jordan, to which by far the most attention is given. Rognvaldr and a companion swim across the river, tie knots in the thicket on the far bank and compose taunting verses which assert their superiority over comfort-loving stay-at-homes. They then return to Jerusalem and set off for Constantinople. They break their journey at Imbólum—a town whose identity is debated (see *Orkneyinga saga* 1965, 233 note 2)—and they then continue by putting out to sea and travelling north to Engilsnes (1965, 235):

Þar lágu þeir nokkurar nætr ok biðu byrjar þess, er þeim þótti góðr at sigla norðr eptir hafinu til Miklagarðs. Þeir vönduðu þá mjök siglingina ok sigldu þá með þrís miklum, sem þeir vissu, at gort hafði Sigurðr Jórslafari.

As they sail on, Rognvaldr asserts in verse that they will add to the Emperor’s honour, although in fact the stay in Constantinople is summarily described: they are well received, are given much money and enjoy the best of entertainment. They then return by sea to Italy, thence via the overland pilgrim route to Denmark and by sea to Norway, where Rognvaldr stays for a time before returning to Orkney. The assessment of the journey is unequivocal: ‘Ok varð þessi ferð in frægsta, ok þóttu þeir allir miklu meira háttar menn síðan, er farit höfðu’ (1965, 236).

The parallels with King Sigurðr are particularly noteworthy in the case of the visit to the Jordan and the delay at Engilsnes, where the saga-writer calls our attention to the parallel as a means of enhancing Rognvaldr’s prestige. But whereas the two events are fully integrated into Sigurðr’s narrative, here they are blind motifs. The scene at the Jordan is a feeble echo of Sigurðr’s in being a generalised taunt, which has no relationship to anything else in the saga, and the delay at Engilsnes is simply accounted for in practical terms, although it is propped up by the telling allusion to Sigurðr and the vague assertion that Rognvaldr then sailed on to Constantinople in fine style.

The shaping of Rognvaldr’s pilgrimage according to the literary model provided by Sigurðr probably depends in the main on the texts which underlie *Fagrskinna*, *Morkinskinna* and *Heimskringla*. But there may be some element of direct influence because, although the *terminus a quo* for the original *Orkneyinga saga* is 1192, when Rognvaldr

was proclaimed a saint, the extant version may be as late as 1234–35, when the reviser of the saga could have had access to the versions of these compilations now extant.<sup>6</sup> If the emphasis on secular concepts of prestige is original, as is highly probable, then the saga stands as an interesting cultural response to the declaration of sanctity in 1192, since this placed Rognvaldr within a powerful ecclesiastical prestige system which runs counter to the values of the saga even as exemplified in the narration of the journey to the Holy Land.

Religious concerns are more evident in the stories told of King Eiríkr of Denmark. He first makes a pilgrimage to Rome and founds charitable institutions at Lucca and Piacenza (*Knýtlinga saga* ch. 74), whilst both Saxo Grammaticus (Bk XII, ch. 7) and Markús Skeggjason's *Eiríksdrápa* (quoted in part in *Knýtlinga saga*) make specific reference to churches and relics in their accounts of his journey to Jerusalem. Even so, it is noteworthy that the version of his encounter with the Emperor Alexis Comnenus I in *Knýtlinga saga* includes a parallel with Sigurðr which is not in Saxo's twelfth-century Latin account.<sup>7</sup> According to the saga, Alexis welcomes Eiríkr, gives him a splendid reception and offers him the choice of a great quantity of gold or games in the hippodrome. In Sigurðr's case this choice is seen as a prestige-test, which Sigurðr passes because he chooses the games. Eiríkr, by contrast, chooses the gold. The saga-writer explains, rather apologetically, that this was because the overland journey to Constantinople had been very costly, but he is aware of the tension between such practical realities and the implications of the literary motif and he invites us to make a comparison between Eiríkr and Sigurðr (ch. 81; 1982, 237):

Þessi sami Álexis Girjakonungr bauð síðan Sigurði Nóregskonungi Jórsalafara slíkan kost. En með því at Sigurðr konungr fór þá heimleiðis ok hafði þá lokit inum mesta fékostnaði í ferð sinni, þá kaus hann fyrir þá sök leikinn. Ok greinask menn at því, hvárt hofðingligar þótti kosit vera.

An attempt is made here to put Sigurðr on an equal footing with Eiríkr by making the decision of both men subject to practical considerations, but what gives the game away is the reported question 'hvárt hofðingligar þótti kosit vera'. The invitation to compare Sigurðr and Eiríkr and to judge which choice was the more noble makes no sense unless the audience can be presumed to know Sigurðr's story and recognise that the choice posed is, in literary contexts, a prestige motif.

The examples of Sigurðr, Eiríkr and Rognvaldr show historical pilgrimages being transformed into events within a literary tradition as each is exploited as a prestige motif. The two final examples in this

article show pilgrimage being exploited for its prestige value in contexts which are wholly fictional.

In the year 1000, King Óláfr Tryggvason was defeated at the battle of Svǫld and lost his life when he plunged into the sea, but in the subsequent elevation of Óláfr to heroic status, particularly within the Christian traditions of Iceland (Turville-Petre 1953, 190–96), he was given a fictional after-life, since it was assumed that he miraculously survived and lived out his life in the East. The first of these fictional extensions is that of Oddr Snorrason, a monk of the Benedictine house of Þingeyrar, whose saga, written in Latin, but now extant only in early thirteenth-century Icelandic translations, describes how Óláfr escaped to Mediterranean lands and, in a manner which would give him prestige in a monastic context, ended his days in a monastery in Greece or Syria (Oddr Snorrason 1932, ch. 78). Gunnlaugr Leifsson, a younger contemporary of Oddr at Þingeyrar, went still further and transported Óláfr to the Holy Land as the fittingly prestigious and exotic home in which the mighty and now somewhat mysterious hero could live out his days in a kind of miraculous second life (*Flateyjarbók* 1860–68, I 501–06; not in Oddr Snorrason's *Óláfs saga* as now extant). Gunnlaugr's narrative, like Oddr's, was translated from its original Latin into Icelandic and it is only fragments of this that survive. The purpose of both writers 'was to demonstrate the moral worth of their hero, and to show that the Icelanders had special reasons for devotion to him' (Turville-Petre 1953, 196). What is significant in the present context is not that Snorri, in his *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, rejected the patently fictional extension (ch. 112; *Heimskringla* 1941–51, I 367–68), but that, in building up Óláfr's after-life in order to elevate him, Oddr and Gunnlaugr exploited the pilgrimage motif. In Gunnlaugr's narrative, Jerusalem is the site of Óláfr's postponed death.

The second fictional example is from the legendary *Kirialax saga*, extant in manuscripts from the fifteenth century. The hero Kirialax (Alexis) bears the name of several Byzantine emperors but he otherwise has no relationship to history: he is a rich and powerful 'king' who, in a series of extraordinary adventures, moves widely over Europe and the Near and Middle East, having dealings amongst others with Theodoric the Goth (died 526) and Attila the Hun (died 453), figures whose roles in the saga are no more historical than that attributed to Kirialax himself. In the midst of all these improbabilities, the hero visits Jerusalem, and for this the saga-writer (or a later redactor) has copied, often verbatim, a documentary pilgrim-record found a few

folios on from the pilgrim narrative of Nikulás of Þverá in AM 194 8vo (compare Kålund 1908, 26 line 17 to 31 line 6, with *Kirialax saga* 1917, 64–67). As a result, the saga shows at this point an abrupt change of style and the sudden use of systematic historical detail for the duration of an episode which has no function in the narrative beyond the bestowing of yet more prestige on the hero.

The saga-writer's source for this episode has been given the editorial title of Variant Description of Jerusalem (Kedar and Westergård-Nielsen 1978–79, 197). It is embedded in AM 194 8vo without any indication of its origin, but the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is described in considerable detail and there is no doubt that this is the Crusader Church, which was dedicated on July 15, 1149. The text can hardly be later than the Battle of Hattin in 1187, when the Latin kingdom was overthrown. Stylistically the account is similar to Nikulás's pilgrim narrative, and Kedar and Westergård-Nielsen (1978–79, 197) were inclined to think that it originated with Nikulás, although Wilkinson (1988, 17–18) has argued against this on the grounds that Nikulás's description of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre pre-dates the completion of the rebuilding undertaken by the Crusaders, which would indicate that he was in Jerusalem some time before the writer of the Variant Description.<sup>8</sup> However, this is not a debate which is significant in the present discussion. What is important is that the writer of a late legendary saga, or a subsequent redactor, thought it necessary to attribute to its hero a lengthy visit to Jerusalem and that, in order to provide this prestige motif, he went to the trouble of looking out an existing pilgrim text.

The author (or redactor) was no scholar; he was a careless copyist and did not always understand what he was writing,<sup>9</sup> but his imagination was fired by the sense of the marvellous that the Jerusalem pilgrimage conveyed, as we see from his tendency to embellish descriptions and his repeated exaggerations when emphasising the miraculous. For example, pillars described in the Variant Description as white, black, red, blue and green (Kålund 1908, 30) are described in *Kirialax saga* as being of carved stone—red, blue, green, yellow, white and black.<sup>10</sup> The uncorrupt body of St Charithon (Caretas) is described in a restrained fashion in the Variant Description as lying 'med heilu liki' (1908, 29), but in *Kirialax saga* a sense of amazement is conveyed by the emphatic detail that she lies 'med holldi ok hári ok heilum likama' (1917, 65). Exaggeration of a similar kind occurs also in the following sentence, where we read that a short distance from St Charithon

is a rock in which one can see ‘stad beggia handa ok allra fingra vors herra Iesu Christi, er hann stakk haundunum vid berginu, þa er illmennen hlupu at honum, svo sem han hefði i leir stungit’ (1917, 65), in contrast with the Variant Description’s more sober statement that ‘ser þar enn fingra-stadinn i berggino, sem hann stakk vid höndunum, þa er illmennin hliopo ath honum’ (Kålund 1908, 30–31). Likewise we are told that at Lazarus’s tomb ‘voru þar gior til aull merki, hvar vor herra Iesus Christi stod, þa er Ladarus reis af dauda graufini’ (*Kirialax saga* 1917, 66)—a meaningless ‘detail’ which has no foundation in either the Variant Description (Kålund 1908, 31) or the biblical account. There are other variations of this kind, but we should not be surprised; as we have seen, the exaggerated flourish, the vivid realisation, the extra detail, are all part of journey descriptions exploited for their prestige value, whether the journey is to Norway, Byzantium or Jerusalem. In this instance the Jerusalem episode stands apart from the surrounding text because of its style and its use of sober, factual details (which predominate, despite the modifications), and because it is presented as impersonally as the Variant Description which it more or less follows; apart from Kirialax’s arrival and departure, which are not part of the description proper, it is not until near the end of the passage that the saga-writer remembers to present the sites as if they are being visited by his hero. But its stylistic isolation, which takes us back full circle to the documentary tradition with which I began, draws attention to the fact that within the saga tradition pilgrimage had achieved such status as a prestige motif that it had to be included at all costs, even in the unlikely context of *Kirialax saga*.<sup>11</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this article I take Snorri’s *Heimskringla* to be the main text as edited by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson from transcripts of the Kringla manuscript, which was all but lost in the fire of 1728. It is thought that the original Kringla vellum is the best witness to Snorri’s original text, although the fact that it was copied from an intermediate copy now lost, and not from the archetype, means that we cannot be certain that its (transcribed) text is faithful to Snorri’s own text in every detail. On the manuscripts and sources of *Heimskringla*, see Whaley 1991, 41–47 and 63–82 respectively. Andersson 1985 provides a survey of the tradition of kings’ sagas, which includes comment on inter-textual relationships.

<sup>2</sup> The gift is mentioned in *Fagrskinna* (ch. 88; 1984, 318) but the details that Snorri provides are from *Ágrip af Nóregskonunga sögum*, ch. 53; see *Heimskringla* 1941–51, III liv.



<sup>3</sup>The episode is included without comment in Erling Monsen's 1932 translation *Heimskringla or the Lives of the Norse Kings by Snorre Sturlason*. Monsen does not state which manuscript he is following but it is probable that here it is the *Hulda-Hrokkinskinna* version of the kings' sagas which, as Jonna Louis-Jensen shows (1977), is mainly a compilation of *Morkinskinna* and *Heimskringla*.

<sup>4</sup>In Nikulás's itinerary Engilsnes is undoubtedly Cap San'Angelo (Akra Maléa), the southern tip of the easternmost promontory of the Peloponnese (see Hill 1983, 185–86 for Engilsnes and the identity and location of the places named immediately after it), but this is too far west for Sigurðr and for Rognvaldr, who similarly pauses at Engilsnes (see p. 445 above). Sigfús Blöndal (1978, 137, 156) suggests that the reference in both sagas is to the Gallipoli peninsula, which is geographically more plausible. The Gallipoli peninsula was, of course, in Greece as then understood, since it lay within the territory directly ruled by the Byzantine ('Greek') emperor.

<sup>5</sup>See *Heimskringla* 1941–51, III liii and note 1, although not all manuscripts use identical wording; compare, for example, the *Fríssbók* version of this episode: *Codex Frisianus* 1871, 287. Davidson 1976, 260–62 summarises Sigurðr's adventures using the *Formanna sögur* edition (1825–37, VII 94–95) without identifying this as the *Hulda-Hrokkinskinna* version (on which see note 3 above).

<sup>6</sup>For a convenient summary of the possible textual relationships, see Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards 1981, 10–11. For a more detailed survey of the complexities of the relationships between *Heimskringla*, *Morkinskinna* and *Orkneyinga saga*, see Whaley 1991, 72–73, and Finnbofi Guðmundsson's edition of *Orkneyinga saga*, where the suggestion is made that the saga was revised under Snorri's supervision (1965, xlii–xliii).

<sup>7</sup>On the literary relationship between the episode as told of Sigurðr in *Morkinskinna* and that in *Knýtlinga saga*, see Albeck 1946, 138–39. The incident involving Sigurðr must have been available in the texts underlying *Fagrskinna*, *Morkinskinna* and *Heimskringla*, see above pp. 442–43 in conjunction with pp. 438–39.

<sup>8</sup>Wilkinson's argument is far from conclusive. Nikulás's description is ambiguous (Kålund 1908, 22), since he brings together the sites of the sepulchre and the crucifixion as if they are parts of one church, which he identifies as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. But before the Crusader church was built, enclosing all the juxtaposed sites at this spot, pilgrim descriptions generally distinguished them as separate (though adjacent) sites. Wilkinson also refers to Nikulás's statement that, since this is the centre of the earth (a traditional belief), the sun shines down directly there on the Feast of St. John. Wilkinson argues that this must mean that the courtyard in which the centre of the earth was marked was still open to the sky, as it was before the Crusader church was completed. But again Nikulás's statement is ambiguous: he does not say that the evidence for the sun being directly overhead on June 24 was apparent from the way the light was cast on the ground at the central point. The solar 'proof' for Jerusalem's privileged position would presumably have been repeated even

to pilgrims who saw the marker for the centre of the earth within the enclosed Crusader church. See Hill 1983, 191–94. It is also relevant to note that Nikulás is elsewhere said to have returned to Iceland in 1154. This is consistent with the itinerary's internal evidence that he was in the Holy Land before the capture of Ascalon (in August 1153). The dates for the start of the pilgrimage and the arrival in the Holy Land are, admittedly, unknown, but they are not likely to be as early as Wilkinson suggests, because a date significantly before the dedication of the Crusader church in July 1149 would mean that the pilgrimage lasted for an unusually long time. A more likely date for Nikulás's arrival in the Holy Land is sometime after the Second Crusade (1148), which was followed by a period of relative peace and stability in the eastern Mediterranean generally and in the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem in particular.

<sup>9</sup>The Variant Description and the passage in *Kirialax saga* can conveniently be compared in Kedar and Westergård-Nielsen 1978–79.

<sup>10</sup>In the Variant Description the pillars are in the *Templum Domini*, the Crusader name for the Dome of the Rock. The description occurs immediately after that of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. In *Kirialax saga* there is confusion between the various churches and so the pillars are attributed to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

<sup>11</sup>*Karlamagnús saga* is a further excellent example of the use of pilgrimage as a prestige motif, but I have chosen in the present paper to restrict my analysis to Scandinavian figures or—in the special case of *Kirialax saga*—to a figure whose supposed visit to the Holy Land is taken almost verbatim from a documentary pilgrim record which originated in Scandinavia. I should like to thank Dr Rory McTurk and the editors of *Saga-Book* for their encouragement and advice in the preparation of this paper.

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## THE *RÍMUR*-POET AND HIS AUDIENCE

BY HANS KUHN

**M**Y SUBJECT-MATTER is an aspect of that vast submerged continent of epic narrative that succeeded the medieval sagas and remained dominant in literary production in Iceland for half a millennium, from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century, the *rímur*. It may be taken as a sign of Icelandic stubbornness or independence of mind that they switched to a form of verse epic just as other European literatures were abandoning the verse epic for prose, while Iceland had produced superb narrative prose at a time when the rest of Europe could not conceive of narrative literature except in verse. Many of the early *rímur*-cycles were simply reworkings of sagas, at times following the texts almost word for word within the formal and stylistic constraints of the new form. To that extent, there is still a tangible link with the more familiar saga literature.

The 'audience' in my title is not an historical body of listeners but the listening partner implicit in the text of the *rímur*. In this respect, the step from saga to *rímur* meant a change more drastic than the formal leap from prose to a new verse form with elaborate conventions. The sagas are unique, in a medieval context, in their virtual lack of an explicit authorial presence, of a narrator pointing out, commenting, moralising, or simply assuming the God-like role of reading the fictional characters' minds and hearts. In the *rímur*, in contrast, the narrator continually asserts his presence, by speaking in his own person at the beginning and the end of each *ríma*, and by making his presence felt by referring to himself or to his sources at frequent intervals.

When I say 'presence', I do not necessarily mean a manifestation of his historical individuality, as a person with a specific background and specific experiences, with individual opinions, prejudices, emotions. A scholar who, in the nineteenth-century fashion, would wish to use the *rímur* to reconstruct the life and personality of the author, would find few nuggets in the course of his quest. Whether they are fleeting references within the narrative, or the conclusion of each *ríma* or the substantial first-person section at the beginning of each *ríma* (usually between six and ten stanzas), they are largely stereotyped in content and partly also in form, which is an argument for assuming a consid-

erable period of oral tradition before the first *ríma* appears in writing in *Flateyjarbók*, c. 1390.

The opening section is the most varied one. Often it justifies its name, *mansöngur*, by dealing with love, either the poet's love for a particular (unnamed) woman, or about his lack of success in love matters. Or he can deplore the reprehensible practice of using *mansöngur* for lewd purposes, or women's foolishness in falling for such literary evidence of love. Criticism or complaint is often the keynote; the subject can be the poet's age, poor state of health, or economic conditions, or his perceived lack of literary skill, or the political state of affairs. Or he often simply says 'I am composing poetry' in a very elaborate way. If one compares the concerns, opinions and attitudes expressed by the *mansöngvar* of one and the same *rímur*-cycle, the picture of the 'author' emerging may not be very consistent. If, on the other hand, *mansöngvar* of different authors are compared, the stereotyped nature of the contents emerges (see Björn K. Þórolfsson 1934, 266–84). This suggests that the author not so much makes an individual statement as assumes an accepted, traditional role; he 'performs' in a situation which warrants first-person statements and an interplay, however formalised, with his audience.

These are well-known facts; well-known, that is, among readers of *rímur*, which may not be a majority of Old Norse scholars. I thought it might be worth while examining what results a detailed investigation of some particular *rímur*-cycles would yield in these respects. For reasons of space, I am restricting myself here to just four:

*Vilmundar rímur viðutan* (henceforth abbreviated *Vilm*; 16 *rímur*, 1143 stanzas) by a certain Ormur, of about 1530, if we accept Ólafur Halldórsson's late dating (1975, 28; for consistency and readability, the orthography of *Vilm* quotations has been normalised).

Two cycles by Hallgrímur Pétursson, the author of the beloved *Passíusálmur*, namely *Króka-Refs rímur* (abbrev. *KR*; 13 *rímur*, 936 stanzas) and *Rímur af Lykla-Pétri og Magelónu* (abbreviated *LPM*; 9 *rímur*, 638 stanzas), of about 1650 (Finnur Sigmundsson 1956).

Sigurður Breiðfjörð's *Rímur af Þórði hræðu* (abbrev. *Þhr*; 10 *rímur*, 717 stanzas) of 1820 (1971, 43–135).

The material on which these observations are based thus comprises 48 *rímur* or 3,434 stanzas.

I will for the moment disregard the *mansöngvar* and the conclusions and look at instances of authorial presence scattered over

the narrative sections. By ‘authorial presence’ I mean not just occasions where the author speaks in the first person but any instance where he alludes to the performance situation, e.g. by referring to his source or asserting the veracity of the story. Such remarks may be stereotyped or simply inserted because they supply a number of syllables, alliterations, end rhymes or internal rhymes demanded by the stringent rules of the chosen metre, but they nevertheless remind the audience of the other ‘scene’, as Lars Lönnroth called it (1978), the presence of a performer and their own presence as an audience. Among the works considered here, such instances occur most frequently in *Vilm* (114 times, or more than seven times, on average, in every *ríma*), a little less frequently in *Hallgrímur* (*KR*: 83 times; an average of more than six times per *ríma*; *LPM*: 45 times; an average of five times per *ríma*), and least often in *Þhr* (33 times; an average of more than three times per *ríma*).

Instances of authorial presence in the narrative parts can be divided into three large groups:

(1) References to the author or his work, namely

- 1.1 ‘I tell you’ / ‘the *ríma* tells you’;
- 1.2 ‘I told you’ / ‘the *ríma* told you’;
- 1.3 ‘I will tell you’ / ‘the *ríma* will tell you’.

1.A A special case is the author addressing a particular person or particular persons in the audience; this is not uncommon in the *mansöngvar* but very rare in the narrative.

(2) References to the source of the story, namely

- 2.1 ‘I have been told’;
- 2.2 ‘The work/poem says’; this is often ambiguous as it can refer to the source or to the poet’s own reshaping of it;
- 2.3 ‘The book says’; here, the reference to a written source is unambiguous (though not necessarily truthful).

2.A A special case is the assertion of truthfulness which can, but does not have to, refer to the source.

(3) References expressing the author’s opinion, namely

- 3.1 ‘I think’ / ‘I believe’;
- 3.2 A comment on an aspect of the story.

**1.1** is particularly frequent in relative clauses:

*KR* vii 21 sem *skýri* eg frá (cf. vi 21); *Vilm* iii 53 sem *inni* eg (cf. i 14; xii 37); *LPM* iv er *segi* eg frá; *Vilm* xiii 24 sem *hermi* eg frá; *KR* v 32 sem *ræði* eg frá; *Vilm* vi 70 sem eg *greini*; *Vilm* vi 63 sem *tel* eg.

In other syntactic contexts:

*skýra* *Vilm* i 12, *KR* viii 75; *greina* *KR* iv 30, xi 29; *herma* *KR* vi 23. Other verbs: *Vilm* x 40 *eg votta skjótt*; *LPM* ix 27 *kveð eg*; *Þhr* i 12 *ég fræði yður*.

With *fá* as auxiliary:

*KR* i 15 *fæ eg fest*; *KR* xiii 50 *fæ eg tjáð*; *Þhr* viii 66 *greint eg fæ*.

*Nefna* is mostly used to introduce a new character (where a saga author might use the impersonal forms *er nefndr* or *hét*):

*Vilm* i 10 *Vísinvold nefn eg* (cf. iii 15 under l. 3), but also *Þhr* x 17 *ég nefni sísona*.

In negative contexts ('I am not telling', 'I have difficulties telling'):

*Vilm* i 12 *skýr eg ei hvað hún heitir*; *Þhr* x 16 *Nenni ég ekki að herma hér / hvernig bragnar sátu*; *Vilm* x 32 *Seint verður oss til mála*.

**1.2.** References to persons or events mentioned before also occur mostly in relative clauses if they appear in the course of the narrative:

*Vilm* ii 12 *sem fyr voru nefndar sögunni í* (cf. *Þhr* ii 49); *Vilm* iv 12 *sem greindi eg fyrri í spjalli* (cf., not in first-person form, iv 31 and xv 10); *Vilm* x 22 *sem hermdum vér*; in impersonal constructions: *Vilm* x 53 *sem inn er frá*; xii 55 *sem kynnt er fyrri*; *KR* x 9 *getið er fyrir um fræða reit*; x 15 *forðum glögg þess getið varð*.

The most frequent references to an earlier stage of the narrative occur at the beginning of the 'epic' part of the *ríma*, after the *mansöngur*. *Rímur* were intended for oral delivery, normally sung, and represented 'Vortragsabschnitte', the amount of text rendered in one 'fit'. Hence the audience had to be reminded where the singer/poet left off, possibly the evening before, at times probably after a longer interval. The general formula for these openings of the narrative sections is '(Last time) I / the *ríma* stopped where', followed by a situation, a character or an incident described at the end of the preceding *ríma*.

Simple references in first-person form are:

*Vilm* viii 11, *KR* xii 11 *Hvarf eg frá þar*; *LPM* ii 9 *Hætti eg við þar*; *Þhr* ii 7 *Þar ég áður þulu hætti míni*; *LPM* v 10 *Skilda eg við þar*; *Vilm* xiii 10 *Greindi eg næst*; *Vilm* ix 11 (Af bróður hennar) *birti eg fyrir*; *KR* xiii 12 *Áður lýsti eg atburð*; *LPM* iv 10 *Geymda eg fyr í gríðar byr*; *Vilm* iii 11 *hefi eg það sett í óðinn minn*; *Vilm* vi 8 *frétt hefi eg rétt*; *KR* viii 9 *Felldi eg óð í fyrra sinn um*; *Þhr* v 12 *Minn var áður málateinn / margbrotinn um*; *Þhr* vi 10 *Bragur minn var áðan einn á enda þulinn / sem*.

Simple impersonal references:

*Vilm* x 2 *sem fyrir var getið í kvæði*, cf. *LPM* vi 10 *getið var í fræði fyrir*; *LPM* viii 7 *Fyrri tjáði fræði þar*; *KR* v 11 *Ræðan var í rénan þar*; *Vilm* xvi



4 rétt var þanninn ríman fyllt; KR vi 11 Ördug mæroin áðan stríð / öll þar falla náði.

Sometimes the *ríma* is referred to by one of the elaborate kennings for ‘(the mead of) poetry’ characteristic of *mansöngur*, usually harking back to *Skáldskaparmál* chs 5–6:

Suttungur or Óðinn’s gain (*Vilm* xiv 7 Suptuns gróður sagði óður / (seggjum) næst og ekki góður; xv 8 Fyrri greindi Fjöltnis gróður / fræða galla); Óðinn’s ale yeast (*LPM* vii 10 Þar trú eg stæði kólnuð kveik / Kjalars í drykkjar vinnu); Óðinn’s arrow (*KR* ix 6 Hnikars lá þar hulin ör); dwarf’s ship or life-saving (*KR* iii 13 Norðra lét eg hafna hauk / hlaupa áðan þar í kaf; iv 9 Dregið af sundi dverga far / Dvalins í nausti hvíldi þar; *KR* vii 10 Suðra far að sandi bar / Suptungs hlaðið minni / brotnaði þar, sem; *LPM* ix 5 Þar var dverga lausnin lífs / lægð í hyrjar gráði). (The editor lists *hyrjar gráð* under kennings for *hugur*, *brjóst*, but *hyrr* ‘fire’ does not make sense. Rather, we may suspect that *hyrjar* is an objective gen. and that ‘hunger, greediness for fire’ is a water kenning, the whole phrase meaning ‘the dwarves’ ship was sunk [at the end of the last *ríma*] where . . .’)

**1.3** Here the poet/performer announces what he is about to tell the audience:

*Vilm* i 52 Af siklings arfa segja skal fyst; *Vilm* viii 31 Greinum hitt hvað gördist heima (cf. *LPM* viii 39, *Þhr* i 14), *Þhr* v 77 Því skal líka greina frá; *Vilm* ix 22 nú skal herma að, xiv 34 Hróðrar val að herma skal, *Þhr* x 32 herma verð; *Vilm* xi 17 svo vil eg inna í Sónar mar; *KR* vi 18 Ólufu vil eg glósa; *LPM* vi 17 þar so til sem birta skal; *LPM* vii 69 skal nú tjá; *Þhr* iii 37 sem eg frá mun spjalla; *Þhr* vi 14 Nú mun verða að nefna fleiri njóta stála.

Or the poet declines to tell the audience something:

*Vilm* iii 39 Eg kann ekki að koma við fleira að sinni; *KR* ix 74 (King Haraldur’s prophetic description of Refur’s *virki* in Greenland) Í setning kvæða sízt eg kann / sveit að fræða um atburð þann.

Such announcements often mark the introduction of a new person or the beginning of a new episode and are thus similar to the ‘change of scene’ situation where in the sagas, too, the author intervenes to bridge the narrative discontinuity. The difference is again, as with the introduction of new characters, that in the sagas an impersonal form is favoured (*Þar er frá at segja*, *Nú er þar til at taka*) while in the *rímur* the author is more likely to speak in the first person.

The most usual formula is:

‘Let’s turn to/away from’ (*Víkjum til Vilm* v 11, xi 59, xvi 30, frá *LPM* v 4) or ‘The story turns to’ (Þangað *víkur* Þundar feng *KR* x 6, x 23, xii 12; xi 10 Ríman þangað rædu *snýr*; *KR* viii 11 Til *Víkur* aftur vísan *fer*, *Vilm* v 12 Til vísis dóttur verður að *venda*) or ‘from’ (*KR* xii 53 Ræðan *víkur* ræsir frá);

‘Let’s relate what’ (*Vilm* viii 31 *Greinum* hitt hvað gjörðist). More elaborate: *KR* viii 34 Af ljóða porti um Noreg næst / náms eg svipti hurðu; *Þhr* vi 36 Fjöltnis hani flýgur minn og frá því glósi, er.

Sometimes it is a two-step operation, ‘Let’s leave X and turn to Y’:

*Vilm* iii 15 Seggir hverfa úr sögu og þessa fræði / Algaut nefni eg ýtran jarl; x 48 Látum hoskan hvílast þar / hrumþvengs nöðru starfa / Vestrar ferju víkja skal / víst til þengils arfa; xii 13 Látum gildan geymir hers hjá gotnum sitja / fleira verða að fylla kvæði / frægðar menn með stoltar æði; *LPM* vi 42 Látum fangaðan dvelja dreng . . . Víkjum þangað Fjöltnis feng, sem; *KR* iv 32 Kemur lítt við söguna sú / segja verður fleira nú; *KR* vi 54 Í hætti settum hulið hjal / eg hlýt til þrautar teygja; *LPM* vii 68 Viðrix gildi vík eg frá / vænni bauga þöllu / skarlats Hildi skal nú tjá / hvað skeði í greifans höllu.

Further expressions for ‘Leaving X’ (without mentioning Y):

*Vilm* iii 29 segir nu ekki meira af þeim; *Þhr* ii 16 Ljóðin sleppi þeim um síð; vii 62 söguna við er skilinn hann.

For the introduction of new characters, *koma við söguna*, as above, is also found in *KR* i 25, *koma til sögunnar* in *KR* ii 12. ‘Let’s get on with it!’ Hallgrímur at times admonishes himself:

*KR* iv 20 Yggjar fundur óðs um krá / aftur snúi veginn á; iv 26 Til sögunnar í svip eg renn.

**1.A.** While the audience, or an individual in it, is often addressed in the *mansöngvar*, I have found only two such specific references in the narrative of *LPM*, namely the *skarlats Hild(i)* in the passage quoted in 1.3 and the *þorna Lín* to be quoted in 3.2.

**2.1.** The *rímur*-poet may be proud of his poetic skill but he claims to relate a true story and therefore often, as a proof of authenticity, refers to ‘having heard’ or ‘having read’ a particular fact. The most frequent formula is *frá eg*, which is also a handy line-filler where two extra syllables are needed. It does not occur in *Þhr*, but appears no less than 32 times in *Vilm* and 12 times in Hallgrímur. Equivalent expressions occur only occasionally:

*KR* xiii 70 hef eg það af fræði frétt (cf. *LPM* ii 48); *Vilm* iv 14 af höldum völdum hermt var mér; *Vilm* vi 62 sem þegnar spjalla; *Vilm* x 35 sem sagt er frá; *KR* iii 47 var það komið so fyrir mig; *Þhr* 29 er þess getið; *Þhr* x 29 sem birtir skraf.

**2.2.** The indiscriminate use made of a great variety of words meaning ‘poetry’, ‘poem’, ‘work of literature’ often allows no certain conclusion whether the poet is speaking of his source or his own work.

Whichever it is in a particular instance, he moves from the fictional scene to the performing scene in that instant. I list the lexical items in order of frequency:

*Vilm* viii 18 sem hermir *fræði* (cf. iii 56, x 8, xiii 58, *KR* vi 15, *LPM* viii 82; *LPM* ix 85 er segir í *fræða línum*); *Vilm* vii 51 *brag[uf]rinn* trú eg svo ræði (cf. x 64, xiii 30, *Þhr* iv 13); *Vilm* xvi 8 *sagan* vill þanninn hljóða (cf. i 15, *Þhr* v 43); *Þhr* ix 59 um sem heyrast *sögur*; *Vilm* iii 32 sem *óðurinn* tór (cf. iv 23, *KR* xiii 82); *Vilm* xvi 15 *kvæðin* segja að (followed by something that is *not* in the source! Cf. *Vilm* iii 39, *LPM* ix 76); *Vilm* xi 76, *Þhr* i 67 *ríman* segir; *KR* iv 47, xi 32 sem innir *spil*; *KR* vi 13 Þorgils tjörgu Týrinn hér / tel eg *málið* kalli; *KR* vii 32 sem innir *tal*; *Þhr* viii 21 sem *ljóðin* inna; *KR* x 47 sem greinir *spjall* (again about something not found in the source); *Þhr* vi 21 sem *mærðin* greinir; *Vilm* xi 9 *Orða snilld* . . . áður skýrði; *Vilm* xvi 8 So rēð greina *Sónar vín* (xvi 23 *Suðra vín*).

Verbal phrases:

*Vilm* xiii 36 sem *kynnt er frá*; *KR* iv 48 sem *greinir frá*; *LPM* iv 54 *getið er þess*.

**2.3.** Post-Reformation Hallgrímur is particularly fond of invoking the authority of a written source in a general form, even though that source may not fully confirm him, as when he says *KR* xiii 77 about Refur having settled down in Skagen: *Átján ár þar sat með sóm / so er greint í letri*, while *Króka-Refs saga* (ÍF XIV 160) only says *nökkura vetr*—but then, there are not many words rhyming with *sankti Petri*.

Other instances of *letur* are found in *KR* iii 67, v 58, vii 70, xi 19, *LPM* v 44 (orða letur), ix 88, *Vilm* xiv 17, xv 11. *Bók* is also popular: *Vilm* xv 24 (Svo vill birta bókin frá), *KR* iii 26, iv 20, v 19, xii 66, xiii 33, *LPM* i 21, ii 19, ii 22, vii 55. *Historían* *KR* x 13 and the plural in *KR* xii 65 Í *historíunum* þetta finnum presumably also means written sources. Further *KR* x 70 þanninn greinir *rit*. A confused kenning is *Vilm* xvi 61 Svo vill greina *Sónar skrá*; ‘Són’s wine’ (quoted above) makes sense for ‘poetry’, ‘Són’s [written] list’ does not.

Verbal phrases:

*Vilm* xiii 54 *lesið er lengur*; *Þhr* viii 62 *ritað* finn (Sigurður’s only reference to a written source).

**2.A.** Assertions of truth are mostly found in *Vilm*; there are none in *Þhr*. In one instance (*Vilm* vii 25 *það stendur í dag til merkja*) it corresponds to a similar assertion in the saga source; otherwise they are the *rímur*-poet’s addition:

*Vilm* i 32 kynni eg allt hið *sanna*, vii 14 af *sönnum* orða greinum, xi 17 slíkt er *satt* með öllu, cf. *LPM* vii 11 *satt* eg um það glósa, ix 75 frá eg að *sönnu*

and ix 74 skal eg *hið rétta* inna, KR vi 42 sem skýri eg hér *með rétti*; *Vilm* ix 11 bragurinn vill það *sanna*, cf. KR x 17 *sanna* þetta öldin kann.

‘I am not exaggerating’:

*Vilm* vii 14 Sagan er ekki af seggjum *rengd* (after describing *Vilmundur*’s prowess at spear-throwing); xi 18 Ekki slíkt með orðum vex / oss í ljóða gjörðum (before claiming that six men could hardly lift the rock *Vilmundur* lifted by himself).

**3.1.** Expressions under this heading are part of a role-play on the performing scene. They serve not so much to convey the convictions, assumptions, guesses of the poet as to draw the audience into the act by inviting them to consider the plausibility of the events related. By feigning conviction, uncertainty or doubt, he makes himself one of the audience, so to speak, and thus becomes a true mediator between the fictional plane and the listeners. In reality, *trú eg* may be the same sort of line-filler as *frá eg*, but both create links between the audience and the fiction, links provided by the performer’s ‘personal’ experience.

*Hallgrímur* uses these little insertions a great deal, *Sigurður* never. They are listed in order of frequency:

*trú eg Vilm* vii 51, 68, KR i 25, 66, vii 24, xi 24, LPM vi 34, vii 10, 14, ix 88, pl. *trúum* KR v 15; *get eg Vilm* i 65, KR i 69, ii 13, xi 36, xiii 51; *tel eg* KR i 42, vi 13, ix 27; *ætla eg Vilm* vi 73, vii 33; *hygg eg* LPM vii 83.

**3.2.** The *mansöngvar* are the place for comments by the poet/performer, but occasionally they are found in the narrative as well. *Vilm* has only one such passage when the author in v 67 anticipates future events: *Skjótt mun svikanna skamt á milli*.

*LPM* has two comments in the ninth and last *ríma*. In ix 72 the author says his pen is unable to describe the joy of the lovers finally reunited:

Fögnuð þeirra Fjölnis vín  
fær ei greint með öllu  
það má sérhvör þorna Lín  
þenkja í minnis höllu.

In ix 79 he takes a short cut by only briefly describing the next recognition scene, that of parents and son:

Hjónin þegar sinn þekktu son  
þó (var.: so) til fátt vér leggjum  
gleðinnar nægð sem var til von  
vóx fyrir hvorutveggjum.

*Sigurður* generally takes a fairly light-hearted approach to his story, e.g. he occasionally calls the main character *Monsér Þórður*. In i 45 the

story of King Sigurður slefa's lecherous ways with the wife of the Hersir Klyppur make him laugh. In v 43–46 he expresses doubt whether the nightly encounters between Sigríður and Ormur were as innocent as the saga claims. In x 15 he says that everybody was invited to a wedding except himself and comments that the poor always miss out.

Space will not allow a full discussion of authorial presence in the *mansöngur* but some general observations can be made to illustrate both the tenacity of tradition and the individuality of an author's handling of that tradition. It will not come as a surprise that the oldest work, *Vilm*, is the most formalised, and the youngest, *Phr*, the most individualised of the four works in question.

One such tenacious tradition is a difference of style between *mansöngur* and the narrative bulk of the *ríma*. While the latter abound in kennings for 'man' and 'woman' and occasionally for other popular referents such as 'ship' or 'battle', and while some metres may call for all sorts of grammatical contortions to satisfy the rules, the diction is characterised, on the whole, by an easy flow. In the *mansöngur* and the corresponding short conclusion of each *ríma* a much more elaborate style is used. There are, in particular, plentiful references to the story of the winning of the mead of poetry by Óðinn in the form of kennings for 'poetry' and 'poem', and these can in turn form the basis of extended conceits. This is true, at least, of the older *rímur*, and the complication can be such that even an expert like Ólafur Halldórsson is induced to sigh: 'Mansöngurinn er þesskonar líkingamál og rímhnoð sem tilgangslaust er að reyna að skýra' (1975, 187). Hallgrímur, more than a century later, uses a much more discursive style, and in Sigurður the difference between *mansöngur* and narrative narrows even further.

*Mansöngur* and conclusion form a bridge between the performance scene and the fictional scene. The performer announces the start of another session, identifies what is coming, says who he is performing for, usually numbers the part and names the metre and often asks for silence. At the beginning of the work he may also say who commissioned it, and at the end he may identify the woman he dedicates it to and himself (usually in a teasingly roundabout way reminiscent of cryptic crosswords). This is practical information for the audience easily explained by the oral performance situation, but it would seem that from an early stage the performer strove to hold the stage in his own name for a little longer at the beginning of each *ríma* and to use the opportunity both to show off his poetic skills and to make personal

remarks, whether genuine or pretended, before submitting to the slavery of the narrative.

*Mansöngur* means ‘love song’, and we know both from the sagas and from *Grágás* that the Icelandic community in the Middle Ages took a dim view of a man compromising a woman by making her the object of such a song; it seems to have been considered as libel, a sort of *níð*. The *rímur*-convention is that composing and performing the work is a form of homage to a female in the audience, who is referred to under a variety of florid kennings but hardly ever by name except in the form of an anagram hidden away in the text. Otherwise the poet’s language is often that of the hopeful or rejected lover, not unlike that of the courtly poet of the high Middle Ages on the continent, pleading for attention, expecting a reward, complaining about the beloved’s indifference or his own loneliness. As in the case of the troubadour, these feelings were expressed in Iceland in a public context, before an audience, not in private, and in this way may be as much a product of audience expectation as of a personal predicament, although in the case of more recent poets such as Sigurður, the lady may actually be identified.

Whether the poet as a pleading, unsuccessful lover owes his existence to European role models, or whether he was conceived in Iceland, possibly as a comic act, is hard to say; he is, however, the norm in the older *rímur*. In *Vilm* i, ii, iii, vii and xv, this is the main theme of the *mansöngur*, sometimes coupled with self-criticism for being a talker, not a doer, for having no practical experience (iii 3–4; vii 1–4; ix 6), or blaming lack of success on age (i 4–5; iii 1–2; vii 2, 5–7, where he gives his age as 57; ix 2–3) or on lack of poetic brilliance (i 6; ix 2–3; xi 3–5). But he also criticises men who use their verbal skill to fool girls (ix 5–9), commends the man who is discreet about his amorous bliss (iii 7), and praises the ideal woman in almost biblical terms (viii 3–8). In another passage, however, he says that a person is mad to honour women if he can never sleep with them (xiv 5). Much *mansöngur* space, in all the four cycles, is used to say why the poet cannot, or does not wish to, write *mansöngur*.

But despite the term *mansöngur*, even in *Vilm* the principal theme is not love but ‘I compose poetry’. And the way the poet expresses it is not only by using the mythological concepts of the divine origin of the mead of poetry but by displaying a firework of kennings and metaphors that puts the *profanum vulgus* in its place. In all of iv, v, vi, xii and xvi, and in most of xi and xiii, this is the subject matter of the *mansöngur*.

In v, vi and xii the (dwarves') boat is the dominant conceit, in xi and xiii brewing. The first and last *mansöngvar* give a veritable pot-pourri of metaphors; in i animals (1–2), liquid from the pen (2), the mead of poetry (3), grinding, sifting and baking (3–5), the dwarves' boat (6–8); in xvi the smithy (1–3, with Óðinn working the bellows), brewing (4), sounds and music (5). The smithy also appears in xi 4; in vi and xii the boat-imagery is enriched with the mythology of love (in vi Frigg and the dwarf Frosti are to share a bed; in xii *Venrix dygðin* and *afmors frygð* go into the building of the boat), and in xii the boat's cargo is Óðinn's drink. The conclusions are less heavily weighed down with metaphorical language but they still carry a fair load: Óðinn's drinking-horn (i 82, ii 66) or beer-keg (xii 68) is empty, the mead of poetry (ii 89, xi 87–88), the dwarves' drink (iii 76), Frosti's beer and flour (vi 73) are used up. The last conclusion provides a whole bouquet of metaphors: I have messed up Són's yeast (xvi 62), my purse of poetry is empty so I cannot feed songs any more, I have hammered together stiff ('blue-cold') verses for you (63), my poetry-talk in the land of consciousness will stop, I lock again the hall of verses (66).

Hallgrímur has the same elements, if in simpler language, but his emphasis is quite different. The tenor of his *mansöng*r passages is his lack of skill and practice: he repeatedly (*KR* i 9, iv 7, xi 4, xiii 86, *LPM* ii 7) asks his audience to correct or improve his verses; he deplors his ignorance of the (Prose) Edda (*KR* i 7, iv 2, vi 7, *LPM* i 6); and what is worse, when he was shown an Edda text, he did not understand it (iv 5–7). The reasons for these shortcomings are his youth (*bernska* *KR* xiii 86) and his stupidity (*pursleg heimska* *KR* xii 9), and he asks the lady to accept his good intentions in lieu of achievement (*KR* ix 4, *LPM* iv 9). This ritual self-depreciation certainly belongs to a literary convention as *captatio benevolentiae*, but there is a ring of truth in his oft-stated dislike of *mansöng*r, his unease with the metre *frumhent* (*KR* viii 8), his professed inability to follow the lady's request for a change of metre (ix 3–4; he does, however, use a new metre in each *ríma*!), his longing for simplicity (*LPM* i 8 *slétt og einfalt*, *KR* v 9 *einfalt rétt með orðin slétt*) and his suspicion that poets who *myrkt kveða* (*KR* v 3) exploit their audience's lack of expertise. He more than once (*KR* v 7, *LPM* iii 2) rejects formal virtuosity (*hagleikr*); contents (*efni*) are more important. Once he even says that he is sick and tired of the whole enterprise (*KR* xii 2 *Leiðast tekur loksins mér þau ljóð að smíða*), but goes on to say that it will not help a lazy person to just look at the work ahead of him.

While the framework of writing for a lady and hoping to be rewarded is kept, he does not launch into discussions of the relationship between poetry and sexuality except obliquely, by criticising those who use the divine gift of poetry to hurt their neighbours: they will be called to account for having wasted their talents in such a way (*KR* iii 3–6; cf. *LPM* vii 8–9). But he also defends himself (*LPM* vii 5–7) against people who seem to have contested his moral right to write *mansöngur*, probably because of the supposed irregularity of his marriage (his wife was, technically, still married to another man; see Stefán Einarsson 1957, 196–97). He, too, provides an extended picture of the ideal woman (*LPM* ii 3–6), with an explicit warning against garrulousness and sneering.

Hallgrímur does not appear to have shared the scruples of some of the post-Reformation *rímur*-poets about using pagan mythology. On the other hand, he does not hesitate to thank Christ in the *mansöngur* for having improved his condition (*LPM* vii 4), and he fills one whole *mansöngur* (*LPM* v) with a baroque sermon on the transitoriness of human life which is reminiscent of the *Passíusálmur*. The metaphorical language is much more restrained. Poetry is almost invariably presented, both in the *mansöngur* and in the conclusions, as a ship taken out of the boat-shed or brought to shore, or one that founders at the end of a *ríma* and has to be rebuilt at the beginning of a new one. Turning the metaphor into an extended conceit occurs only in *KR* xii; typically for him, it is a description of the *dilapidated* state of his ship of poetry. The only other metaphors for producing poetry are those of seed springing up (*LPM* vi 1 *Kvæða sprettur kornið smátt*) and of a door turning on its hinges (*LPM* viii 6 *hurðin máls á hjörum snýst*). He is also folksy in using proverbs and, once, a Wellerism (*KR* xi 7), something his audience is likely to have recognised with pleasure. Once (*KR* x 79) he pays homage to tradition by turning a concluding stanza into a firework of rhymes, with every stressed syllable providing a rhyme. This is the sort of device Sigurður is quite fond of (*Þhr* iv 51, vi 84, vii 70).

Sigurður Breiðfjörð lived in an age when disciples of the Enlightenment such as Magnús Stephensen had already criticised *rímur*, and an edict against sagas and *rímur* had been issued as early as 1746. These may be the *nýju lög* he refers to in *Þhr* iv 5, although it cannot have been half as effective as Jónas Hallgrímsson's denunciation of the genre (and Sigurður's *Rímur af Tístran og Indönu* in particular) seventeen years later, in *Fjölnir*. He says he would not have taken to *rímur*



if he had remembered that before. But that is probably a tongue-in-cheek remark, for he is very playful in his *mansöngvar*: playful concerning tradition, playful with his audience. A short conspectus of the contents of the *mansöngvar* in *Phr* may illustrate this.

In i he takes the metaphor 'mead of poetry' literally. Óðinn puts a little keg of it on the table, but the poet prefers the merchants' *brennivín*, and a gulp of that inspires him right away so he forswears Óðinn. In ii he recounts how he pretended to be not very interested when the girl asked him to compose a *ríma*-cycle, while in reality he went crazy with happiness. Now he hopes to join the line of poets, even though only as the lowest limb of the tail. In iii he makes fun of the show of modesty *rímur*-poets are fond of, e.g. by claiming that theirs is not the mead of poetry regurgitated (from the mouth) by Óðinn in eagle shape but ejected at the other end (e.g. *KR* x 4 *dvel eg því við arnar stél*). Sigurður claims that his girl would reject such birdshit; and he invokes Bacchus to help him produce something better. In iv, Óðinn (*monsieur ásgramur*) has no mead left, and even if he had, it would be no better than the horrible mixture the poet is served in real life; he finally invokes mighty Minerva. In v he takes up the cliché of the unhappy poet, feeling as if excluded when in love, with everybody putting obstacles in his way—and women's love being as flighty as aurora borealis. But then he suddenly stops in mid-track. Is he, who is so fond of women, going to criticise them? He hastens to apologise to the girl the *ríma* is written for. In this *mansöngur* he also addresses Ormur, a character not yet introduced in the story but one who meets an unhappy end. In vi the conceit of the dwarves' ship is taken up. Should he take Þórður (the story's protagonist) on board? There are so many other farmers wanting a ride (cf. the saga: *Nú verður at nefna fleiri menn til sögunnar*, *ÍF* XIV 190); he will take them on for the time being and throw them out when the time comes. Up with the sail, Austri! I am taking the helm. The traditional motif in vii is the poet's adversities: not enough time and quiet to write, personal misfortunes. In Sigurður's case, it is the imminent separation from his lady that threatens to depress him; but creating joy and entertainment in times of worry is better than riches (something of a cliché in *mansöngur* comments). In viii he again blends the performance scene with the scene of fiction. What woman will Þórður be able to enjoy on earth? (At that point of the story, he is living in the household of an unworthy older husband of a young wife.) The poet would have been assured of a happy married life for Þórður in heaven, but now a clergyman has claimed that there

will be no such thing. The poet refuses to spy and speculate on intimate details (motif love/women's favour). In ix occurs what must be the shortest *mansöngur* in *rímur*-history, a paltry three stanzas with the barest information about that *ríma*'s properties, as if to prove that against all precedent, you *can* come to the point of the story right away. The *mansöngur* of the last *ríma*, x, is a variation on the 'I compose poetry' theme, namely a review of his *rímur*-production up to that point, 116 *rímur* in 20 cycles, with titles given; he also vows *not* to write any more. At the conclusion of his work he asks the audience to leave quickly because he still has to talk to his girl. He then asks her, Guðrún, for a kiss for his trouble but stops himself because people might be listening.

This bare enumeration can only convey Sigurður's play with the *rímur*-conventions, not that with his audience. The conclusion is one example of the latter: his pretending that the listeners have left when in reality they are all still sitting there. By inner monologues and sudden outbreaks he makes them accomplices of a created private persona; he anticipates interjections, asks the men to be quiet but then remembers he is not singing for them but for one particular woman. His playful mixing of fictional stage and performance stage, once even in the narrative, has been shown to be an almost constant feature. It is romantic irony in a place where and at a time when Romanticism cannot have made an impact yet. The whole performance amounts to a puckish game with the audience by an author who could take neither literary conventions nor himself (in the poet's role) quite seriously.

Lars Lönnroth was right in speaking of 'den dubbla scenen', for oral performance is not a contrast of a fictional world with the 'reality' of the performing situation but an artist acting on two stages, as a creator of a fictional world and a performer taking on a variety of roles: in the *mansöngur* as announcer, demonstrator, dazzler, interlocutor, moralist. He was heir to two traditions: skaldic poetry with its stereotyped contents and its emphasis on style and form, an oral tradition with a performer and a live audience; and the saga tradition, largely free in style and form and with its emphasis on the content. The saga tradition, too, was an oral form once, but the very act of fixing it in writing must have 'depersonalised' it as far as authorial presence was concerned. In skaldic poetry the authorial presence could not disappear because it was preserved by formal constraints; when oral prose stories came to be written down, nothing prevented the 'ephemeral' features of performance from vanishing. It still happens today. A speaker at a confer-

ence may do a certain amount of improvisation geared to the occasion, to the audience, to what has happened at the conference before his talk. But even if he writes down these performance-oriented features in his typescript, they are unlikely to appear in the volume of published papers. The saga narrator must have referred to his audience, to the place, to topical events in a performance situation, just as certain forms of theatre do; these references must have disappeared as soon as the saga was written down. In skaldic poetry and in *rímur* they could not be improvised, or only by the exceptional virtuoso; rather, the network of performer/audience relations was written into the text and preserved, as occasional references in *lausavísur* in the sagas must have been, by its strict form, whether occurring in the *mansöngur* or the narrative. It is true that at times *rímur* were copied in manuscript without the *mansöngvar*; but such omission is unlikely to have happened in performance, where a warm-up period and a bridge between reality and fiction were needed—a bridge, however, which also set an Ormur, a Hallgrímur or a Sigurður in his role as poet and performer firmly apart from the Ormur, Hallgrímur or Sigurður of normal daily intercourse.

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## ÐÓRR'S RIVER CROSSING

BY LOTTE MOTZ

ÐÓRR'S visit to Geirroðr, a fierce and dangerous giant, in his mountain fastness, is well remembered in Germanic texts. It was commemorated by the tenth-century poet Eilífr Goðrúnarson in his *Þórdrápa* (*Skj B I* 139–44) and recounted by Snorri in his *Edda* (*Skáldskaparmál* ch. 18). A version of the adventure appears in Saxo's *History of the Danes* (Book VIII; 1979, 262–66); here the hero Thorkil goes to meet the giant Geruth. Another variant is found in the heroic saga *Þorsteins þáttur bæjarmagns* (chs 5–10). A fragmentary poem by Vetrliði refers to Þórr's killing of Gjálp, the giant's daughter, and two other poems, the *Húsdrápa* of Úlfr Uggason and an anonymous stanza, tell of Þórr's crossing of a river encountered in his journey (all three are cited by Snorri, *Skáldskaparmál* chs 4 and 18).

Three great dangers are met and overcome by the god in this particular adventure: the traversing of a swollen waterway, the hostile attacks of the giant's daughters and the contest with the giant. All versions note the raging waters and the meeting with Geirroðr; Saxo, Snorri, Eilífr and Vetrliði note Þórr's confrontation with female members of the giant's race. Only Snorri combines this meeting with the passage through the waves.

The river is named Vimur by Úlfr Uggason and Snorri, and Hemra in the heroic saga; here it is of such murderous cold that it destroys any part of the body which it touches. With Saxo it lies in the distant region of Permland. The river is not named in Eilífr's poem where its fury is most vividly described. Snorri's treatise transmits the striking image of a giantess who straddles the riverbed, standing on cliffs and swelling the water with her urine. The god counteracts the danger by casting a stone at the source of the deadly flow.

It is clear that the river crossing is as essential to the story as the meeting with the giant. Some recent studies have examined the significance of the passage through the water and the nature of the stream itself. Vilhelm Kiil (1956) assumes that the river runs with the menstrual blood of a giantess. This interpretation has been accepted by Margaret Clunies Ross (1981, 377–88). To her the river is filled with the menstrual flow of Mother Earth, Jǫrð, who is Þórr's mother in

North Germanic myth. His escape from the aggressive liquid thus would celebrate a young man's liberation from maternal bondage and his entrance into the world of adult men. His later defeat of a male giant would symbolise the overcoming of his father.

It is the purpose of the first part of this paper to examine these novel and stimulating claims concerning the meeting of the river and the god.

#### I. THE WATERS OF THE RIVER

Kiil bases his conclusion on kennings in the poem *Þórsdrápa* and supports his view by reference to the urinating giantess of Snorri's text. He proposes the following readings (1956, 104–29):

Strophe 4a: *fljóða frumseyris dreyra* 'the first-destroying blood of women' (*kvinnars fyrste-spilles blod* = menstruation) = the river (*frum* 'first'; \**seyra* 'to destroy, cause to waste away'; *dreyri* 'blood'; *fljóð* 'woman').

Strophe 5a: *vegþverrir fetrunar* 'the diminisher of the path of the footstep-stream (i. e. the stream between the feet)' = Þórr (*þverra* 'to diminish'; *fet* 'footstep'; *run* 'small stream'; *vegr* 'way').

Strophe 5a: *af hagli Nönnu hjalts* 'from the hail of the woman's sword-pommel (vulva)' = menstrual flow (*hjalt* 'boss at the end of a sword, hilt, guard'; *hagl* 'hail').

Strophe 7b: *Mörnar snæriblóð* 'the whirling blood-stream of Mörn' = the river.

Strophe 8a: *Fríðar sverðrunnit fen* 'the fen (flow) running from the sword of Fríðr (vulva)' = the river (*sverð* 'sword'; *fen* 'swamp'; *renna* 'to run').

Strophe 9b: *æðdu stáli stríðan/straum hrekk-Mímis ekkjur* 'the widows of mischief-Mímir (giantesses) made the fierce stream furious with their steel weapon (vulva)' (*æða* 'to madden'; *stál* 'steel weapon'; *stríðr* 'strong, severe'; *straumr* 'stream, current').

Kiil's interpretation rests heavily on Snorri's anecdote which he uses to support his views. In Snorri's Edda the deadly flow issues indeed from a woman's private parts. This episode, however, is not presented in the skaldic poem. The existence of the image is not confirmed by any reference in folktales, literature or speech. The text of the poem can be, and has been, understood in other ways.<sup>1</sup> If one sets aside the interpretations implied by Snorri's tale other metaphors are equally valid and sometimes more convincing. The translation of the kenning in 4a twists grammatical rules; it actually means 'the blood of the first destroyer of women'. Kiil's kennings and *heiti* for 'vulva' are *Nönnu hjalt* 'sword knob of Nanna', *Fríðar sverð* 'the sword of Fríðr', *stál* 'the steel weapon'; a sword knob, a sword, a steel weapon cannot be related to the visual image of the female genitals which are usually symbolised

by the triangle of pubic hair or the cleft between the labia.<sup>2</sup> The sword, in particular, generally symbolises the male organ.

It is true that 'blood' (*dreyri*, *blóð*) occurs twice as a metaphor for 'water'. The equation of blood with liquids of many kinds is normal in skaldic poetry. Meissner (1921, 204–05) lists the following, among others, used in referring to 'blood': sea, lake, flood, fjord, wave, surf, river, waterfall, fountain, dew, rain, tears, sweat. A body of water may, conversely, be defined through 'blood' as in *sals dreyri* (*Skj B I 104,36,4*) = 'the blood of the earth' = 'brook'. None of these kennings contains a reference to the monthly course of women.

It is also true that the turbulence of the river is attributed to the action of troll-women (the 'widows of hrekk-Mímir', st. 9). Let us now consider what means the creatures employ to achieve their undertaking:

Strophe 5a: *hlaupáar af hagli oltnar* 'rushing rivers rolling (whipped) with hail' (*velta* 'to roll').

Strophe 5b: *þjóðáar fnæstu eitri* 'the mighty waters spewed poison (i. e. ice?)'.

Strophe 6b: *hreggi hoggvin* 'battered by storm'.

Strophe 8a: the water is *sverðrunnit* 'flowing with the biting fierceness of swords'.

Strophe 8b: the stream is *hretviðri blásin* 'lashed by tempest'.

None of the images evokes or describes the monthly flow, for they describe and evoke the fierceness of northern weather. Giantesses, moreover, no matter how grotesquely drawn, are never, to my knowledge, seen in relation to their bodily needs and functions. They are, on the other hand, closely linked with the frost and ice of the northern landscape, as dwellers in such places as Hálogaland, Greenland or the Polar Bay (Motz 1987, n. 18). Some giantesses' names have a meaning 'snow' (*Drífa*, *Fönn*, *Mjöll*; see Motz 1981). The giantess *Gói* represents a winter month; the troll-woman *Þorgerðr Hølgabrúðr* sends a hailstorm to defeat an enemy (*Jómsvíkingadrápa*, *Skj B II 7,32*). A numbing chill may come upon a hero before his meeting with a giantess (as in *Illuga saga Gríðarfóstra* ch. 3; see Motz 1987, 472, n. 74). If giantesses caused the fury of the icy river they did so through their powers over wind and weather. It is even possible to understand the combination 'widows of hrekk-Mímir' as a metaphor for 'storms' (though misunderstood by Snorri; *hrekk* might be a variant of *hregg*, 'storm'). In the same way the wind is described as 'son of Fornjótr' (*Skáldskaparmál* ch. 27). Since Snorri's image of *Gjálp* is nowhere present in *Þórsdrápa*, Kiil's arguments do not convince.

Margaret Clunies Ross accepts most of the readings proposed by Kiil. She adds more kennings for ‘vulva’ to the list: *Fedju steði* (st. 6b) ‘the anvil of Fedja (a river)’, because it is against this base that the gods press their staves; she accepts an emendation of (*fríðar*) *sverðrunnit fen* (st. 8a) ‘sword-running flow’ to *Fríðar svarðrunnit fen* ‘the flow from the grassy patch (pubic hair, vulva) of the giantess’ (1981, 375). She finds the fact that the river is ‘thick with dangerous rocks’ an indication of its threatening female power, for in skaldic kennings stones are sometimes described as ‘the bones of the earth’. She sees further support for her claim in images of Norse myth in which rivers are replete with knives and stones, and in the figure of the goddess Rán who catches sailors in her net (1981, 376).

While it is true that streams and oceans present many dangers to a population of fishermen and sailors and that this danger was visualised in poetic imagery, we cannot therefore conclude that this danger had arisen in the functions of the female body and that the river Vimur was running with the menstrual blood of a giantess.<sup>3</sup> Clunies Ross bases her interpretation, furthermore, on the assumption of an ‘early Scandinavian thought-pattern’; in this pattern the waters of the world were seen as female features of the landscape and were described in terms of female effluvia (1981, 373). Let us now consider this assumption.

### *The Waters of Eddic Mythology*

Water, as well as frost and ice, is indeed endowed with creative force in Eddic myth. This creative force is not allied with women.

The pre-cosmic void contained the waters of Hvergelmir from which rivers fell into the gaping space (*Gylfaginning* ch. 4), and these hardened into solid ice. The ice melted through contact with sparks of fire, and the first living being, the giant Ymir, came into existence (*Vafþrúðnismál* st. 31). He, in turn, brought forth through his *sveiti* ‘perspiration’ the first man and woman. Later he was killed and from his blood ran the ocean and the rivers of the earth. The gods caused the blood of his wounds to flow as a ring around their world to separate it from the dwellings of the giants (*Gylfaginning* ch. 8; *Vafþrúðnismál* st. 21; *Grímnismál* st. 40). This ring of water is exceedingly difficult to cross. A male creature thus came forth as the first form of biological life and in him originated other species.

The cosmic waters belong, on the whole, with male rather than with female beings. The rivers of the world are said to issue from the horns of a stag which is stationed on Óðinn’s hall (*Grímnismál* st. 26,

*Gylfaginning* ch. 39). Snorri gives the names of twenty-five and the Eddic poem names thirty-seven of these streams. The cosmic ash is also linked with sacred waters: Mímir's well, replete with the liquid of wisdom, and Urðr's well, its contents sprinkled on the leaves of the hallowed ash and falling as dew into the valleys (*Gylfaginning* chs 15–16, *Völuspá* st. 19, 28). Dew drips also from the jaws of the horse of night, Hrímfaxi (*Gylfaginning* ch. 10, *Vafþrúðnismál* st. 14). In this list of cosmic waters only Urðr's well is guarded by women.

The waves of the sea are indeed imagined as female creatures since they are the daughters of a goddess and the giant of the sea (*Skáldskaparmál* chs 25, 33, 61). The waves, however, are not presented in anthropomorphic shape and were certainly not symbolised through female biological functions. Three instances (Rán, Urðr, the waves of the sea) out of many cannot substantiate the claim that the waters of the land were 'described . . . in terms of human female effluvia' (Clunies Ross 1981, 373).

### *Folktales of the Giants*

The giants are singled out in this discussion because it is to them, more than to other spirits of folklore, that the origin of the landscape is ascribed. I have not come across a single tale in which a lake, a river or a brook is created by a giantess.

Male giants, on the other hand, sometimes cause the existence of a waterway, a pond or a stream. A giant of Slesvig thus dug a hole and this later filled with water (Broderius 1932, 16). In Halland, Sweden, a giant cut into the earth to form a drainage canal; it became a river (Broderius 1932, 16). A spring or pond originates at times in a giant's blood. It is told near Magdeburg that a giant took to leaping across the village for his amusement. He stubbed his toe against the spire of the church and his blood formed a small pool; it is now named Hünenblut (Grimm 1891, I, no. 326). The Tyrolean giant Thyrsis was killed by Haimon, his enemy. The blood of the slain creature became the Thyrsenbach (Broderius 1932, 35). Thus it is male and not female blood which is the origin of features of the landscape.<sup>4</sup>

### *Skaldic Poetry*

It is not possible to treat this category exhaustively and only some characteristic instances are cited.

In kennings the ocean may be referred to as 'Ymir's blood', *Ymis blóð* (*Skj* B I 135,2,2), 'Rán's home', *Ránheimr* (*Skj* B I 482,16,4), or



'surrounder of the earth', *jarðar umgerðir*, *grundar garðr* (*Skj* B II 215,16,1; B I 207,3,5-6).

The waves are known as 'Ægir's daughters' (*Skáldskaparmál* ch. 25). A river may be named 'blood of the earth', *sals dreyri* (*Skj* B I 104,36,4), *vengis dreyri* (*Skj* B I 268,3,1- 3), *jarðar dreyri* (*Skj* B II 379,28,6); or 'sweat of the earth', *foldar sveiti* (*Skj* B II 227,3,4). A river may also be the 'ocean of the mountains', *hallands marr* (*Þórsdrápa* st. 7a); the river Vimur in *Þórsdrápa* is described as 'the blood-stream of Mǫrn (a giantess)' (st. 7b, according to Kiil) or 'the blood of Gangr (a giant)', *Gangs dreyri* (st. 4a, according to Finnur Jónsson).

We note again that the 'blood' which fills a river is not necessarily the blood of a female creature. The metaphors in which a river is the 'blood of the earth' do not imagine the earth as a woman of flesh and bone. The noun *jörð* 'land' is feminine, the noun *vengi* 'land' is neuter and the noun *salr* 'home, land' is masculine. We may note, furthermore, that Jörð, Þórr's mother, is never visualised in any myth.<sup>5</sup> Even if the water of a river is equated with a woman's blood, there is no reason whatsoever to assume that this blood is of a menstrual nature. Ymir's blood has certainly no menstrual aspect.

On the basis of folklore, poetry and myth we cannot ascribe cosmogonic significance to the specific effluvia of women.

## II. SNORRI'S MODEL

In the second part of this paper I attempt to trace Snorri's episode to a model, and this would have to be found outside the Germanic cultural area.

Tales which testify to the cosmogonic creativity of urine appear in the matter of France and Ireland, both rooted in Celtic tradition.

### *The French Heritage*

The sailors of the Bay of Saint-Brieuc relate that the sun, a giant, descended to earth; there he emitted such an intensity of heat that people perished. The saints came down from paradise and begged him to return to heaven, but he would not listen to their pleas. Then they relieved themselves of urine, unceasingly, for eight days. In this way the salty ocean was created, and the sun went back to his former dwelling (Sébillot 1905, 7).

A woman of Touraine was hospitable to a saint and was granted the reward that whatever task she undertook in the morning would continue by itself throughout the day. The woman eagerly prepared her

linen, but she crouched down before she worked. The flow did not cease all day and formed the river passing the foot of the Loges in Anjou (Sébillot 1905, 327–28; the same story is also told in the Bourgogne. She is called *commère* Lasseine, and the river is the Seine). A young girl believed that she was forbidden by her confessor to relieve herself for a fortnight. In her anxiety she urinated for three hours, creating thereby a pond near the castle of Combourg (Sébillot 1905, 403; Ille-et-Vilaine, Basse Bretagne). There is a small spring in a grotto in the valley of the Autise that owes its existence to the urine of Mélusine (Sébillot 1905, 176).

Gargantua, above all, is given credit for originating waterways through the fluid of his body. In this way the rivers Arguenon and Frémur were brought forth in Haute-Bretagne and various waters of the valleys of the Dauphiné (Sébillot 1905, 328).

### *The Irish Heritage*

In Irish tradition we encounter themes and images that show great resemblance to those of Snorri's episode. In the tale of *The Second Battle of Moytura* (Stokes 1891, 85) the god Dagdae meets a woman, at the time of Samain, in the river Unius.

He beheld the woman in Unius in Corann washing (herself), with one of her two feet . . . to the south of the water, and the other . . . to the north of the water . . . The Dagdae conversed with her, and they make a union . . . The woman that is here mentioned is the Morrígan.

The Irish story thus shows the image, also present in Snorri's story, of a woman straddling a river glen and exposing her pudenda.

In the *Cattle Raid of Cuailnge* it is Queen Medb who has to relieve herself before a battle; she asks her husband Fergus to take over the defence.<sup>6</sup>

'Take over the shelter of shields . . . until I relieve myself' . . . and Medb relieved herself. It dug three great channels, each big enough to take a household.

The place is designated as Fual Medba, 'Medb's Urine'.

In a story derived from this one, *Táin Bó Flidaise* II, the queen, likewise, attended to her needs. In this case 'neither root nor underbrush . . . was left, down to the gravel of the earth.' This place also, consisting of some stones, received the name Mún Medhbhi, 'Medb's Urine'.<sup>7</sup>

The Irish texts also provide an analogue to the stone cast at the vulva. The event takes place in a tale about Cuchulainn, the great hero of the Ulster cycle. He was in grim pursuit of his enemy when this man's

foster-mother, Richis, barred the warrior's way by planting herself before him and exposing her female parts, thus paralysing the hero in his action (cited in Stefán Einarsson 1986, 145, after Thurneysen 1921, 483–84):

Richis overtook Cuchulainn *at a ford* and lifted her skirts before him. In his embarrassment Cuchulainn buried his face in the ground and could not be prevailed upon to move . . . Then Laeg threw a stone into her vulva, whereupon she fell down dead with a broken spine [*italics mine*].

The episode encapsulates a belief which had taken strong root in some areas of Celtic settlement, such as Normandy, Brittany and the British Isles, that a powerful magic issues from a woman's exposed genitals. This belief is reflected in the many figures of grotesquely shaped hags which are placed in prominent positions above a church door, the entry to a castle or a monastery, or on a belfry.<sup>8</sup> Such a figure is known as Sheela-na-gig and she always bares her sexual organs.

We now have the following parallels between Snorri's tale and the Irish narratives: the image of a woman above a river who straddles a ravine, the water of a river generated by a woman's urine and the stone sent into the vulva which destroys the woman's powers. These images and themes do not occur elsewhere in Germanic culture and we must assume that Snorri has introduced foreign matter.

### *Snorri and the Folktale*

Snorri repeatedly employed themes of folk narrative in his rendering of Germanic myth.<sup>9</sup> Many elements of Celtic provenance have been discerned in his stories, especially in the tale of Þórr's journey to Útgarda-Loki. In this journey Þórr and his companions enter the castle of a giant and engage in contests which they cannot win, for the opponents of the gods are allegorical figures. Þórr thus wrestles with an old woman; she is, in fact, the personification of old age which cannot be defeated by anyone (*Gylfaginning* chs 44–47).

Michael Chesnutt finds an analogue to Þórr's voyage in the Irish tale *The Reception of Fionn at the House of Cuanna*. In this narrative the hero meets a girl who personifies intellect, as in Snorri's account Þórr's companion meets Hugi, 'thought'. Fionn struggles with an animal that symbolises the crimes of the world, while Þórr struggles with a cat which is, in reality, the mighty Midgard snake.<sup>10</sup>

Friedrich von der Leyen sees the counterpart to Þórr's adventure in the Irish fairy-tale of Diarmuid. When the heroes of this story receive hospitality they must battle with a ram, i. e. 'the strength of the world'.

Diarmuid is entranced by the beauty of the host's young daughter, but he cannot gain her for his own. She is 'youth' which no man can hold for long.<sup>11</sup>

The story of Þórr's journey contains yet another widely-diffused theme. While staying with a farmer the god slaughters his goats to provide for the evening meal. The next day the god reawakens them to life with his sacred hammer. One of the goats is lame, however, because its thigh bone has been split. Tales of slaughtered and resurrected beasts, whose life resurges from their collected bones, are spread throughout the world.

The theme must have originated among hunting nations, for these believe that a beast's life-force resides within its bones, and these must be treated with reverence and care and must be carefully assembled.<sup>12</sup> These stories are usually set in pastoral communities. The tales occur in Alpine areas, in Switzerland, Carinthia and southern Tyrol, and also, less frequently, in such places as Brittany and Ireland. The theme has been incorporated into fairy-tales and legends throughout the world.<sup>13</sup>

Another well-known story is encountered in Snorri's book. It is widely reported in the Germanic provinces that an important structure originated in the labour of a superhuman being who was later tricked of his wages and who left the place of his defeat in anger.<sup>14</sup> The task is usually accomplished by a giant or by the devil who is his successor. In Snorri's account the story is attached to the building of Ásgarðr, the fortress of the gods. After he was cheated, the giant's skull was shattered by Þórr's hammer (*Gylfaginning* ch. 42).

Although the tales here discussed are derived from the cultural stores of various peoples they are put by Snorri into a framework of North Germanic myth, and endowed with cosmic significance. In his adventure with Útgarda-Loki Þórr creates aspects of the landscape, viz three valleys and the ebb-tide of the sea. He also struggles with the Midgard snake, the cosmic creature that dwells in the ocean.

In folktales of reawakened beasts, they are returned to life by being covered with their hide. In Snorri's version alone the miracle is worked by Þórr's hallowed hammer. The topos of the cheated mason, in turn, is placed in relation to the fortress of the gods, the defeat of a giant, Óðinn's wonderful steed, the shape-shifting of Loki and the valour of mighty Þórr. Þórr and his hammer are, in fact, brought in after the story has run its folktale course.

## III. THE GERMANIC CONTEXT

In the third section of this article I will seek to identify the underlying pattern of Germanic myth with which the tale of Gjalp has been combined.

*Þórr the Wader*

The image of the god's stride through water recurs repeatedly in the texts, and the word *vaða* 'to wade', is consistently employed to describe the activity.

He thus waded across the *Élivágar* carrying *Aurvandill* in a basket (*Skáldskaparmál* ch. 17), 'he had waded from the north over *Élivágar* and he had carried *Aurvandill* in a basket on his back' (*hann hafði vaðit norðan yfir Élivága ok hafði borit í meis á baki sér Aurvandil*). This passage parallels the story of the crossing of the river *Vimur*, where he carried *Loki* (*Snorri*) or *Þjálfi* (*Eilífr*), in that here too *Þórr* carries a smaller figure. He also contends with *Élivágar*, which separate the world of giants from the world of gods and men, just as *Vimur* separates the world of men from the fortress of the giant.

*Þórr* also wades into the middle of a stream to capture *Loki* (*Gylfaginning* ch. 50), 'and then *Þórr* wades along the middle of the stream' (*en Þórr veðr þá eptir miðri ánni*). *Þórr* waded to the shore after he defeated the *Midgard* snake (*Gylfaginning* ch. 48) 'and *Þórr* waded to the land' (*en Þórr óð til lands*). The god wades through four rivers every day to attend the assembly of the gods (*Grímnismál* st. 29):

Kornt and Qrmt and the two Kerlaugar  
through these *Þórr* must wade.

Kornt oc Qrmt oc Kerlaugar tvær  
þær scal *Þórr* vaða.

*Snorri* refers to *Þórr*'s passage through the river (*Skáldskaparmál* ch. 4), 'A river is named *Vimur*, through which *Þórr* waded when he visited the fortress of the giant *Geirroðr*' (*Á heitir Vimur, er Þórr óð þá er hann sótti til Geirroðargarða*). *Þórr* himself speaks of his 'wading' at the moment of the greatest danger (*Skáldskaparmál* ch. 18):

Do not grow now, river *Vimur*,  
since I wish to wade across you  
to the giants' dwellings.

Vaxattu nú *Vimur*  
alls mik þik vaða tíðir  
jötna garða í.

The god is called 'Víðgymnir of the wading-place of Vimur' (*Víðgymnir Vimrar vaðs*) by Úlfr Uggason (*Skáldskaparmál* ch. 4; *Skj B* I 129,6,5–6). The wading of Þórr even found pictorial expression on the Altuna Stone of Sweden (eleventh century), which shows Þórr in a boat as he fights the Midgard snake, and his foot protrudes through the bottom of the boat into the water.

### *The Giant Waders*

As wading through water forms an important part of Þórr's image in Norse myth, so wading through water belongs with the image of the giants of Germanic folklore. While a human in his voyage would have to cross a body of water by swimming or by boat, it is natural for a giant to cross it with his mighty stride. The accounts are numerous and only a few examples will be cited. In Pomerania a giant girl took her way through the water when she wished to visit Rügen (Grimm 1882–88, II 536). A giant on the isle of Rügen began construction of a dam, for he was tired of wading through the ocean when he desired to visit Pomerania (Grimm 1882–88, II 535). The giantess Hvenild of Zealand wanted to carry a piece of land to the Swedish shore; she placed it in her apron but the string broke, and the land slid into the sea. Thus the island Hven came into existence (Grimm 1882–88, II 535). And a giant of Saxony became angry when the water touched his breeches (Broderius 1932, 113).

In a literary text we encounter the giant *Vaði*, 'wader'; he had carried his son *Vølundr* on his shoulder when he strode through the Grönsund (between Falster and Møn) where it is nine yards deep. *Vaði* has indeed a relation to the sea, for he was fathered by King Vilkin on a mermaid (*Þiðriks saga* 1905–11, ch. 85). *Vaði* of *Þiðriks saga* has a counterpart in Old High German *Wato*, Old English *Wada*. *Wato* (*Wate*) is remembered as a physician in the Old High German *Gudrunslied*, who learned his craft from a wood-wife. *Wada*, later *Wade*, is remembered through place-names in the English countryside. *Wada*–*Wato* surely was a figure of importance in the mythology of West Germanic peoples (Grimm 1882–88, I 376–77; III 1148).<sup>15</sup>

### *Þórr and the Giants*

Þórr the wader has a counterpart in the wading giants of Germanic folklore, myth and literature. The relentless killer of giants and troll-women is himself drawn in the likeness of a giant. He is named 'Víðgymnir of the wading place of Vimur' by Úlfr Uggason, and this

kenning is explained by Snorri as ‘the giant of the wading-place of Vimur’ (*Skáldskaparmál* ch. 4). The presumably related name Gymir is, in fact, another name for Ægir, the giant of the sea. It also occurs in Snorri’s lists among the names for the ocean. Gymir thus would be the Lord of the Ocean as well as its embodiment. (The murmur of the sea is referred to as *Gymis ljóð* ‘Gymir’s song’ in *Ynglingatal*, *Skj B I 11,25,11.*) Named Víðgymnir by Úlfr, and striding through the waters, Þórr has the aspect of a giant of the water who may also be the element itself.

This consideration throws new light on the words addressed to the river by the god in the lines of the anonymous poet quoted by Snorri in *Skáldskaparmál* ch. 18:

Do you know, if you grow,  
that then will grow my godlike strength  
as high up as the sky?  
  
Veiztu, ef þú vex,  
at þá vex mér ásmegin  
jafnhátt upp sem himinn?

Surely the lines indicate an affinity between the might of the god and the mighty waters. A similar thought is voiced in Eilífr’s *Þórsdrápa* (st. 7b). Here it is stated that Þórr will allow his strength to rise to heaven unless the blood of Mjörn (the river) diminishes (cited after Kiil 1956, 119):

And the diminisher of giants’ offspring said his godlike strength would rise to heaven, unless the blood-stream of the giantess diminished.

Þverrir lét, nema þyrrí,  
þorsbarna, sér, Mjornar  
snæriblóð, til svíra  
salþaks megin vaxa.

The same idea, stated positively, might be rendered ‘as long as the blood of Mjörn rolls on’.

That the god has an affinity with giants is also indicated by a formula (surely an expression of belief) engraved on an amulet from Sigtuna dating from AD 1073 which calls Þórr ‘Lord of Giants’ (*þur vígi þik þorsa trutin*; see Ljungberg 1947, 121).

### *The Monster-Killer and the Monster*

To solve the puzzle why Þórr, the giant-killer, shares aspects with his enemy, let us turn to a context in which we meet a number of monster-slaying divinities, well defined in images and texts. The god who, like

Þórr, defeats the monster with his thunder-weapon and thereby establishes cosmic order is a leading divinity in various cultures of the ancient Middle East, for instance Canaanite Baal or Teschup of the Hittites.<sup>16</sup> As the champion of human values he is always in human form, and in subduing the uncouth forces of the non-human environment he symbolises in his triumph man's triumphant stand against chaos.

In earlier, less anthropocentric religions, however, the non-human forces, the ocean, mountains and beasts, had themselves been adored as divinities. Some of these developed into godheads that were shaped like men. And when a god fights and defeats a monster he might battle against his own earlier epiphany.<sup>17</sup>

The process of transformation and blending is illustrated by the example of the Mesopotamian Lord of Storms, Ningirsu-Ninurta, who slays the thunderbird, a lion-headed eagle. Some seals (of the second Dynasty) draw a bird which possesses in his lower portion the body of a human. The god is glimpsed in a dream as 'winged and ending in a flood'. A temple relief shows him as a man with bird-like wings growing from his shoulders throwing darts at a winged bird-lion. A hymn addresses Ningirsu as 'dragon with the front paws of a lion and the hind paws of an eagle'. The god is also drawn in fully human shape, and he vanquishes the thunderbird.<sup>18</sup>

In archaic Ugaritic myth the storms and winds were created by a bull. When he was replaced, eventually, by the human god of weather, Baal, the latter remained strongly linked with bulls, and is shown on images as standing on a bull, leading a bull by a nose-ring or riding in a bull-drawn carriage (as sign of his superiority); he also carried a bull's horns on his helmet.<sup>19</sup>

### *Þórr and the Monster of the Sea*

The monster-slayer Þórr defeats the creatures of the mountains and the sea. He engages in fierce encounter with the Midgard snake, the monster of the water which also personifies the ring-shaped sea. In resembling a giant of the ocean, Þórr shows, like Ningirsu, aspects of the force which he defeats.

I suggest that the tale of Þórr's river crossing contains a vestigial version of the god's struggle with the Midgard snake, the uncouth power of the sea. When the god's *ásmegin* rises in proportion to the rising waves his action parallels the action of the enemy. Ultimately the god is stronger because, like other monster slayers, he employs an implement: the staff Gríðarvölr, given by a giantess.



A tool is nearly always mentioned in connection with a god's triumph over chaos, e. g. Baal's cudgels, Ninurta's mace, Marduk's net. Roberta Frank (1986, 95–98) has pointed to the prominence accorded to Þórr's 'tool' in Eilífr's poem, where it is visualised in varying images (a rod, a metal file, a staff) as he crosses the river.

The language of combat is employed in some strophes describing the crossing. In st. 5a the verb *vinna* 'fight, conquer' is used for Þórr's stride through the waves. In st. 10a the combination *Glamma stöðvar stríðkviðjandi* 'the strong enemy (fighter) of the water' appears for the god and his companion (according to Reichardt's reading (1948, 360); he bases his interpretation on the fact that Glammi is the name of a sea-king in the name-lists; *Glamma stöð* would then be a kenning for 'water').

Wolfgang Mohr (1940, 225–26) believes that two accounts are embedded in Snorri's narrative: one popular and humorous (the urinating Gjálp), the other serious and heroic (Þórr's power rising against the power of nature). I too believe in two sources for the narrative, ascribing them, however, to foreign and to Germanic tradition respectively. I do not wish to deny the complexity and subtlety of allusion which the passage has acquired in the works of the medieval authors. These have been successfully explored by, for instance, Roberta Frank (1986) and Edith Marold (1990). I merely wish to point to the archaic frame.

#### IV. SUMMARY

In the first section of this article I contested the assumptions that the waters of Vimur represent a particularly female fluid and that a male–female confrontation lies embedded in the tale. I showed that water holds no strong association with femininity in Germanic folklore, literature and myth. The kennings of *Þórsdrápa* can be interpreted in various ways; their interpretation does not have to be based on the episode of the urinating giantess which is found only in Snorri's prose version.

In the second portion of the study I pointed to analogues to the tale of the urinating giantess. I found these in Celtic tradition in which urine has a cosmogonic function. The imagery of Irish tales, especially, contains parallels to the action and station of the woman in the Icelandic story.

In the third section I placed the crossing of the river in the context of Germanic myth. I interpret it as a version of Þórr's struggle with a water-monster, the representative of chaos, thus as a parallel to Þórr's encounter with the Midgard snake. Like monster-slayers of various cultures the god exhibits aspects of his adversary.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Finnur Jónsson (*Skj B I* 140) reads *frumseyrir fríðrar himintöngu vargs fljóða* 'the destroyer of giantesses (Þórr)' *kom til Gangs dreyra* 'came to the blood of the giant, i. e. river'.

In st. 5a Reichardt (1948, 348) suggests: *varra hjalt* = 'sword-knob of the sea, i. e. cliff'; *varra hjalts Nonnu vegþverrir* 'diminisher of the honour of the Lady of the cliff (giantess), i. e. Þórr'.

In st. 7b Finnur Jónsson suggests for *þverrir Mornar barna* 'the killer of Morn's children, i. e. Þórr'.

In st. 8a Finnur Jónsson emends the MS reading *sverðrunnar* to *svarðrunnit* which is glossed in LP as 'running over grass, of a stream'; Reichardt translates *sverðrunnit fen* 'water fierce as knives'; *Völuspá* st. 36 has water running over (or with) 'swords and knives'.

In st. 9b Reichardt (1948, 359) interprets *stál* as 'the walking stick of the god, which ends in an iron point'.

<sup>2</sup> A statuette of a naked woman was excavated on the Faroes; it is dated to the end of the Bronze Age. Apparently a goddess, she wears a necklace and exposes a marked vulvar cleft (see the illustration in Brøndsted 1938–40, II 225).

<sup>3</sup> Ursula Dronke (1989, 104) considers the possibility of a 'topographic joke' in which the urine of giantesses runs as rivers to the sea. Turville-Petre (1964, 79) accepts the possibility of menstrual blood.

<sup>4</sup> In Germanic folklore lakes, rivers and fountains originate in various ways: through a lightning-stroke from heaven, as punishment for sin (by drowning a community), through the rod of a hero or a saint. I did find one instance of a body of water originating in the urine of the devil's grandmother (Bächtold-Stäubli 1938–41, under *Fluss*, 9).

<sup>5</sup> In kennings *Jörð* is usually referred to in terms of her relationship to another being, e. g. *móðir Þórs*, *Skáldskaparmál* ch. 24. In most skaldic references *Jörð* means 'land', e. g. *brúðr Báleygs* 'Óðinn's wife', i. e. the land of Norway, *Skj B I* 148,6,1–2. She extends 'all the way eastwards to the dwellings of the men of Agðir' (*alt austr / til Egða býs*), *Háleygjatal* 15, *Skj B I* 62,15,1–2.

<sup>6</sup> Cited in Bowen 1975, 32; the translator (Kinsella 1970, 250) speaks, in fact, of Medb's 'gush of blood'. Bowen contests this translation, pointing out that the exact meaning is 'urine of blood'; also that the place is named afterwards 'Medb's Urine', and three times in the text afterwards the verb 'to pass urine' is employed. I would add that one does not 'relieve' oneself of menstrual blood, for this is beyond conscious control. The sexual significance of urine in Irish tradition is revealed in a tale, a fragment of the Ulster cycle, entitled *The Death of Derbforgaill*. In this tale women raise a pillar of snow and hold a contest. She whose urine will penetrate most deeply into the snow is shown to be the best at making love. When Derbforgaill wins she is beaten to death, out of jealousy, by the other women (see Bowen 1975, 26).

<sup>7</sup> Cited in Bowen 1975, 33 from his own translation of *Táin Bó Flidaise II* (from Royal Irish Academy MS B IV 1, fol. 147 (144)). The parallel between

Snorri's Gjalp and the figures of the Irish tales has also been noted by Hilda Ellis Davidson 1991, 172.

<sup>8</sup> Andersen (1977) has listed a large number of these figures from many areas of the world.

<sup>9</sup> It is, of course, possible that the folklore themes were already present in Snorri's sources. More folklore patterns occur, however, in Snorri's treatise than in skaldic or Eddic poetry.

<sup>10</sup> Chesnutt 1989a, 47–50; the story belongs to the Ossian cycle and appears in the *Feis tìghe Chonáin, The Feast at the House of Conán*.

<sup>11</sup> von der Leyen 1908, 382–84, who believes the Germanic tale to be primary; but von Sydow 1910, 173–75, points to several Celtic tales in which heroes set out on a journey and receive hospitality in an enchanted place where trickery is practised on them; this is told of Diarmuid, Conan, Goll and Oskar, of Finn and his three companions, and of Finn, Coailte and Oisín. In two of these the men meet allegorical figures.

<sup>12</sup> Schmidt 1952, 512–25. For the ritual treatment of bones among certain nations see Meuli 1975, 958–64; the Eskimos of Cumberland return the bones of seals to the water so that they may rise again. The Lamuts of Central Asia place bones in their proper order on a platform fastened to a forest tree.

<sup>13</sup> von Sydow 1910, 81–99, points to tales of slaughtered, eaten and revived creatures in such widely separated places as India and Madagascar. The classical topos is the tale of Pelops, son of Tantalus, who was slaughtered and set as a meal before the gods.

Chesnutt (1989b) traces Snorri's story to saints' legends like that of St Martin or St Germain, and he classifies it with other tales of the three wishes. In these stories hospitality is given to a superhuman being; three wishes are granted to the human and are squandered through foolishness. This classification may be contested on the ground that there is no hospitality (Þórr provides his own meal) and therefore no reward in the form of wishes. The tale might more easily be classed with those in which a taboo has been violated.

<sup>14</sup> A number of collections of these tales have been published, e. g. Boberg 1955, Wünsche 1905, Höttges 1937. Joseph Harris (1976, 101) believes that Snorri's narrative derived from a local legend, from *Völuspá* and from *Trójumanna saga*. It may be worth noting that, just as the giant of the Edda built the fortress of the gods, so, frequently, the builder of the folktales erects a House of God. The Cathedral of Lund was built for St Lawrence by the giant Finn (in other stories the saint is St Olaf and the giant's name can be 'Wind and Weather'; Grimm 1882–88, II 548).

<sup>15</sup> Chaucer mentions 'Wade's boat'; a group of stones in Yorkshire are designated as 'Wade's Grave'; the road from Dunsley to York is named 'Wade's Causey (causeway)' because he had built it for his wife; a place near the Roman wall bears the name 'Wade's Gap'. We note that he is linked with the form and function that are usually attributed to giants. He still has some relation to the sea (Davidson 1958, 150–51).

<sup>16</sup> The figure of the monster-slayer is extensively discussed by Fontenrose (1959). Of the nine criteria which, according to him, define the figure, all but one are clearly applicable to Þórr.

<sup>17</sup> This is seen in another example of Mesopotamian tradition, as indicated by Thorkild Jacobsen (1976, 128–29): ‘the human form of the god of the fresh waters, Enki/Ea, captured his own nonhuman form, Apsu, the fresh waters underground’.

<sup>18</sup> The examples and their interpretations are given in Jacobsen 1975, 128–29. An Akkadian myth recounts Ningirsu's victory over the thunderbird Zu who had stolen the tablets of destiny (Pritchard 1955, 111–12). The hymn is recorded by Falkenstein and Soden 1953, 60.

<sup>19</sup> Helck 1971, 170, fig. 174, representing a relief from Ugarit. Bronze figures from Ras Shamra and other parts of Syria also show this type.

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## ARNOLD RODGERS TAYLOR

Arnold Taylor died on Sunday 30th May 1993 at the age of 80. For all those who knew him, who knew how much pain he had suffered over the years and how desolated he had been since the death in 1990 of his deeply loved wife Sigríður (Sigga), the feeling must have been gratitude that he was at last released from so much physical and emotional distress. But his friends and colleagues are the poorer.

Arnold was born in 1913 in Norton-on-Tees, County Durham, and after achieving well at school, notably in languages, went on to read English at the University of Manchester. It was here he came under one of the most formative influences on his life, his teacher Professor E. V. Gordon. Under Professor Gordon's inspiration he read Old and Middle English, Old Icelandic and Gothic, and during his second year went to the University of Iceland, Reykjavík, where he developed his love for the country and its people in addition to his already established addiction to the early language and literature. After achieving his degree he went on to specialise in Old Icelandic at postgraduate level, writing his thesis on *Droplaugarsona saga*, and working on it mostly in Iceland. His experiences of both Iceland and Icelandic were to take a practical turn during the war years. First he learned that there was a need for German speakers in the army and volunteered, but Icelandic speakers were even more difficult to come by and in 1940 he was posted to Iceland.

Arnold had met and lost sight of Sigga when previously in Iceland. In 1941 he met her again and they were engaged. A year later, in March 1942, they were married in Reykjavík.

Arnold's first appointments in England were in school-teaching, but in 1946 he was interviewed for a post in the English Department at the University of Leeds. Apparently believing that another candidate had already been appointed he tried to leave, but was forestalled by the Registrar who offered him an appointment to a second vacancy. The two appointees, W. A. G. Doyle-Davidson (DD) and Arnold Taylor became life-long friends as well as colleagues, and all those who subsequently came to know the medievalists in the English Department at the University of Leeds, colleagues and students alike, were to benefit enormously from the scholarship, wisdom and kindness of both.

For most of us in the academic world the memories of Arnold are the memories of the teacher at Leeds University. Students remember him for his eyebrows ('enormous bushy orange eyebrows, of the kind found



only in golden eagles and goshawks' (Helen Maclean)), and it is undoubtedly these that led to his pseudo-Icelandic nickname of Arnold the Red. But they also remember him for his academic integrity and his gentleness and his 'huge kindness' (Calum Campbell).

Colleagues remember those aspects of his personality too, but perhaps even more they remember the courteous incisiveness with which he could cut through academic debate or more precisely waffle, inserting 'measured and convincing comment which could swing the whole meeting to a decision' (Stanley Ellis). Another colleague, Elizabeth Williams, referred to the same quality as 'cutting through the rhetorical fog of even the most acrimonious meetings with his own dry brand of incisive pedantry'.

Arnold spent much of his life in pain, and though he meticulously carried out his duties as teacher within the University his scholarship was a victim of his health. His fine re-editing of Gordon's *An Introduction to Old Norse* is his major work, though he also produced excellent articles in *Saga-Book*. The one in Volume XIII:2 (1947–48), 78–96, on 'Auðunn and the Bear' is a splendid example of the crispness and elegance with which he wrote and translated. His services to Iceland and to Icelandic literature and language were recognised in 1963 when he became a Knight of the Icelandic Order of the Falcon, and again in 1978 when he became a Knight Commander of that same order.

His knowledge was always at the disposal of students and colleagues. I particularly remember when I was translating *Egils saga* the care with which he read through my translation and the many improvements both factual and stylistic for which he was responsible.

There can be no one who knew Arnold Taylor who does not remember him with deep affection and deep respect. We have watched his courage in the face of constant suffering, and seen how little that suffering affected his care for others, for friends and colleagues and students. We are grateful for his life and believe that we are the better for having known him.

C. E. F.

## NOTES

### UP THE CREEK WITHOUT A PADDLE: A RESPONSE TO LOTTE MOTZ'S 'ÞÓRR'S RIVER CROSSING'

BY MARGARET CLUNIES ROSS

In this response to Lotte Motz's article (*Saga-Book* XXIII:6, 1993, 469–87) I would like to stress the importance of using an appropriate methodology in the study of Old Norse myth. Like Edmund Leach (1982), in his stinging introductory critique to Steblin-Kamenskij's study entitled *Myth*, I endorse a holistic approach with the following characteristics:

1. As I stated at the beginning of my own (1981) interpretation of the Þórr–Geirrðr myth, one cannot explicate the structure and meaning of a myth in a particular culture without examining all available representations of it. One must try to understand how each relates to the other, given what we know about the literary or iconographical context in which the various versions are to be found.

2. It is then important to see how the myth in question relates to the larger mythic world-view of the culture concerned. In the present instance, how does the myth of Þórr, Geirrðr and his daughters relate to other Þórr myths, both structurally and conceptually, and what are they 'about'? What do the various component elements of the mythic world mean? When myths talk of various kinds of supernatural beings, of various places in which they live, of various attributes they possess, what do all these things mean for the culture concerned, in this case that of medieval Iceland? How do they relate to what we know of the social and cultural values and organisation of the human world that created the myths?

3. In order to answer the last question under point 2 with respect to the myth under consideration here, it is necessary to set the groups of myths in which the god Þórr travels to the land of giants and engages in agonistic episodes with them in the context of the semantic values generally attributed to gods and giants, and specifically to Þórr and his various opponents, in Old Norse myth. There is, as Lindow (1988) has reminded us, a specific sub-set of such myths in which Þórr engages with giantesses and kills them, and there is extant skaldic and eddic verse which shows that his encounter with Gjálp and Greip belongs to this group. (This evidence is not adduced by Motz.) We should be

asking what it means for Þórr to encounter such females, whether separately or in combination with a male adversary, in this case Geirröðr.

4. One should adopt a rigorous procedure when resorting to comparative material from other cultures to explain the meaning of a recalcitrant myth or myth-element. My own view is that unless there is good evidence for the presence of a such an element or way of thinking in the culture under consideration, with supporting evidence to show that the element means much the same to the culture under examination as to the culture of supposed derivation, one should refrain from suggesting direct foreign models for things one finds difficult to explain. It is particularly important to be able to show that the motifs or myth-elements function similarly in the receiving culture as in the culture of derivation, otherwise the comparative exercise is of dubious value even if one accepts that a borrowing has taken place.

Too many studies of Old Norse myth, including the present example, fail to satisfy these four primary criteria, a point I examine in more detail in the first chapter of my forthcoming book *Prolonged echoes. Old Norse myths in medieval Icelandic society* (Odense, 1993).

Let me now examine Lotte Motz's article 'Þórr's river crossing' in the light of these criteria. First, however, I shall summarise her argument and those she opposes. She begins by questioning Vilhelm Kiil's (1952) and my own (1981) interpretations of that section of *Þórsdrápa* which represents Þórr's crossing of a swollen river on his way to the abode of the giant Geirröðr. Kiil argued that a number of the kennings for the river involve a combination of words for 'blood' and elements that refer to female sexual organs and inferred that Eilífr Goðrúnarson wanted his audience to understand that the river was swollen with the menstrual blood of a giantess. He drew support in this interpretation from Snorri Sturluson's version of the myth in *Skáldskaparmál*, in which the river torrents are caused by Geirröðr's daughter Gjálp straddling the stream to urinate higher up the mountain slope. In my 1981 article, I was critical of some of Kiil's interpretations, though I accepted his general position. I suggested that we have to try and understand why the river-crossing is represented as so dangerous to Þórr in all the Norse versions of this myth, even though Snorri's is the only one that associates the swollen river directly with the bodily effluvia of a giantess. I also tried to explore the meaning of the connection between the river-crossing (whether fully identified with the actions of a giantess or operating at the level of symbolic equation) and Þórr's subsequent encounter with Geirröðr. There is also the question of how the various

versions of the myth show him armed, a matter taken up most explicitly by Roberta Frank (1986). In 1981 I suggested that the danger of the river, and the fact that it appears to be associated with female bodily fluids, whether urine or menstrual blood, could be understood if we connected it with the dangers that giantesses represent for the god Þórr, that deity who characteristically risks his life by venturing into giant territory. My interpretation then was that the river (named Vimur in some texts) was imbued with the qualities associated with giant, female chthonic beings, and specifically with the Earth, who happens to be represented in Norse myth as Þórr's mother. Thus I concluded that the myth of the river crossing signalled the dangers of incestuous attachment to the females of his own family group to Þórr and that the reason why this myth was coupled with that of his visit to Geirrðör was that this giant was, at least on one level, a father-figure, who had to be subdued and his phallic weapon seized before the young god could establish his own dominance within the Norse mythological world.

I am not so keen in 1993 to endorse the Oedipal interpretation I accorded in 1981 to Þórr's dealings with Geirrðör, nor would I necessarily place as much weight on the dangers represented by the giantesses as incestuous, though I do think that there is something in the notion that Þórr needs to repudiate his own matrikin with unusual fervour. What I still stand by, however, are the general symbolic values I attributed to the protagonists and the circumstances of the myth. I still believe that the river-crossing, insofar as it is associated directly or indirectly with giantesses, 'is centrally concerned with the ordering of chaos of a particular kind, unbridled female sexuality'. In my forthcoming book I have examined the semiotics of Old Norse myth as a whole, drawing also on the work of such others as Hastrup (1985), Lindow (1988) and Schjødt (1990), and have come to the conclusion that the gods are imbued with qualities of order, creativity, intelligence and cunning, which are generally seen as male attributes, while the giants are associated with disorder, natural resources (including those of sexuality, fertility and mortality), and passivity. These qualities are closely associated with female powers, to such an extent that, although there are of course males within the giant world, their whole sphere of operation is closely allied with qualities regarded as female. Thus relationships between male gods and giantesses are particularly intense and ambivalent, resulting either in sexual liaison (as often with Óðinn) or in physical destruction (as often with Þórr).

Lotte Motz will have none of the views expressed by Kiil or me. She denies first of all the significance of base-words for blood in river-kennings, pointing out (correctly) that blood-words can be used in skaldic poetry for liquids of various kinds. The reason why one might wish to accord them special significance in *Þórsdrápa*, however, is that they seem to occur in conjunction with words or phrases that refer to female beings and to those female beings' sexual organs. Motz argues against this in several cases on various grounds (including that of the inappropriateness of Kiil's *Fríðar sverð*, str. 8a, as a vulva-kenning), but she does not manage to remove all the evidence, I think. It is hard to discount a kenning such as *Mǫrnar snæribloð* (7b), for example, though I would agree with her that it is not necessary to construe it as referring to menstrual blood. Without doubt, however, it feminises the raging river.<sup>1</sup>

Having cleaned up *Þórsdrápa* to her satisfaction, Motz then proceeds to discount Snorri's narrative of the urinating Gjálp as un-Norse and attempts 'to trace Snorri's episode to a model, and this would have to be found outside the Germanic cultural area' (p. 474). This procedure violates all four principles of interpretation I recommended at the beginning of this note. For reasons she does not explain, Motz searches the folklore of Europe, irrespective of chronology, for 'tales which testify to the cosmogonic creativity of urine' (p. 474). Of course she finds some—they occur all over the world, and I know some from Aboriginal Australia—but why are they relevant to the Gjálp story? Is her pissing cosmogonic? It does not create the river, only causes it to swell. The Old Irish material Motz adduces is indeed interesting but I think more careful consideration needs to be given to the significance of a woman's exposing of her genitals or urinating in full view of a man in both these instances and in the case of Snorri's *Edda*. And even if one sees some similarity between the Irish and Norse material, it is surely unnecessary to jump to the conclusion that 'Snorri has introduced foreign matter' (p. 476). It is really not true that 'these images and themes do not occur elsewhere in Germanic culture' (p. 476). I gave at least one example in my 1981 article (p. 378) from *Lokasenna* 34, where the Vanir god Njörðr is said to have been humiliated during the period of his captivity as a hostage to the Æsir by the daughters of the giant Hymir who urinated into his mouth.

Lotte Motz is certainly right to draw our attention to those aspects of Þórr's behaviour that associate him with the giants who are his maternal kin. The fact that he must often wade through the element of water

suggests to me, not that he ‘has the aspect of a giant of the water who may also be the element itself’ (Motz, p. 480), but that he especially among the gods must expose himself (and, as their protector, divine society also) to the dangers of a situation between his own world and that of the giants. Rivers, oceans and other watery elements are liminal things; they link worlds and they come from below the ground. They thus partake of the world of death, situated below ground in the Old Norse world picture, as well as the world of life. Women, like Gjálp, and monsters, like Miðgarðsormr, have their associations with disorder and with death, women because their ability to give life leads eventually to death for those they bring forth and monsters because their powers are not amenable to social control but are directed towards the destruction of divine society.

### Note

<sup>1</sup> I do not have space here to engage with the section of the article that deals with the significance of water in Norse myth, nor with the significance of Þórr wading through water, nor with Snorri and the folktale. I discuss all these issues in my forthcoming book.

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# ÓÐINN, D. A. H. EVANS AND *HEIMUR HÁVAMÁLA*

BY HERMANN PÁLSSON

Óðinn Bestluson and Bósi Brynhildarson have long been considered the outstanding womanisers of northern Europe in the old days, but as an unmitigated male chauvinist Óðinn belonged to a class of his own. In early poetry he gloated on his conquests of the fairer sex, admitting that he resorted to magic in order to achieve his ends:

Þat kann ek it sextánda,  
ef ek vil ins svinna mans  
hafa geð allt ok gaman:  
hugi ek hverfi  
hvítarmri konu  
ok sný ek hennar ǫllum sefa.

Þat kann ek it sjautjándá,  
at mik mun seint firrask  
it manunga man. (*Hávamál*, str. 161–62)

As the most indiscriminate woman-chaser of the North, Óðinn had no qualms about seducing married women, even those who were not known for their feminine charm:

Miklar manvélar  
ek hafða við myrkríður,  
þá er ek véltá þær frá verum. (*Hárbarðsljóð*, str. 20)

When Óðinn boasts:

Ek var austr  
ok við einherju dæmða'k,  
lék ek við ina línhvítu  
ok launþing háða'k  
gladda'k ina gullbjörtu,  
gamni mæri undi (*Hárbarðsljóð*, str. 30),

his son Þórr makes a simple observation with just a hint of admiration and envy: 'Góð áttu þér *mankygni* þar þá.' *Að eiga sér góð mankygni* has always been a young man's dream, although gentlemen are not supposed to boast of such things; but then, Óðinn has never been considered a true gentleman.

Until recently, there has been general agreement as to the meaning of *mankygni*. Finnur Jónsson, *Lexicon poeticum* (1931), 392, glosses the term 'bekendtskab med eller besøg hos unge kvinder'. In his *Ordbog over det gamle norske Sprog* (1883–96), II 638, Johan Fritzner

compares the term *mankynni* to *ástkynni* (*Atlamál*, str. 14) and defines it thus: ‘Besøg hos Kvinde . . . , hvorunder man nyder godt af hendes Kjærlighed.’ Cleasby and Vigfússon, *An Icelandic–English Dictionary* (1874), 409, render the phrase *góð mankynni* as ‘luck in love affairs’.

Various translators of *Hárbarðsljóð* leave the reader in no doubt as to the sense of Þórr’s memorable statement. Paul B. Taylor and W. H. Auden, *The Elder Edda. A selection translated from the Icelandic* (1969), 129:

‘You had luck in your choice of a lovely maid.’

Lee M. Hollander, *The Poetic Edda* (1962), 31:

‘Good was then the wench to thee!’

Felix Genzmer, *Edda. Zweiter Band: Götterdichtung und Spruchdichtung* (1922), 68:

‘Gute Weiberbekanntschaften hattest du damals dort.’

Ludvig Holm-Olsen, *Edda-dikt* (1975), 100:

‘Det var gode kvinnfolk dere kom til da!’

Régis Boyer and Éveline Lot-Falck, *Les religions de l’Europe du Nord* (1974), 409:

‘Alors tu avais là bonne sorte de femme.’

All these eminent scholars rightly assume that *mankynni* is a compound of the nouns *man* (n.) ‘a girl, maid, mistress’ and *kynni* (n.) ‘acquaintance, intercourse, friendly relations, etc.’ But recently in *Saga-Book XXIII:5* (1992), 414, D. A. H. Evans (hereafter abbreviated DAHE) rejects the time-honoured way of interpreting *mankynni*; according to him the term has nothing to do with *woman* but everything with *man*. In his hostile and ill-informed review of my *Heimur Hávamála* (1990), DAHE translates *mankynni* as ‘mankind’. In this context, the English gloss *mankind* can hardly mean ‘the human race’; rather, it appears to be the opposite of *womankind* and to denote ‘the men of the human race’. One wonders how DAHE would render the rest of the sentence in *Hárbarðsljóð* (str. 31).

Considering the fact that in my book *mankynni* serves as a label for that section of *Hávamál* which deals with Óðinn’s preoccupation with women and love, the reasons for DAHE’s revolutionary approach to the meaning of *mankynni* are somewhat puzzling, to say the least. Are we to assume that he is trying to suggest new ideas about Óðinn’s sexual proclivities? Was DAHE thinking of Snorri’s statement in



*Ynglinga saga* regarding the *ergi* of those males, including Óðinn, who practised *seiðr*? Or, perhaps, of Loki's defamatory remark in *Lokasenna* (str. 24)? While Óðinn may have been a sexual pervert as long as he was actively involved in the *seiðr* type of witchcraft, the evidence of *Hávamál* and *Hárbarðsljóð* shows beyond a shadow of doubt that the traditional way of looking at his *mankynni* is fully justified. And since my *Heimur Hávamála* deals with a poem in which Óðinn himself alludes to his intimate knowledge of women, it seems a bit queer to associate him as a lover with persons of his own gender.

## REVIEWS

KVINNOR OCH FAMILJ I DET FORN- OCH MEDELTIDA SKANDINAVIEN. By BIRGIT SAWYER. *Occasional papers on medieval topics*, 6. Viktoria Bokförlag. Skara, 1992. iv + 112 pp.

Birgit Sawyer makes a bold attempt to present to a general reader some of the discussion topics on medieval women's history which have been aired in Scandinavian scholarship recently. Her short book is wide in scope, covering women and their families, women and the law, women under paganism and Christianity, women of different social classes, and women in fact and fiction. Rather than dealing with the subject chronologically and region by region, she chooses a broadly thematic approach. After an introduction to the source materials, there are two main chapters which are intended to be read separately. The first, on women and inheritance, explores the complexities of the overlapping systems of inheritance within Scandinavia; and the second, on the reality behind women in fiction, re-examines the myth of the strong independent female. The early medieval period is treated in more detail than the later, Christian, centuries, where there is certainly no lack of source materials; much space is given to runic inscriptions as social monuments, and other underlying themes are the effects of the growth in royal power and the decline in women's status after the conversion to Christianity. The bibliography is full in its references to recent work in the field of women's studies in Scandinavia, but not as comprehensive as might be hoped for in a book which skims the surface of so many issues. For example, while acknowledging that the word *Edda* is open to wide interpretation, Sawyer opts for the meaning 'great-grandmother' (p. 73), but without supplying a bibliographical reference for her reader to follow up other possible interpretations. This is a useful survey of the current state of research, and it will certainly stimulate further discussion. An English version of the book would be welcome, for Scandinavia has undoubtedly much comparative material to offer to the discipline of medieval women's history.

BRIDGET MORRIS

CORPUS OF ANGLO-SAXON STONE SCULPTURE. III. YORK AND EASTERN YORKSHIRE. By JAMES LANG, with contributions by JOHN HIGGITT, RAYMOND I. PAGE and JOHN R. SENIOR. *Oxford University Press for The British Academy*. Oxford, 1991. xiv + 439 pp.

The British Academy's *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture* continues to make a stately progress into print, and with the appearance of the third volume it makes a particularly substantial and appreciable contribution to the resources available for the study of Scandinavian-settled England in and immediately after the Viking Period. This book provides a comprehensive survey of the sculpture of a distinct geographical zone in eastern Yorkshire south of the

North Yorkshire Moors, and thereby sets a number of long-familiar 'star pieces', such as certain carvings from Middleton and other sites in or very near Ryedale, in a regional context in a highly informative way. Particularly to be welcomed in this volume is the full, illustrated catalogue of relatively recent finds from York—mostly from excavations on the Minster site—which again are all the more revealing when presented in the wider regional context. James Lang's text in his introductory chapters and the catalogue provides a good deal of praiseworthy analysis and interpretation of all this material. Most of this has, admittedly, been published before in Lang's many articles and papers, but it is nothing but a boon now to have a critical summary and restatement of this work by its author.

Lang's study places a strong emphasis on the distinctly Anglo-Scandinavian character of the Viking-Period sculpture in question, most of which is to be dated to the tenth century, some, probably, to the late ninth, and a little, perhaps, to the eleventh century (setting aside a fascinating group of sundials, on which more later). But although it is possible to trace some important details reflecting continuity within the area from eighth- and earlier ninth-century sculpture into the period of Scandinavian settlement, the sense of strictly local continuity the study gives is not overwhelming, and the importance of influence from neighbouring parts of England, particularly the west and south-west, in providing the repertoire of the Anglo-Scandinavian sculpture is clearly revealed. The study leaves one in no doubt as to the strength of the case for the primacy of York in composing and disseminating this repertoire, but, curiously, the known Anglian-Period sculpture of York is rather undistinguished. Most of it is funerary in function, and much of this is very plain in style, though even this contributes distinctive elements to the range of Viking-Period sculpture in the city. From the Minster site, for instance, have come a considerable number of Viking-Period grave-covers, including one (Minster 42) which seems to show a Viking-Period adoption of a memorial formula, + ORATE PRO ANIMA, also recorded in the earlier, Anglian Period. The most distinctive Christian sculpture of eastern Yorkshire in the pre-Viking Period has clear monastic connections, at (or around) the monasteries/cells of Lastingham and Hackness. Detailed sculptural links between Hackness and Whitby (its parent house) and even Monkwearmouth are brought out in this study.

It is particularly satisfying to see the certainty with which Lang argues the existence and the pervasiveness of a pattern of hybridisation of originally distinctively English and Scandinavian elements to form a material embodiment of a new Anglo-Scandinavian culture in England. This union of cultures is most clearly reflected in the art-styles appearing on the sculpture, but, importantly, Lang brings out in his discussion some much deeper, structural aspects of the culture. Within this he emphasises, properly, the apparently easy and unchallenged prevalence of Christianity in the area, certainly from the late ninth century onwards, revealing too a thoroughly sensible perception of and attitude towards the Norse legendary and pre-Christian elements that are (relatively infrequently) adopted by the developing sculptural tradition. An important social contrast

between the Anglian and Viking Periods that may be detectable is noted in the shift from monastic concentrations of sculpture to more widely-dispersed funerary memorials at the rural precursors of parish churches. This has fairly plain implications for the possible mapping of the distribution of patronage, landholding and social power in this historical phase. To this extent, Lang ploughs a furrow closely parallel to that of Peter Sawyer in his controversial *The Age of the Vikings*. Lang is not, however, tempted to try to answer the 'How many children had Lady Macbeth?' question of the density of Scandinavian settlement on this basis.

There would appear to be scope for some very informative further work on the social relationship between the urban centre of York and its immediate hinterland in the Viking Period, starting from, or certainly making a great deal of use of, the work and material contained in this book. The case for the general supremacy of York over the countryside to the north and east is clearly presented and well illustrated here. Analyses of the stones used for the sculptures prove to be especially illuminating in the study of local patterns of supply and influence. Stone suitable for sculpture was not available in the vicinity of every site at which sculpture is found, and amongst other lines of supply it is clear that Roman-Period ashlar from York were widely used for Viking-Period sculpture. Such stones re-exported from York have been found over the whole range of the Yorkshire Wolds, where there is no suitable local material. Plausible cases of finished sculptures being exported from York are, however, very few. A spectacular but quite exceptional example appears to be a grave-cover that was sent as far away as Gainford, on the Tees in County Durham. Perhaps the most significant monument in the whole corpus included in this book is the Nunburnholme cross-shaft, worked on by at least three hands and, stylistically at least, bridging the transition from the Anglian to the Viking Period. This too was probably carved on a re-used Roman ashlar from York, but it appears, from Lang's silence on the question, not possible (or desirable) to speculate on how much of the monument was carved in York. It would have been desirable, however, for that much at least to be declared. Part of the importance of the Nunburnholme shaft is its seminal place in the emergence of the relatively prolific 'York Metropolitan School' of sculpture. Lang presents a well-argued case for the 'Ryedale School' in turn to have been substantially influenced by the York Metropolitan School. Against this general pattern of central dominance and influence, the rare postulated example of 'a provincial carver working for once in the city' (St Mary Bishophill Junior 3) stands out.

This book offers a clear and effective summary of the characteristics and relationships of the Anglo-Scandinavian art-style appearing on these stones. In common with the motif-stock of Anglian-Period sculpture, complex patterns of linear interlace are retained. The plant scroll survives too, albeit in a considerably less vigorous state. The great innovations of Anglo-Scandinavian sculptural decoration are the introduction—to a dominant level—of zoomorphic elements, and various developments in human portraiture. It would be, and has proved, all too easy to connect the prevalence of zoomorphic ornament with the classic

animal-styles of Viking art—in particular the Jellinge Style—but Lang argues firmly that such conclusions are superficial, and that immediate Insular sources underlie the form, the disposition, and many of the details of the beasts to be found on the Anglo-Scandinavian sculpture. The most substantial channel of derivation is one traced back through the York Metropolitan School to the area west of York, to Wharfedale; some details are traced back further afield, to ninth-century Mercia. Elements of truly Scandinavian character, such as Jellinge-style features on some beasts, are regarded by Lang overwhelmingly as ‘embellishments’. As is the case in Cumbria, intimations of the Mammen Style are quite ephemeral, and there is no suggestion of anything later in character. The naturalistic elements and human portraiture in the repertoire of this Anglo-Scandinavian art are of particular interest. Lang identifies a late-Anglian (mid-ninth-century) precursor to the portraits that become such a distinctive feature of the local Viking-Period tradition in two naturalistic human figures on a fragment of a cross-shaft from York, St Mary Bishophill Junior I. The most conspicuous, and most frequently (and wildly) discussed, development of this portraiture is that of the Ryedale School, including, for instance, the ‘warriors’ on a number of crosses from Middleton. By reference to a fragment of a late ninth- or early tenth-century shaft at Old Malton, Lang importantly supports the argument that these warriors are represented as enthroned on some seat, which, more regrettably, he refers to by the now established shorthand term, the Old English poetic compound *gifstol*. The naturalistic animal depictions, we are told, usually appear in narrative scenes. Amongst these are scenes from Norse myth and legend. In this region we have one, somewhat tentative, identification of a scene from Ragnarøk, and two rather more readily recognisable portrayals of the hero Sigurðr (in his role as *Fáfnisbani*). The latter is interpreted in terms of typological Christian iconography where it occurs on the Nunburnholme shaft. The introduction of material from these tales into Christian carving is, of course, paralleled elsewhere in northern England, the Isle of Man, and indeed in Scandinavia. Rather more local to Yorkshire is a group of carvings which are convincingly identified as representing Weland (*Vølundr*) the smith. Although in one case the identification of a simple winged ‘human’ figure as Weland rather than an angel looks to be a thoroughly indeterminable matter, the presence of scenes from the Weland legend on Christian sculpture continues to challenge interpretation. Why, on the other hand, Lang should describe the iconography of familiar hunting scenes such as the ‘hart and hound’ vignette, the polysemous but congruent meanings of which have been thoroughly explored, most recently by Richard Bailey, as ‘puzzling’ (Stonegrave 7) is equally mysterious.

There are a number of details of the discussion and/or presentation of material within this book that bear highlighting for comparison with either or both of the two previous volumes in the series. In contrast with Richard Bailey, Lang is happy to talk categorically of Irish influence on the Viking-Period sculpture of Yorkshire, and the range of the details he cites, for instance of cross-head forms and crucifixions, lends considerable credence to his view.

One may still demur, however, at the privileged position given to the date of *circa* 920, extorted from slender historical sources, as a *terminus post quem* for such influence. It is also good to see the question of the evidence and date for the demise of the strong Viking-Period Anglo-Scandinavian sculptural tradition in the area being explicitly addressed, even if briefly. In discussing the previous volume in this series (in *Saga-Book* XXII:7 (1989), 444–56), I criticised the exclusive reliance on photographic illustration of the carvings. Although the same policy has been kept for this volume—and no doubt will be for future volumes—it gives relatively little cause for complaint on this occasion. It would still, nevertheless, have been good to have had a better idea of what the stag on Kirkdale 4 is supposed to look like, and Lang himself published a very much clearer photograph of Ellerburn 5 in an article in the *Yorkshire archaeological journal* 53 (1981), 22, fig. 4, than has made it into the *Corpus*.

From the viewpoint of Norse studies, it is also appropriate to comment on the discussion of the tenth- and eleventh-century inscriptions that appear within this volume. Since there are no runic inscriptions in this group, responsibility for presenting all of these falls to John Higgitt. His studies show a marked bias in favour of the details of Anglo-Saxon paleography, with a consequent tendency to undervalue the points of interest in the later inscriptions. In particular, one can point to a lack of appreciation of the positive interpretation that can be made of the bilingual (or multilingual?) character of several of these texts. In respect of the dedication stone of St Mary Castlegate in York, for instance, the text of which moves from English to Latin and then, apparently, back to a vernacular for the now irredeemably damaged final lines, he talks of a ‘lapse into Latin, perhaps influenced by an official ecclesiastical record of the dedication’. But taking the Latinisation of vernacular names and, arguably, words on contemporary York coins into account, we can see that linguistic mixing of this kind is not necessarily random or irregular. A very similar pattern is to be found in the York Minster 42 grave-cover—already noted above—of which Higgitt notes an ‘informality and lack of professionalism’; in fact this is an inscribed Roman sepulchral stone that was re-inscribed, apparently in the tenth or eleventh century, with a Latin formula for which Anglian-Period exemplars were available close at hand. The other set of noteworthy inscriptions are those on the reasonably well-known set of church sundials in this region of about the mid-eleventh century and later. Of these, Great Edstone shows a mixture of English and Latin; the examples from Aldbrough, Kirkdale, Old Byland and possibly Sinnington are good examples of the changing English language in the area at that time. In this context, the inclusion in this book of at least an illustration of the post-Conquest Latin-inscribed sundial from Weaverthorpe would have been fully justified.

More than either of the previous volumes, Volume III of the *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture* reveals itself as a substantial piece of what will turn out to be a very impressive jigsaw indeed. One reason for this may be that a gap has been left between the area this volume covers and those covered by the previous volumes, a gap to be filled by a future volume although not, it

appears, as early as in Volume IV of the series. We already know that the north and west of Yorkshire is an area rich in sculpture, and James Lang's study in this book makes it clear how a detailed conspectus of that material is essential to set what is found in York itself and its hinterland to the east in a proper perspective. I would therefore further praise the volume under review here by recording with what interest and anticipation it leaves me looking forward to that future volume.

JOHN HINES

SNORRI STURLUSON. EDDA. HÁTTATAL. Edited by ANTHONY FAULKES. *Clarendon Press*. Oxford, 1991. xxviii + 169 pp.

*Háttatal* is preserved as the third part of *Snorra Edda* even though it was probably written earlier than *Gylfaginning* and *Skáldskaparmál*, in all likelihood as early as 1222–23 (though the exact date is uncertain). The poem (the authorship of the commentary is more questionable) is the only work (apart from some *lausavísur*) that can be unequivocally attributed to Snorri Sturluson. It deserves therefore to be an obligatory text for all students of its author. Readers focusing on the technical complexity of *Háttatal* have nevertheless neglected the literary qualities of the poem. It is customary to see *Háttatal* only in the context of prosody and the study of skaldic metres, rather than to regard it as one of Snorri's most important works. In the 102 stanzas of *Háttatal* he sets out to exemplify all metres available to a thirteenth-century poet, starting hierarchically rather than chronologically with *dróttkvætt*, and concluding with the simpler forms of eddic poetry. It seems that metrical showmanship inspired Snorri—he even praises himself for his virtuosity in the last stanzas of the poem—rather than its subject matter. Admittedly, at first glance Snorri neither displays startling originality in the use of kennings nor does he offer much experimentation in poetic diction, yet a close reading of the verses enables a more subtle assessment of his verbal art and ingenuity. Snorri's choice of subject matter, that of a praise poem for King Hákon Hákonarson of Norway and Earl Skúli Bárðarson (a shared poem for the two most powerful men in Norway), cannot have been an arbitrary one. Clearly the masterly display of metres in the poem was a most fitting vehicle for a praise-poem of such distinguished men. But the over-prominence Snorri gives to Skúli (dedicating two thirds of the poem to him, and only one third to Hákon) has often been 'strangely' discarded by scholars, as Anthony Faulkes notes in his excellent edition of the poem. This fact provides a fascinating insight into Snorri's attitude to the Norwegian king, and bears out Snorri's unashamed bias in Norwegian politics of the thirteenth century. This edition of *Háttatal* by Anthony Faulkes is the first to be published in English. Faulkes has, however, translated the poem in his version of the complete *Edda*, published in 1987, and reviewed in *Saga-Book* XXII:5 (1988), 290–97. That translation and this new edition

with its fine introduction and notes will deservedly bring the poem to a wider public.

Faulkes gives in his Introduction a clear and concise account of the author Snorri Sturluson and places *Háttatal* firmly in the context of earlier sources, such as *Háttalykill* by Hallr Þórarinnsson and Earl Rognvaldr of Orkney, and Latin treatises on metre. Snorri must clearly have known *Háttalykill*, and though Faulkes does not succeed in pointing to one specific Latin source for the commentary to *Háttatal* (it shows only 'a passing familiarity with the manner of Latin textbooks'), he clearly demonstrates that it has much in common with Latin textbooks. The informative Introduction is accompanied by an Appendix in which Faulkes enumerates examples of Snorri's metres in other Old Norse verse, from both before and after Snorri. This inventory is much more than a simple list of metres, and demonstrates Faulkes's clear grasp of metrical variants. It is a most valuable contribution to the study of metres in Old Icelandic poetry, and poses many fascinating questions, e. g. whether a common metre could suggest a link between different poems. The text of *Háttatal* and the commentary are printed in a lucid and clear way and normalised to a thirteenth-century standard. Faulkes bases his edition on the Codex Regius manuscript, and has supplemented from the other three main manuscripts only when Codex Regius is either corrupt or the text 'does not give acceptable sense' (p. xxvi). This edition does not provide an exhaustive variant apparatus, so the reader must use editions of the other manuscripts to check alternative readings. I noticed only one typographical error; in stanza 13/3 *audgjafa* should read *auðgjafa*, as is corroborated by the Glossary. The Explanatory Notes to the text provide illuminating comments on particular metrical problems. The emphasis in this edition is on stylistic and metrical aspects of the poem, rather than on an analysis of kennings and the meaning of stanzas. The less experienced reader of skaldic poetry may find it difficult to translate some of the stanzas with only the help of the Glossary, as Faulkes does not follow the practice of reordering the *helmingr* syntactically in order to provide a clear sequence of meaning. The Glossary is, however, excellent in providing lucid and crisp explanations of the terms. There are (usually) cross-references between different parts of kennings which will compensate for the lack of reordering of each *helmingr*.

This edition of *Háttatal* can only be praised. It has taken an extraordinarily long time to make the poem accessible to English-speaking students of Snorri Sturluson and to those interested in skaldic poetry. It is important to emphasise that this edition will not only benefit English-speaking readers, but that it is essential reading for all those studying *Háttatal*. Anthony Faulkes has in this meticulous and erudite presentation of the text successfully brought the poem to the centre stage of Old Icelandic literature where it undoubtedly belongs.



VIKING POEMS ON WAR AND PEACE. A STUDY IN SKALDIC NARRATIVE. By R. G. POOLE. *Toronto medieval texts and translations*, 8. University of Toronto Press, 1991. xvi + 217 pp.

The apparent canonicity of the skaldic corpus as presented in the four stout volumes of Finnur Jónsson's *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning* (1912–15) is, as is only too well known, partly illusory—the inevitable result of the pragmatic necessity of producing a readable edition, arranged in chronological order, in which individual verses are assigned to named poets (or to 'anon.')

and to particular poems in a particular order. It is not only that the authenticity of *lausavísur* attributed in sagas to speakers such as the three-year-old Egill, the ghost of Óláfr helgi, the partially decapitated Jökull Bárðarson, and assorted berserks and troll-wives is questionable, or that Gísli and Kormákr may have had assistance from makers of saga-narratives in their versifying. With few exceptions, the classic formal panegyrics of the ninth to twelfth centuries are mainly conjectural assemblages of single strophes or part-strophes which are preserved mainly within kings' sagas and treatises on poetics and grammar written around or after 1200. There are numerous disagreements between manuscripts about the speakers of verses, and even when the poet is known there is ample room for scholarly disagreement about the reconstruction of poems, a subject which receives most expansive treatment in Bjarne Fidjestøl's *Det norrøne fyrstediktet* (1982). To illustrate, one need only compare the treatment of the verses about Magnús Ólafsson inn góði and his campaigns attributed to Þjóðólfr Arnórsson—34 strophes or part-strophes, not including one about the king's death. There is a fair consensus among scholars that 19 of these verses belong to the *Magnússflokkur*, although only one is so labelled in a medieval source. The remaining 15 are printed by Guðbrandur Vigfússon and F. York Powell in *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* II (1883), 202–04 as 'Vísor (1044–45)', and Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson in vol. III of his *Heimskringla* edition (1951, 7) is in almost total agreement with this division. Finnur Jónsson, who took the present tense as being diagnostic of *lausavísur*, tentatively adopted a middle course, printing 6 of the verses within the *Magnússflokkur* in *Skjaldedigtning* (A I 361–68, B I 332–38), while designating the remainder as *Lausavísur* 1–9 (A I 377–79, B I 347–49). Fidjestøl, following the evidence of the prose works, counts all 34 as part of the *Magnússflokkur* (1982, 133). As this example shows, a crucial part of the process of reconstructing the skaldic corpus is to establish which verses originally belonged to longer poems (i. e. were 'extracted verses' in Poole's terminology) and which were *lausavísur*, 'free-standing (improvisatory) verses' (p. 64). It is a fascinating problem, which touches on the broader questions, what kinds of long skaldic compositions there were, how many of the claimed *lausavísur* really were produced in the situations described in the sagas, how many minor, non-professional skalds there were, and in what form skaldic verses were handed down the generations; and it is one of the central preoccupations of Russell Poole's challenging and enjoyable book.

The ‘*lausavísa*’ question is addressed most directly in the two introductory chapters, which seek to demonstrate how the recognition of verses belonging to complete poems has been hindered by two factors: (i) the tendency of prose writers to treat extracted verses as *lausavísur* (and of modern scholars to believe them); and (ii) the internal features of the verses, especially the use of the historic present tense. Medieval and modern misunderstanding of (ii), Poole argues, has often led to (i). In the first chapter, ‘*Lausavísur* and other verses’, Poole, with rich exemplification from a wide range of sagas, confronts some of the problems of distinguishing *lausavísur* from extracted verses. He examines the possibility that sets of verses united by style and subject-matter might have been fragmented by prose writers who took their emotional intensity as a sign of on-the-spot improvisation and assumed their fictive speakers, where present, to be their actual poets. They then, in effect, turned them into *lausavísur* by inferring, and elaborating on, a dramatic context for the verse utterance from hints within the verse. *Ágrip*’s treatment of *Bersöglisvísur* 12 (discussed on pp. 8–10) is an early example of this practice, which, as Poole observes, became progressively more developed among saga-writers (including Snorri Sturluson) through time. The question how far back in the pre-history of the existing saga-narratives this process might have begun, is scarcely addressed, nor is it clear to what extent saga-authors were or were not conscious of what they were doing. Poole on p. 23 speaks of their literal-mindedness, but also of their ‘creative powers’. If a fairly conscious activity, it would be paralleled by the treatment of eddic poems in *Snorra Edda*, where Snorri quite knowingly extracts, for example, a verse from *Skírnismál* and places it in the mouth of Freyr with the words, *þá kvað hann þetta*.

The second major chapter, ‘Excursus: the present historic tense in poetry’ draws on *rímur*, fourteenth-century religious skaldic poems, eddic poems, *Háttatal*, *Merlínússpá* and then earlier skaldic poems in order to dispute Axel Åkerblom’s thesis that the historic present was practically non-existent in skaldic verse before 1100 (‘Bruket av historiskt presens i den tidigare isländska skaldediktningen’, *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 33 (1917), 293–314). There is rather more detail in this section than necessary, as the author concedes by heading it ‘Excursus’ and considerably suggesting that non-initiates might postpone reading it (p. xi); yet it is closely bound into the argument of the book, since it is the presence, but comparative rarity, of the historic present that Poole sees as one of the reasons that verses from long poems are misinterpreted as *lausavísur*. Not all the material here is equally convincing. The main drawback is that all the early skaldic works quoted belong, certainly or probably, to the ‘picture-describing’ genre—Bragi’s *Ragnarsdrápa*, Þjóðólfr’s *Haustlög*, Kormákr’s *Sigurðardrápa* and Ulfr Uggason’s *Húsdrápa*—and even in these, the present tense is extremely rare. Although Poole is right that Åkerblom’s interpretation of the tenses does not work in detail, one cannot exclude the general possibility that the present tense is not a genuine historic present but an actual present, serving as a periodic reminder that scenes are being looked at. Cumulatively, then, Poole makes a case for the present tense as a stylistic

possibility within skaldic verse—and in long compositions, not only in *lausavísur*—but the early evidence is difficult, and this is not the strongest part of his argument.

The corollary of the mis-classification of some verses as *lausavísur* is, Poole indicates, that there has been a too narrow view of what is possible within a long skaldic poem, and that a genre of poems has gone unrecognised. The remainder of the book amounts to an anthology, with expansive discussions, of seven representatives of this genre. These are quite short sets of verses that describe a battle or, more rarely, peace-making, normally within a pattern of prelude—action—aftermath. They are set either wholly in the present tense or in a blend of tenses, in which ‘the present tense of the running commentary, used alongside the preterite of the retrospective survey, takes on the feel of a present historic’ (p. 195). The poems frequently consist, in whole or part, of dramatic speech projected into the mouths of speakers other than the skald; incitements and vocatives are quite common. Four of the items are labelled ‘poems’ and three ‘reconstructed poems’. The four are *Liðsmannaflokkur*, the eddic *Darraðarljóð*, Þjóðólfr Arnórsson’s verses about the battle of the River Niz/Nissa (1062), and the *Friðgerðarflokkur* (Poole’s title), anonymous verses about the ensuing peace-negotiations between Haraldr Sigurðarson and Sveinn Úlfsson. The ‘reconstructed poems’—all almost entirely in the present tense—are ‘Torf-Einarr’s revenge’, ‘Egill’s duel with Ljótr’ and ‘Eiríkr viðsjá: a battle on the heath’. The poetry surveyed in the book thus represents the period from the early tenth century to the mid-eleventh, and, refreshingly, concentrates mainly on poems which do not fit the mould of royal panegyric. Space does not permit a detailed response to the treatment of each of these poems, but a few specific points may be made. The selection of the Nissa verses by Þjóðólfr Arnórsson as the first representative of the genre is initially disconcerting, since the reader is asked first to be persuaded that seven verses printed in *Skjaldedigtning* among Þjóðólfr’s *lausavísur* are actually part of *Sexstefja*, and then that they, together with six longer-established verses from *Sexstefja*, form a separate entity within the longer poem. The thirteen verses as printed certainly do form a satisfying unity, which is emphasised by Poole’s perceptive commentary on such features as lexical and phonological concatenation. However, how these relate to the rest of *Sexstefja* is an interesting question, and I cannot quite agree with Poole’s judgement that it is beyond the scope of the book (p. 72). His notion of (presumably) a poem within a poem is reminiscent of Fidjestøl’s suggestion that some verses with the appearance of *lausavísur* might have been loosely attached to panegyric poems, as a frame for example (1982, 84–85), both suggestions serving as a timely but uncomfortable reminder that much remains uncertain about the range of possible skaldic structures. This chapter contains substantially the same material as Poole’s ‘The cooperative principle in medieval interpretations of skaldic verse . . .’, *Journal of English and Germanic philology* 87 (1988), 159–78, not included in the Bibliography.

The chapters on *Liðsmannaflokkur* and *Darraðarljóð* are rich in historical interest. Some of the material could have been pruned somewhat, such as the

seven-page demonstration of Þorkell inn hávi's key role in Knútr's establishment of Danish rule in England in the second decade of the tenth century, pp. 100–07), fascinating though it is and fundamental for the argument that the dual focus on Knútr and Þorkell in the *Liðsmannaflokkur* does not betray its disparate origins but reflects the complex political situation of this time. On the other hand, some comment on the singular fact that this appears to be a very rare specimen of (Anglo-)Danish skaldic verse would have been welcome. The early tenth-century history surveyed in *Darraðarljóð* is similarly essential to the argument—that the poem may belong there rather than in the eleventh century as a memorial of Clontarf—but again is somewhat more detailed than strictly necessary.

In the three chapters on the 'reconstructed poems' Poole—who has been reconnecting *lausavísur* at least since 1973—shows that these have an aesthetic unity and narrative flow which were lost when the verses were separated by prose link passages; even the author of *Egils saga* proves inept in this respect (p. 181). Poole is not the first to propose the original unity of certain verses preserved as *lausavísur* (his predecessors include Klaus von See, Anne Holtmark and even Finnur Jónsson), but he makes a fuller case for it than others, and it is on the whole a strong one, for although one could envisage artistic unity in a series of *lausavísur* composed by the same skald on the same theme, one would not expect such a multiplicity of complex linkages as are described, in sometimes relentless detail, by Poole (e. g. pp. 191–94). The case of the five 'Torf-Einarr' verses is least convincing, since they are not characterised by elaborate concatenations, and their ordering is somewhat in doubt. Concerning authorship, Poole considers that the attributions to Eiríkr víðsjá may be correct, but, with others, that the Torf-Einarr and Egill verses might be the work of a now unknown poet (p. 197). His work thus confirms the direction of scholarly trends in which the heroes of the *skáldasögur* and other verse-speaking heroes have been seen as ever more literary constructs, and the evidence of prose works viewed with increasing scepticism. In the latter respect, his approach contrasts with that of Bjarne Fidjestøl, whose methodology involves trusting the evidence of prose works, albeit not uncritically (1982, 82). If right, Poole's suspicions about authorship undermine the traditional view of skaldic poetry as essentially not anonymous; and they invite us to wonder who these prodigiously talented twelfth-century makers of fake verses might have been. In theory, Poole's thesis could be taken to extremes and used to explain away almost any *lausavísa*; but in practice it is carefully argued and moderate (more moderate, I think, than in his Toronto doctoral dissertation, *Skaldic Poetry in the sagas . . .*, 1975). His position is summarised, 'When we consider the verses incorporated in prose works we should be . . . prepared to entertain the possibility that certain alleged *lausavísur* are in reality excerpts from extended poems' (p. 23).

A few general points: the book manages, on the whole, quite well without footnotes, but in some places one has to take on trust a claim that could have been documented in a note, or a translation that is not the most obvious one.

For example, it is said on p. 71 that the unusual word *furða*, used in the third verse quoted from Þjóðólfr Arnórsson together with the verb *undrask*, appears in ‘what seems to be a systematic use of a lexical set from the Christian religion’. The reference is presumably to the echo of v. 12 of Sigvatr’s *Erfidrápa Óláfs helga*, where *undr* and *furða* are used with reference to the solar eclipse which was believed to have accompanied Óláfr’s fall at Stiklarstaðir; but without this or any other information the claim of Christian associations is frustratingly cryptic. Similarly, I do not know why *svírar* is translated in the singular ‘stem’ (of a ship) on p. 59 (though Finnur Jónsson does the same in *Skjaldedigtning* B I 351). On p. 75 an absence of detail is misleading: it is noted that the title ‘Friðgerðarflokkur’ was devised in imitation of ‘Snorri’s “friðgerðarsaga”’, but without an explanatory note this could give the impression that the peace-making of Haraldr and Sveinn is so headed in *Heimskringla* manuscripts, whereas in fact it is applied to the dealings between Óláfr Haraldsson (inn helgi) and Óláfr Svíakonungr a few decades earlier. My other small complaint is that the parallel translations of the seven poems do less than full justice to the kennings, which are often treated as mere counters and rendered with bland generics such as ‘man’ or ‘warrior’, or with pronouns, whatever their individual semantics, though these are occasionally mentioned in the critical discussions. Thus *fleindoggar stafr* in v. 4 of the Ljótr sequence, literally ‘stave of shaft-dew’ i. e. ‘stave of battle’, hence ‘warrior’, is translated as ‘he’ (p. 174), which is a great loss, especially given the wittily ironic contrast between the ideal represented by the kenning—a warrior, sturdy and upright in battle—and the pathetic actuality of a berserk who pales and fails to stand firm in the fight (*stendrat fast*, the predicate to the kenning). This way of handling kennings is not unusual, but it is odd here, since the *heiti* are often given more precisely etymological renderings, as when *flæði* is translated ‘high tide’, not ‘sea’, and *dreki* ‘dragon [i. e. the longship]’ (both p. 59), and since the book contains so much fine observation of detail.

A book-length study from Russell Poole will be welcomed by those familiar with his many shorter publications on skaldic subjects or with his Toronto dissertation. The book is to a large extent based on both, but presents its case in an integrated and readable form. It is enriched by the application of certain general concepts to skaldic materials, such as narrativity and the (anti-)individualist ethos, without falling into the danger of jargon-tossing, and is sensitive to the possibility of changes of outlook between the Viking Age and the thirteenth century. Alternative interpretations are discussed throughout with discrimination, and the subtlety and wit of the skalds observed with evident enjoyment. Pleasingly produced, it is also a book which presents its ideas with vigour and clarity. Its chain of argument is, minor links excepted, strong, and it makes a substantial and stimulating contribution to contemporary skaldic studies.

YNGLINGATAL OG YNGLINGESAGA. EN STUDIE I HISTORISKE KILDER. By CLAUS KRAG. *Studia Humaniora* 2. *Rådet for humanistisk forskning, NAVF & Universitetsforlaget*. Oslo, 1991. 286 pp.

This important study of the Yngling tradition is divided into three parts. The first, containing two chapters, is devoted to the dating of *Ynglingatal*, the second comprises two chapters on the evolution of the Yngling legend in poetry, saga and genealogy, and the third, a single chapter though actually the most diverse of the five, offers 'pragmatiske konklusjoner', reviewing among other things aspects of the Yngling tradition as a historical source.

As is well known, the thirty-seven verses of *Ynglingatal* are preserved chiefly in Snorri Sturluson's *Ynglinga saga*, and are attributed there, as in *Skáldatal*, to Þjóðólfr ór Hvini, thus suggesting a date around or shortly before 900. With only a few dissenting voices, scholarly opinion has upheld this dating; but now Claus Krag, reviving old arguments and bringing new ones to bear on the problem, proposes origins in a learned milieu in twelfth-century Iceland.

It is, as Krag observes, hazardous to use metrical or stylistic criteria for dating in a medium so conservative as skaldic verse (though more discussion of these things would not have been out of place), and the kernel of his argument relates to content rather than style. There are, as Krag maintains, developing arguments brought forward by Bugge and Neckel, certain non-obvious views of the world in *Ynglingatal* which would have been impossible in the pre-conversion period. The first four royal deaths are by drowning in a mead-tub, immolation in a rock-cave, suffocation and burning, and this appears too programmatic, too close to the medieval four-element theory, which was known in Iceland from the late eleventh century, to be coincidental. The rare genealogical 'fire' kennings *sævar niðr* and *sonr Fornjóts* (vv. 4 and 29) seem to allude to a personified version of the same systematic view of the elements. Other likely cases of conceptual anachronism are invoked by Krag. He sees the often-noted fact that the earliest Yngling kings bear names elsewhere attached to Óðinn and Freyr as a late phenomenon, comparable with the euhemerisation of myth in the Prologue to *Snorra Edda*. Similarly, the demonic view of heathendom in evidence at some points in the poem seems to be a species of *interpretatio Christiana*, and the touch of erotic personification in the presentation of Hel in v. 7 would have been unlikely at a time when Hel was still taken seriously.

Arguments that *Ynglingatal* fits poorly in a late ninth-century context go hand in hand, as these examples show, with evidence that it fits well in the twelfth, and points relevant to dating inevitably spill out beyond the confines of the 'official' discussion in Part One. Among the strongest is the indisputable fact that the twelfth century is a fertile time for synoptic verse compositions on historical themes, among them *Íslendingadrápa* and *Háttalykill*, and above all *Nóregs konungatal*, which shares the *kviðuháttir* metre and many other features with *Ynglingatal*. Another poem, not, I think, mentioned by Krag, but favourable to his argument, is the twelfth-century *Óláfs drápa Tryggvasonar*, preserved

only in Bergsbók and falsely attributed there to Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld. Also telling is the point that indications of temporal remoteness (*sás löngu vas*, v. 33, and *forðum*, v. 35) when speaking of kings no more than two generations before the time of Þjóðólfr ór Hvini are much more credible in a twelfth-century poem. The reference to *fróðir menn* in v. 6 also seems suspiciously pedantic.

The less convincing points include the resemblance between v. 7 of *Ynglingatal* and v. 7 of *Glælognskviða*, by Þórarinn loftunga, hence early eleventh century. Krag thinks the *Ynglingatal* verse is later, an ironic reminiscence, but coincidence cannot be ruled out. *Beowulf*, whose set of Swedish kings, Ohtere, Eadgils and Onela matches the Óttarr, Aðils and Áli of *Ynglingatal*, has often been cited as evidence for the venerable age of the Yngling tradition. Krag, in my view, sets too much store by arguments for a possibly late dating of *Beowulf*, some of which do not stand up well to close scrutiny; but it is certainly true that the traditional dating of *Beowulf* to the earlier eighth century is not sufficiently secure to allow other arguments to be founded on it. As for the presumed poet of *Ynglingatal*, Þjóðólfr ór Hvini, Krag does not deny his existence, or his connection with the shadowy Røgnvaldr heiðumhæri who is celebrated in v. 37; indeed this untypical verse is taken by Krag as possibly the only genuinely old verse of the poem. But clearly the sparse tradition we have about Þjóðólfr can neither support nor undermine any particular dating.

Krag's hypothesis certainly deserves to be taken seriously. The approach is purposeful but not blinkered, and one warms to an argument that begins with an admission that the materials for proof may be slender, but quietly asserts that once the insecure basis of the old view is recognised the new one may be accepted as having much in its favour (p. 5). My own inclination is more towards belief than disbelief in Krag's thesis, but it will need long and close scrutiny from many angles before being accepted as the new orthodoxy.

The evolution of the Yngling legend is the subject of the second part of the book, and it is the new light shed on this that Krag himself regards as the most valuable part of his study (p. 7). The central texts for consideration are *Ynglingatal*—now a twelfth-century poem and therefore no longer the principal ancient source for all the prose texts—, the *Ynglinga saga* in Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*, *Historia Norvegiæ*, *Af Upplendingakonungum* in *Hauksbók* (which covers the latter part of the Yngling line, from Óláfr trételgja onwards), and the genealogy appended to Ari Þorgilsson's *Íslendingabók*. The material in the first four of these texts, with its shifting patterns of similarity and difference, is usefully collated, king by king, in section 3 of Chapter III, and the results tabulated on pp. 144–45. The conclusions reached are many, and they are summarised in a stemma on p. 165, but the most important among them are: (i) that there is a single Yngling tradition (although not a single, simple line of descent from one text to another); (ii) that Ari's genealogy and his lost *konunga ævi* supplied material for *Historia Norvegiæ*, for a group of intermediate texts including *Ynglingatal* and *Af Upplendingakonungum* and for *Ynglinga saga*; (iii) that the author of *Historia Norvegiæ* did not have

access to *Ynglingatal*; (iv) that *Ynglingatal* may have been composed as poetic embellishment for a saga text; (v) that *Ynglinga saga* does—as has always been assumed—depend closely on *Ynglingatal*, which Snorri took in good faith as a probably ancient poem.

From the historical point of view, the single most significant point to emerge from all of this is that the attachment of the Yngling Upplendingakonungar to Vestfold, and hence the concept of Vestfold as the ancient cradle of Norwegian unification, is not part of the earliest tradition, but evolves through time. It is absent from *Historia Norvegiæ* (and presumably from its source in Ari), but in *Af Upplendingakonungum* the kings from Hálfðan Eysteinnsson onwards also hold power in Vestfold, and the linkage is taken two generations further back, to Hálfðan hvítbeinn, in *Ynglingatal*. It is above all Snorri, in *Ynglinga saga*, who emphasises this feature, not least by portraying the Ynglingar as losing their territories in Uppland, which are then recovered by Hálfðan svartir from a base in Vestfold. Snorri thus figures more clearly than ever as a creator, not merely a recorder or adapter, of historiographical tradition.

As well as exploring the existing texts, Krag ranges into the unknown hinterland of their antecedents. He rejects the old arguments that the original *Ynglingatal* either had fuller coverage of the kings represented or stretched farther back into the mythological past. (This involves taking Snorri's remarks in the Prologues to *Heimskringla* and the *Separate saga of Óláfr helgi* somewhat loosely, p. 87.) Also rejected is the opportunistic recourse to oral tradition exemplified by Beyschlag's theory of *Begleitprosa*. Instead, Krag postulates another early written stage in the Yngling tradition: 'den opphavelige ynglingesagaen' (p. 110), which seems to be identified with Ari's lost *konunga ævi* (pp. 147 and 217). There is perhaps more confidence at some points than the scant evidence warrants, especially when Krag states, 'Hvorfor han [Ari] gjorde som han gjorde i det enkelte tilfellet, vil vi aldri kunne få vite' (p. 221); but we may never know what Ari did, let alone why he did it.

The original Yngling saga, as Krag argues in Chapter V, drew its being from raw materials akin to heroic poetry and *fornaldarsögur*. The sphere of activity of the early Ynglingar, for instance, is especially Gautland, Denmark, and southern Norway—very much *fornöld* territory; their conflicts and fates are characteristically presented as personal, in the style of the heroic age, rather than military or political; and the narratives feature women, animals, Finns, dwarves and the supernatural generally. In this connection, Krag rehearses the arguments for the very early casting of *fornaldarsaga* material in written, or at least highly developed oral, form.

The overall picture in all this is of an evolving Yngling tradition which represents a much systematised and historicised version of materials which were originally amorphous, fragmentary and essentially non-chronological, and which does not find its final political purpose of presenting Norway as the *óðal* of Haraldr hárfagri until well after his reign (an issue already addressed by Krag in an article of 1989, listed in his bibliography). That the Yngling genealogy is a post-conversion development is suggested by its likely dependence



on the Skjöldung genealogy, whose runs of fourteen generations are in turn reminiscent of Anglo-Saxon and biblical genealogies. There is transparent use of duplicated names (e. g. the two Fróðis in *Ynglingatal*) and of fictive names (e. g. Herleifus—Hunleifus—Aleifus etc. in the Skjöldung genealogy) in order to attain the required number of generations. Moreover, ‘Yngling’ appears not to be used as an ancient dynastic name in the early poetry, but only as the appellative *ynglingr* meaning ‘prince’. The evidence thus cumulatively supports Krag’s belief that the emergence of a systematic Yngling genealogy comes c.1100, supplying a male ancestry for Haraldr hárfagri just as the genealogy of the Skjöldungar supplied the female ancestry. *Ynglingatal* is then seen as depending on a pre-existing prose genealogy, just as *Nóregs konungatal* depends on the lost writings of Sæmundr Sigfússon inn fróði.

The most obvious result of Krag’s researches is that the removal of *Ynglingatal* to the twelfth century invalidates the only substantial literary source for Scandinavia’s legendary past, which has been treasured not only as a resource for the study of dynastic history but also as a repository for nuggets of information about early burial customs, sacral kingship and onomastic practices. As Krag says, doubts about the Yngling tradition, where it is scant or where it is full, must be virtually fundamental (p. 234 and cf. p. 239). In its place—meagre compensation, some might feel—we have greater insight into the historicising activities of learned Icelanders before and around 1200. Of course, few, if any, scholars have placed unquestioning faith in the details of *Ynglingatal*, but many have accepted the poem as partially, and broadly, true, at least insofar as the dominant Norwegian dynasty is named the Ynglingar and given Swedish origins. This, and the connection of the dynasty of Haraldr hárfagri with Vestfold, are among the points which historians will have to ponder at leisure in the light of Krag’s arguments. The archaeologists will have to review some of their assumptions about important sites in southern Norway. Krag rightly points out that the use of *Ynglingatal* on the one hand and sites such as the Borre mounds and the Oseberg and Gokstad ships on the other to validate interpretations of both has often been over-confident and circular, and strongly dependent on the dating of *Ynglingatal* to c.900. Meanwhile, the philologists too will have to experiment with a ‘map’ of the early Nordic literary world in which *Ynglingatal* is placed in twelfth-century Iceland instead of ninth-century Norway. The character of *Ynglingatal* itself, including its irregular strophe length and other metrical features, and its particular deployment of kennings, may be usefully reviewed, and the poem compared both with others attributed to Þjóðólfr and with others in the *kviðuhátt* metre, not least *Háleygjatal*, about which Krag glancingly intimates that probably only part of it is genuine (p. 201, n. 30). As the authority of the skaldic record as transmitted by Snorri Sturluson and others is increasingly challenged, the role of twelfth-century poets and scholars comes increasingly to the fore, and this century will doubtless be a fertile area for further research (a direction which the work of Russell Poole also suggests; see pp. 506–10 above). In particular, it will be necessary and fruitful to ask, if *Ynglingatal* is a twelfth-century poem, exactly when,

where, why, and by whom it could have been composed; and whatever theories are proposed will have to explain the fact that Snorri seems to have been taken in by this fabrication.

Throughout the book, arguments are on the whole presented lucidly, often with the help of charts and diagrams, and the writer is not afraid to reiterate points in the interest of clarity. The book is pleasant to the eye and has evidently been proof-read with care. The placing of notes and references (including the most exiguous) at the end of each chapter is a nuisance which only slightly detracts from the accessibility of the book, and the same can be said of the practice in the bibliography of obscuring the alphabetical ordering by putting forenames left of, rather than right of, surnames. Another minor grouse is that the translations of *Ynglingatal* in Chapter III give literal equivalents of kennings, but no indication of the presumed total meaning, e. g. *sævar niðr* in v. 4 rendered 'sjøens bror', where 'sjøens bror [ild]' would have been more useful. More important than any of these, as a useful bonus, is the provision of a summary, translated into English by Judith Jesch.

DIANA WHALEY

STUDIES IN RAGNARS SAGA LOÐBRÓKAR AND ITS MAJOR SCANDINAVIAN ANALOGUES. By RORY MCTURK. *Medium ævum monographs, new series XV. The Society for the Study of Mediæval Languages and Literature*. Oxford, 1991. xi + 275 pp.

This is essentially Rory McTurk's doctoral thesis of 1985. In it, he discusses aspects of the network of traditions around Ragnarr loðbrók and his wife Áslaug, as they developed between the ninth century and the nineteenth. It is divided into three chapters. The first argues that Loðbróka was originally a woman, named after a fertility goddess with whom she was associated, and that she was mother of Ívarr the boneless, Sigurðr snake-in-the-eye and three other sons (real historical figures from the 870s)—Ragnarr himself (another historical figure, a Viking dead soon after 845) only coming into the story, and being linked to the nickname *loðbrók*, later. The second attaches eighteen different versions of the Ragnarr traditions to the spine narrative of the 'international heroic biography', and shows how Ragnarr's career, and those of his sons and his wife Áslaug, fit (or do not fit) that narrative. The third discusses how the separate Ragnarr and Áslaug traditions come together in the medieval versions of the story and, in particular, in early modern Norwegian versions. In addition to these core discussions, there are innumerable spin-off arguments about different aspects of the traditions, especially in Chapters 2 and 3 (at the end of Chapter 2 there is a list of the more important ones, pp. 145–47; a similar list does not, however, conclude Chapter 3). McTurk ranges across all the Scandinavian countries, Germany, France, Britain and Ireland, and occasionally as far as Greece and India, in fine style, arguing with Jan de Vries about every detail of the Ragnarr traditions. There is no doubt that he has the material in the palm of his hand, and can manipulate all his versions with total assurance. His

complex reconstructions of their transmission and mutual influence are very effective. I doubt that his stemma on p. 241 will be superseded in more than trivial detail.

That said, however, there are problems in both form and content, which I shall take in turn. I doubt I have ever read a book whose major arguments are harder to work out. It opens in mid-air with a brief reference to a previous article by the same author, and closes in mid-air with a brief characterisation of his debt to de Vries. Arguments are based on documentation that can appear dozens of pages later, if ever. We never get any systematic account of what the widely-varying Ragnarr texts actually contain, so it is only possible to get any sense of them by following the author down every byway (of which there are hundreds) and crossing one's fingers. I am not an Old Norse specialist, and perhaps I should be, but even specialists might have liked some help through the content of Faroese and Norwegian ballads, some of them not published since the mid-nineteenth century. It seems to me to have been a strategic error to tie so much detail to the heroic-biography argument in Chapter 2; it spoils the focus of, for example, the arguments about *Krákumál* on pp. 125–36. Nor will anyone be very grateful for the absence of conclusions that characterises the entire text (what, for example, does the use of the heroic-biography template really tell us?). This book is a doctoral thesis, and as far as I can tell is almost wholly unrevised (except possibly for the perplexing decision to bring all the footnotes into the text). I regret having to give so much space to the issue of form; but it will get in the way of the usefulness of the work.

As to content, there are certainly some points where I do not entirely follow the writer, as is inevitable in a work as complex as this. I am convinced by McTurk that Loðbróka was originally a female goddess, but do not see why her 'sons' need be the physical sons of her priestess (pp. 25–26), rather than men devoted to her cult. I can see why Ívarr, Sigurðr, Ubba and Halfdan can be seen as brothers, but it seems to me too much to claim that Björn ironside was as well, just on the basis of William of Jumièges (pp. 43–45), when Björn never had any documented link to the others at all, and his 'father' Loðbrók was a well-known legendary king by the late eleventh century. I think it a pity that the writer should link the heroic biography so tightly to rather vaguely-formulated ideas about fertility rituals (e. g. pp. 35–36, 52, 95–97), and in that context I wish he had read more anthropology—one minor article by Edmund Leach is not enough. I would have liked some defence for using the Áslaug tradition to fill in the early sections of the heroic biography where the Ragnarr tradition is lacking (e. g. pp. 62–68), especially as he shows subsequently that the two traditions only joined together at all fairly late. It seems to me also that McTurk is on occasion over-literal in his interpretations of texts. One example is the physical descent of Ívarr *et al.* from Loðbróka, already mentioned; another is the contortions he goes through to explain why one of the conditions of Áslaug's appearance before Ragnarr has apparently changed from 'neither on foot nor on horseback' in the standard Aarne-Thompson tale-type to 'neither alone nor accompanied by man' (pp. 204–11), when such substitutions are

utterly normal in the folktale tradition—any teller worth his or her salt should have known both and several others. (McTurk only uses Aarne-Thompson, not Stith Thompson's own motif-index, which gives a better idea of the flexibility of tale detail.)

I must end, however, by reiterating that this book is both complex and assured. It will be the new basis for all future study of Ragnarr loðbrók. I hope indeed that the author himself will use its raw material for a definitive synthetic study, which he himself is better equipped than anyone else to carry out.

CHRIS WICKHAM

BACKGROUND TO DYLAN THOMAS AND OTHER EXPLORATIONS. By GWYN JONES. *Oxford University Press*. Oxford, 1992. x + 210 pp.

The sight of this title among the reviews of *Saga-Book* may momentarily surprise. But the Gwyn Jones who is the literary critic and explorer implied by the title is also Gwyn Jones the novelist, short story writer, reteller of folktales and legends, compiler and editor, and (more relevantly here) translator and historian and Honorary Life Member of the Viking Society, whose *Norse Atlantic saga* and *History of the Vikings* at least will be familiar to many, along with some of his saga translations. And of the twelve lectures, essays and addresses in this book, one is substantially relevant to Norse studies and two others are on entirely Norse topics.

In 'Here be dragons: a view of the nature and function of heroic poetry' (pp. 139–61), the author uses chiefly the Welsh *Gododdin* and the Poets of the Princes, but also the English *Maldon* and the Norse *Rígsþula* and *Bjarkamál*, to set forth the distinctive characteristics of the old heroic poetry narrowly considered, a loud clear voice from an age which saw war between men as the richest flower of human experience, a voice clamant, magnificent and unashamed, but today unthinkable. How unthinkable he shows us in a postscript. There are heroes enough, but we know too much, the appropriate rhetoric is out of fashion and the heroic lay with it. Witness Wilfred Owen, whose conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty won him the Military Cross, and who shared death in a classic heroic situation with a hero of the old mould (a Major J. H. Marshall, often wounded, often decorated; called by Owen in ancient fashion 'Marshall of the Ten Wounds'). But Owen with his deep thought and sensitivity was from a different mould, and in his poetry of War and the pity of War, the poetry is in the pity; meeting the new requirements of a new age, he provided a different voice for his time and ours, and one antithetical to the glory-ridden heroic celebrations of the past.

'The legendary history of Olaf Tryggvason' (pp. 162–85) was a W. P. Ker Memorial Lecture delivered in Glasgow in 1968. In its preliminaries, after a quick description of the many well-known sources, the lecture usefully brought to the awareness of a wider public the devastating examination of northern historical sources that had taken place in Scandinavia, and set the scene with

an explanation of the nature of Olaf's Norwegian kingdom in the tenth century, summed up as a personal aggrandisement of territory and wealth, limited in scope, unstable in nature and uncertain of duration, and dependent on sea-power. The main part then retells with discernment and delight the wealth of story that the medieval historians and poets have bequeathed to us, and at the same time demolishes it as history—which is sometimes literature's gain.

'The Viking world' (pp. 186–203) is of more recent vintage, having been first delivered at a conference in Maine in 1988, and appearing here in a version modified for Cambridge in 1989. It is the master's graphic short description of vikings moving and settling both East and West, with a look at causes, means and limitations. It concludes with a thumbnail appreciation of our sources of knowledge and the providers of them, and in this the assessor of documents is not short in gratitude to the archaeologist and the palaeo-scientist.

Other items in the book, though not Norse, will surely also be of interest to readers of *Saga-Book*. Only one will be mentioned here. Many medievalists are familiar with the Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones translation of the *Mabinogion* in the Everyman edition, and some may have been so fortunate as to see it in its superb original Golden Cockerel form. The making of that book is here recounted, from its modest beginning in Gwyn's attempt to redress a previous rendering, through the raising of his ambition on meeting Christopher Sandford of the Golden Cockerel Press, the move up to a joint translation with Thomas Jones, the foremost young Welsh medievalist of the day, the collaboration with Sandford and the artist Dorothea Braby, the difficulties and vicissitudes they overcame together, with the generous aid of Helping Companions, to its triumphant appearance; it is an enthralling account.

DESMOND SLAY

THE ANGLO MAN: ÞORLEIFUR REPP, PHILOLOGY AND NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITAIN. By ANDREW WAWN. *Studia Islandica, Íslensk fræði*, 49. *Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóðs*. Reykjavík, 1991. iii + 270 pp.

Þorleifur Guðmundsson Repp (1794–1857), an energetic and brilliant graduate of the Latin School at Bessastaðir, left his native Iceland to study in Copenhagen from 1814 to 1821, fulfilling there his early promise, particularly as a philologist. He mastered some two dozen languages, ancient and modern, and was so enthralled by British history and the English language that he was known in Denmark as the 'Anglo man'. He lived in London during 1821–22 and then returned to Copenhagen, completing a Master's Dissertation there in 1826, just before accepting a post at the National Library in Edinburgh, where he lived from 1826 to 1837. He spent the last 20 years of his life in Copenhagen, eking out a living as teacher, translator and journalist. Repp's books, articles, critical reviews, letters and essays, all ensured that he was well known in his time; and his work was esteemed by even the likes of Rasmus Rask. But he died in near

obscurity, and he remained there for 135 years. Andrew Wawn has now resurrected this 'Anglo man'. Why? Why did he decide to devote several years to a study of Repp's life and writings? At the outset, Wawn offers three reasons, and they become the central and unifying themes of this interesting and valuable book.

First, 'Repp's career offers a vivid insight from a quite unfamiliar perspective into the halting reception of the then new linguistic science of comparative philology in a major British intellectual centre [Enlightenment Edinburgh], at a time when the work of Rasmus Rask and the brothers Grimm was enjoying significant exposure in Europe' (p. 17). On a series of fronts, Repp promoted the new science, pointing out its importance to cultural and linguistic studies and to pedagogy generally, trying to alert British scholars to the treasure trove of manuscripts—full of prime data—mouldering away in archives awaiting another Thorkelín, while they myopically pursued their studies of Greek and Latin.

'A second theme illuminated by any investigation of Repp's years in Britain is that of Anglo-Icelandic literary and cultural relations in the first half of the nineteenth century, viewed for once from an Icelandic rather than a British perspective' (p. 20). In several earlier publications, Wawn has discussed those British perspectives. (See his *The Iceland journal of Henry Holland, 1810* (Hakluyt Society, 1987), and references therein to articles on other British travellers to Iceland.) Explorers like Banks and Hooker had argued—around the time of Iceland's short-lived 'revolution' in 1809—that if England should annex Iceland, both countries would profit. Repp would probably have agreed. Throughout his life he argued that independence-seeking Icelanders (many then at work in Copenhagen) had more to learn from the British than from the Danes; or from the Germans or the French, particularly with regard to judicial reform. Furthermore, the most positive aspects of British law, Repp argued, had parallels in the laws of the medieval Icelanders. So the network of associations between Iceland and Britain, past and present, Repp saw as potentially rich and productive; and he was distressed that few of his contemporaries, particularly in Britain, understood this. And so he took every opportunity to educate them.

'The third theme . . . must be the relationship between [Repp's] academic work and his life and temperament' (p. 22). Wawn carefully traces and illustrates how Repp's writings were shaped not only by controversies about philology and politics and education, but also by anxieties about money and advancement, and by convictions that small-minded and penurious employers and editors did not appreciate his true worth. His stubborn and quirkily brilliant personality heightened all such influences and made objectivity impossible. Though scholarly detachment might be for all of us a contradiction in terms, it certainly was so for Repp. When he writes, for instance, about King Alfred, he stresses (in Wawn's words) the king's 'linguistic facility and enthusiasms, the high priority accorded to pedagogy, the travel, the importance for a nation of welcoming and encouraging foreign scholars' (p. 23), all points linked to Repp's own interests and career. Wawn also notes this 'self-referential impulse' in Repp's descriptions

of problems faced by luminaries as varied as Lord Byron and Edward the Confessor and James Bothwell, the sixteenth-century adventurer and lover of Mary Queen of Scots. In a retelling of *Færeyinga saga*, Repp went so far as to interpolate into the tale a 'rather poignant self-portrait' (p. 146) of a resplendently attired, immensely polished and learned Icelandic scholar-skald who has stopped off at the Faroes on his way home from Constantinople. And all the Faroese—unlike the Scots Repp lived among—realised the importance and weight of this traveller. His name was Thorleif.

That northern tale, like so much of Repp's output, remains unpublished. Wawn has pored over it all—a mountain of paper, in nine large boxes in Iceland's National Library—and he has of course digested all the published works. In these writings Wawn detects 'characteristic features of tone and style, notably an instinctive, peppery combativeness towards other scholars' (p. 24), features that are sometimes to be observed in Wawn's own prose, particularly when he alludes to some of the more fashionable inanities in contemporary academe. Wawn announces, for instance, that his study of Repp will necessarily deal with linguistic and literary theory but not with the 'self-indulgent and self-defeating private codes and political correctness [the /p/ /k/ alliteration punctuates Wawn's scorn] of far too much contemporary "literary theory", particularly as currently practised with ludicrous earnestness in the universities of Repp's beloved Britain'. Wawn goes on, becoming more caustic as he points out that 'throughout his adult life, Repp wrestled with real problems, intellectual, political and personal—his victim status was genuine, not a product of the berserk fury of the ageing *blómabarn*, the robotic indignation of the tenured radical with an inflation-proof pension, a benefit which Repp so conspicuously lacked in his impoverished latter years. The Iclander also had a sense of humour' (p. 11). As that passage indicates, Wawn has one too, and it serves throughout to enliven his discussions of Repp's life and the significance of his work.

Repp's first philological essay, on the ways that poetic metre affects meaning, was submitted in 1818 for an aesthetics prize at the University of Copenhagen. Although his effort—a 44-page treatise in Latin—won no laurels, the judges were evidently impressed by Repp's learning: he cited authorities from Aristotle and Catullus to Egill Skallagrímsson, and he explicated poems from a host of contemporary European writers. Repp's first translations—extracts from *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* into Danish—appeared in 1818–19; and during this period he also worked for the Arnamagnæan Commission, translating *Laxdæla saga* into Latin for the 1826 edition of the saga. In 1823 Repp submitted another prize essay, this one on poetic structures and translation; he argued for the importance and utility of the new philology, suggesting that the 'natural laws' of language could be applied to other intellectual disciplines. The essay, published in 1824 as *En undersøgelse henhørende til metriken og den empiriske sproghilosophie*, won the gold. In 1826, in *De sermone tentamen*—which he had every reason to assume would earn him a Master's Degree—Repp again turned to comparative philology and to specific points about differing intonation

patterns in Indo-European languages. Wawn's discussion of the dissertation is excellent, as is his recounting of a brother's revenge (replete with pertinent saga references) that kept Repp from receiving the degree.

Repp then moved to Edinburgh where his 'scholarly output as an essayist and projector was prodigious. He wrote books, pamphlets, papers for learned societies, translations, reviews, letters to newspapers; he also wrote masses of pieces which never saw the light of day . . . [He] projected histories of etymology, of comparative religion, and of Norse mythology' (p. 86). He also devised plans to reorganise the university system in Scotland, to build a 'Caledonian Museum' (p. 87), to inaugurate geographical and literary societies, to launch periodicals, and so forth. Wawn's deft commentaries upon the major works from the Edinburgh period are set against prevailing theoretical controversies about language and race, as with those ignited by John Pinkerton in his 1789 *Enquiry into the history of Scotland*. Wawn also carefully charts the reasons for and the effects upon his writings of Repp's problems with his superiors at the Advocates' Library, problems that led to his dismissal in 1834. Among the works discussed is the following: *An historical treatise on trial by jury, wager of law, and other co-ordinate forensic institutions formerly in use in Scandinavia and in Iceland*. This study, commissioned by the British Home Secretary, was published in 1832. In it Repp celebrates the achievements in both literature and law of his Icelandic ancestors, while reminding his British readers of their debts to Old Norse culture. Repp's learned explications of 'Hogmanay and Trollalay' (a Scottish Yuletide greeting), of etymological secrets in *Havelok the Dane*, of the meaning of the runes on the Hunterston brooch (unearthed in Ayrshire in 1830) and upon the Ruthwell Cross, all receive close attention. Even when Repp was wrong, egregiously so with the Ruthwell runes, seeing 'Christbason' (i. e. 'baptismal font') in the runes for *Krist wæs on [rode]*, his contentious mistakes provoked British scholars like Kemble to pay attention to British artifacts like the Dumfriesshire cross and thus 'to stand on Icelandic shoulders and come much closer to the truth' (p. 131).

In his final years in Copenhagen, Repp wrote *A brief view of the Old Norse grammar* (a completed manuscript of 151 pages, never published); he revised an English translation of a Danish grammar by Rask; he co-authored a Danish dictionary; he translated into Danish the English *Book of Common Prayer* and put together for his Danish students two English language readers—a collection of fiction, *English stories*, and another of poetry: *Udsøgte engelske digte for damer, for skoler og for studerende*. 'In this collection, Repp was able to indulge his admiration for Byron the poet and to hint at his identification with aspects of Byron the man' (p. 195). And he translated into Danish other British books on topics as diverse as economic theory and diseases of the blood; he founded and edited a newspaper, *Tiden*, which displayed a 'generosity of coverage of all things British' (p. 201). He also wrote copiously on Icelandic politics, and politics was the motive for his translation of *The Saga of King Edward the Confessor* as well as his edition of *Saga Oswalds konungs hins*



*helga*. In a fascinating chapter sub-titled 'The politics of saga', Wawn places Repp among the 'politicised philologists of the emergent Icelandic nation state. Alongside a celebration of the native roots of saga, there developed a renewed eagerness to highlight Iceland's European cultural affiliations' (p. 211), and thus these Icelandic narratives of non-Icelanders received new attention after 1848.

Wawn's attempts in this book to reveal the importance and relevance of Repp's life and works are a complete success. Always returning to the three themes he announced at the outset, Wawn brings to life both the man and the times. His hard work and patient scholarship must be applauded. A few months back I peered into one of those nine boxes of Repp's papers in Landsbókasafn. Literally hundreds of documents, in differing sizes, languages, conditions, glowered back at me. That Wawn has carefully sifted and read the papers in all nine boxes strikes me as heroic. He does philology the old-fashioned way.

Wawn is apparently assuming an audience as familiar with Scandinavian languages as he is, since none of the many titles and passages quoted in Danish and Icelandic are translated. That might be a minor inconvenience for some readers. There are a few mistakes and typos that should be noted. In his discussion of Repp's contribution (a facing-page Latin translation) to the 1826 edition of *Laxdæla saga*, Wawn asserts that the Icelandic text is 'based on Flateyjarbók' (p. 57), rather than—as is the case—on *Möðruvallabók*. In his extensive bibliography (eleven pages of titles, 26 of them by Repp), Wawn places a recent publication of an 1833 travel book, *A Journal of an Expedition to the Faroe and Westman Islands and Iceland*, under 'Seaton, A. V'. Seaton was the editor, George Atkinson the author. In a footnote, Wawn refers to Atkinson as a 'Newcastle scientist' (p. 246, n. 387). He was in fact a wealthy industrialist who conducted some important investigations on the effects of industry on the environment. At times the cross-references in those footnotes (there are 484 of them, 182 to the contents of those large boxes in Landsbókasafn) will crease a few brows. In an allusion to a Reppian fiction about an Oxford student named Wanhope, Wawn laments that 'Repp's readers [will be] frustrated . . . by the author's chronic inability to finish what he had started' (p. 39). But there will certainly be few such 'readers' since the story in question is in one of those large boxes in Reykjavík. I noticed the following typos: 'a' for 'an' on p. 32, 8 lines up; 'an' for 'a' on p. 37, l. 3; 'and and' for 'and' on p. 148, l. 17; 'Edingurgh' for 'Edinburgh' on p. 254, 15 lines up. Finally, an article by Mackenzie is dated '1814' in the bibliography (p. 258, l. 14), but '1815' in footnote 303, p. 242.

GARY L. AHO

ÚR DÓLUM TIL DALA: GUÐBRANDUR VIGFÚSSON CENTENARY ESSAYS. Edited by RORY MCTURK and ANDREW WAWN. *Leeds texts and monographs, new series 11. Leeds studies in English*. Leeds, 1989. x + 327 pp.

This volume's playful title refers to the fact that it is a collection of essays edited and published in the Yorkshire dales and dedicated to the memory of Guðbrandur Vigfússon (1827–89), a native of Dalasýsla, on the one-hundredth anniversary of his death. In the words of the editors, 'The essays . . . seek either to address the nature and influence of Guðbrandur's scholarly achievement and influence, or to add twentieth-century perspectives to important questions concerning Icelandic literary tradition, many of which were first formulated in Guðbrandur's writings, and which still challenge scholars a hundred years later' (p. vii). It is an impressive and interesting collection, carefully and thoughtfully edited, reflecting the continued good health and high standards of Vigfússon's field of study—at least at its solid, familiar centre. The volume remains largely free, as far as I can tell, of the taint of French philosophy or of literary theory post-Guðbrandur. Indeed, it is instructive to note how canny the editors have been in their awareness that the major figures in contemporary Old Norse-Icelandic scholarship continue to focus their thought on the questions that interested Vigfússon, especially his concern with the dating and chronological ordering of texts. Peter Hallberg begins his essay in this volume by saying 'Chronology is a major problem—or, rather, the major problem—in establishing the development of Old Icelandic literature' (p. 113). Roughly half of the essays in this volume bear out the validity of Hallberg's perception of the field.

The essays are arranged alphabetically by author and begin with Theodore M. Andersson's review of 'Guðbrandur Vigfússon's saga chronology: the case of *Ljósvetninga saga*'. His conclusion is that Vigfússon's advocacy of a date of composition early in the thirteenth century is not without merit still. Andersson rejects, however, Vigfússon's reliance on the statement in one text of the so-called prologue to *Sturlunga saga* (situated between *Sturla saga* and *Prests saga Guðmundar Arasonar*) that 'those sagas which had taken place in Iceland had been written before the death of Bishop Brandur' (1201), preferring the usually accepted wording of AM 122b fol.: 'all the sagas that had taken place in Iceland before the death of Bishop Brandur had been written down' (i. e. by the time Sturla Þórðarson composed *Íslendinga saga*). What Andersson does find persuasive in arguing for the early date is the mention in both *Ljósvetninga saga* and *Reykðæla saga* of Þorvarðr Þorgeirsson, a well known Icelander who was born in 1140. It is rare that a contemporary person is mentioned in an *Íslendingasaga* at all, and Andersson finds it easier to believe that it would happen sooner after the man had died than later.

Coming second is an especially well-written biographical sketch by B. S. Benedikz that provides a good framework in which to place Vigfússon's accomplishments. It includes a just and detailed analysis and evaluation of his career, which might appropriately have begun the volume, albeit slightly out of alphabetical order, immediately following the handsome frontispiece, a photograph of the portrait by H. M. Paget. Especially informative is the

description of the school at Bessastaðir, which moved into Reykjavík while Guðbrandur was still a student, and three remarkable teachers there, who influenced not only Guðbrandur Vigfússon but a whole generation of learned Icelanders. Vigfússon had a complex personality that is only partially explained by the form of his education and subsequent career, most of it spent far from the nation he loved so intensely and whose culture he did so much to spread in the English-speaking world. There was no degree programme in Old Norse-Icelandic studies in Vigfússon's day and hence no possibility for him *að taka próf* in this field, a fact which led eventually and pathetically to his losing the only girl to whom he ever paid serious attention. While his Oxford students, a very distinguished group, unanimously spoke of him with affection, the University was not on the whole generous to him, and the absence of worthy collaborators prevented him, notwithstanding his large editorial and lexicographical achievements, from making the fullest scholarly contribution of which he might have been capable.

Michael Chesnutt's contribution, 'The beguiling of Þórr', begins with an allusion to Vigfússon's idea that *eddukvæði* originated in the British Isles. His main purpose, however, is narrower, to examine the Celtic influence on the three episodes of the story in *Gylfaginning* of 'the beguiling of Þórr' — Þórr's slaughter of the goats, the Skrímir episode, and the visit to Útgardr — and, more briefly, the *Hjaðningavíg* episode in *Skáldskaparmál*. His case depends upon a great deal of learning, some of it involving the construction of chronological chains of relationship and influence among poems and stories that did not actually appear in written form until two or three centuries after they are thought to have been composed. If we leave aside specific surviving texts, the general principle of Celtic-Norse interchanges, more likely in the Orkneys and the 'Western Isles' than in Ireland, earns our consent and heightens our desire to learn more. But a sceptical reader is left with a strong sense of how little we can actually know about the verbal art of ninth- and tenth-century Scandinavians.

It is tempting when we have more than one version of an *Íslendingasaga* to speculate about which of them is the older, original version, or at least closer to the original. Robert Cook raises this question when he discusses 'The ordering of the wooing episodes in *Hallfreðar saga*'. The question he asks is not which is the 'better' order of events, but which one is closer to the 'original'. In *Möðruvallabók* (M) there are two episodes which occur in one sequence, while in the versions of a group of MSS of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (Ó) the sequence of these two episodes is reversed. The statement and solution of the problem is more subtle and detailed than can be indicated here. Because the stemma of the manuscripts has two branches, Cook cannot resolve the question of primacy on the genetic relationships among them. Instead he must attempt to answer the question: what might have motivated one of the two scribes to *reverse* the order of the text as he found it in his original? Elaborating on a suggestion of Björn M. Ólsen's, Cook concludes that the most compelling reason in this case for *changing* the order of events in *Hallfreðar saga* would be to adhere to their order in *Vatnsdæla saga*, where the sequence is required

by the context. The same motivation (i. e. to bring the order into agreement with an influential analogue) does not exist for the scribes of the Ó MSS, which must therefore be the original version of the saga. When, at the end of his essay, Cook's discussion turns to variations between *Vatnsdæla saga* and *Hallfreðar saga*, one wonders whether here the concept of an 'original' version is equally valid. Often between these two sagas the variant texts seem to depend on variant points of view that were developed (in oral tales) toward what may have been the same 'original' events. In other words, the saga as *fabula* (story) may have an original version but not the saga as *sjúzet* (discourse).

Ursula Dronke begins her essay on 'The scope of the *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*' by noting a paradox: the infinite suggestiveness of Vigfússon and Powell's *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* and its notorious unreliability. Nevertheless, she thinks that it remains a good idea to review our own conflicting ideas about dates and 'originality' by reviewing their work, and she does support in general their proposition that 'best is earliest', or in her words, 'that the poetic qualities of a work—its intellectual content and style of verbal skill—should lead us to its correct dating'. What follows is an interesting and learned essay on the dating of *Lokasenna*. I was especially struck by the analysis of the accusation that Þórunn embraced her *bróðurbani* (st. 17) and how this human situation can be understood as a displacement of older mythic ideas. Throughout the poem Dronke sees serious mythic features of the gods being translated into essentially modern sexual and scatological terms. Such a satire, she believes, would be more or less pointless to a Christian audience, outside of the culture in which the gods are worshipped, since it is a form of 'ritual reversal' at certain 'licensed moments' within a pagan culture. My objections to dating *Lokasenna*, or any poem, to a time centuries before the advent of literacy in Scandinavia on such grounds is that doing so depends on our believing that we (and the ancient heathens) can see the point to a satire that went over the heads of the thirteenth-century scribes who wrote them down. Neither the scribes nor performers in an oral tradition would continue to transmit material that was essentially meaningless to them. It is important to remember how lost we would be in our studies without the help of such thirteenth-century students of antiquity as the compiler of Codex Regius 2365, 4to. This essay may be the best example of any in the collection of how distracting Vigfússon's sort of concern with dating can be from the sensitivity and learning of such first-rate modern scholarship as Dronke's.

Peter Hallberg reports on research that affirms the conventional dating of nine genres of Icelandic prose texts by studying the relative distribution of *fyrir sakir* (the older form) and *sakir* (the more recent), together with *fyrir skyld*, *fyrir grein*, *fyrir sök*, *sökum*, which reflect generic as well as chronological distributions. He notes that in these texts, the modern *vegna* is extremely rare.

In an essay on the novelist Gunnar Gunnarsson, Sveinn Skorri Höskuldsson reminds us of Guðbrandur Vigfússon's contribution to the study of Icelandic folktales, specifically his role in overseeing the printing of the first major folktale collection, Jón Árnason's *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og æfintýri* (Leipzig,

1862–64) and writing a substantial introduction to that work. This reference to Guðbrandur, however, exists primarily as a context for describing the seminal role of Icelandic folktales in the development of Gunnar Gunnarsson's narrative art. The essay ends with a quite beautiful account of the novelist's conversion of the theme of the conventional medieval *danse macabre* (a rare motif, by the way, in Icelandic folktales) into a Christian *danse vivante* in his symbolic novel *Vikivaki*.

O. D. Macrae-Gibson's essay 'Sagas, Snorri, and the literary criticism of scaldic verse' reviews what recent writers on *dróttkvæði* have had to say about the poems as works of art—especially from the point of view of their saga contexts. Such ideas as the following, which manage to get beyond the constraints imposed by old arguments over dating and authorship, are welcome:

In considering the literary merits of scaldic verses as placed in a saga the question of their 'authenticity' matters little. If we allow that a saga as we have it had in some sense 'an author', then whether he treated the verses as a source and built the saga round them, or structured the saga fitting in or writing appropriate verses where they seemed called for, the fact is that he left a work of which they formed part, and can be presumed to have intended them to contribute to the total effect the work was to make. (pp. 166–67)

The verses, he goes on to show, can be used—as prose rarely is—to reveal inner feelings. In the sagas that have verses, the two forms enhance each other. To understand fully how the verses enhance the larger narrative, Macrae-Gibson believes it is necessary to pay attention to what Snorri has to say about the way verses work: character is revealed not only in the expression of feelings but also in the risks the poet has been willing to take in the technical details of composition.

Vésteinn Ólason, too, sets aside questions of the 'authenticity' of the saga verses when he considers the topic of authorship and tradition in the 'Máhlíðingamál' episode in *Eyrbyggja saga*, although he does in a sense continue into the present the old debate as to the oral and/or literary composition of the sagas. He is interested in the subtle interplay between the particular and the conventional in the episode. He sees the particular story of the struggle between the two sorcerers Geirrǫðr and Katla as a type of the conventional *landhreinsun*, cleansing of the land of sorcerers and thieves. He notes separate male (social) and female (mythic) aspects of the episode, in which men are powerless against the evil Katla, whose crimes can only be revealed by Geirrǫðr. And these women, too, constitute a polarity between Geirrǫðr's knowledge and Katla's sexuality. The conclusion of Vésteinn's discussion of tradition and authorship in this episode of *Eyrbyggja* is so subtle that I cannot resist quoting it:

In spite of, or perhaps because of its thoroughgoing traditionality, the tale of Máhlíðingamál is a unique story. Although Þórarinn svarti has many typical features, there is no other character in the sagas, or in world literature for that matter, who is exactly like him. Katla is a typical witch but also a particular witch. And the most memorable images of the text—Auðr's hand lying in the grass, Nagli and the slaves running around in the mountains mad with fear—are unique and extremely real at

the same time. It is in the unique details of the story that I imagine I feel most strongly the presence of oral tradition; but it is in the totally traditional craftsmanship of the story-teller that I sense the presence of a great writer. (p. 198)

In order for Vésteinn to have these impressions of the orality and the literacy of this episode, he assumes that an author learned his story-telling conventions through books and his local details through oral transmission. In neither case does this formulation leave room for a saga authorship dependent upon the striking idiosyncrasies of individual genius, and that may be the move that we have been waiting to make. Without an author in the modern sense the tension between oral and literary is considerably lessened.

P. R. Orton approaches the obscure Old English poem *The wife's lament* by studying its parallels with *Skírnismál*. He begins with a very detailed consideration of the English poem's literal meaning and the various fictional/mythic contexts that have been proposed for interpreting what is apparently the miserable subterranean situation of a woman who is complaining. He then notices that the threats delivered by Skírnir to Gerðr in *Skírnismál* describe a similar fate, which awaits her if she does not yield to Freyr's desire. The common image is *under actreo* in the English description of the woman's dwelling and *á viðar rótum* in the Icelandic. This is rich and stimulating material (comparable to Dronke's in her *Lokasenna* article) when it is considered in the light of the Scandinavian temple as microcosm, as in Adam of Bremen's description of the temple at Uppsala. The woman's subterranean abode becomes a temple at the centre of the earth, furthest from her lord at the edge. Also in accordance with Dronke's method of understanding the mythic imagery of *Lokasenna*, Orton speculates that the mythic material underlying *The wife's lament* has been displaced, or 'deritualized', to represent, if not an identifiable group of persons, at least a generalised humanity. We do not know enough to be able to prove any of it, but I find this parallel with Scandinavian myth provides as satisfactory and memorable a fictional context in which to imagine the events of *The wife's lament* as any I know.

Richard Perkins's contribution to the volume is a theoretical article on 'Objects and oral tradition in medieval Iceland'. I cannot do justice here to the denseness and interest of its argument. After disavowing an allegiance to 'Free-prose' theory, Perkins nevertheless observes (in much the spirit of Vésteinn Ólason's view of *Eyrbyggja*)

that in the Iceland of the *ritöld* . . . there existed a vigorous and dynamic oral tradition which consisted not only in *metrical* compositions but also found its expression in *prose*. And . . . this prose oral tradition would also have included stories about persons said to have lived in the Iceland of the *söguöld* . . . There seems to me little doubt that the written sagas we have had such prose oral stories as their *sources*. (p. 241)

He then postulates that various phenomena served as 'kernels' round which oral traditions grew. Among these phenomena, literary and physical, are included concrete objects, and it is primarily these that Perkins categorises and illustrates. He cites the Icelandic proverb *sjón er sögu ríkari* to remind us of the function

of physical imagery not only in oral tradition but possibly also as a source for the earliest writers who attempted to recount ancient events: mythological iconography on rune stones which Snorri might have seen in Sweden and Norway, the *bjöllur* and *baglar* Ari Þorgilsson says were left behind by the *papar*, grave-mounds described in Haukr Erlendsson's version of *Landnámabók*. Finally, Perkins makes clear that the centring of oral traditions around physical objects does not mean that such stories, even in the *Íslendingasögur*, are historically true nor, alas, that the hundreds of objects mentioned in them have survived. I might only observe that Perkins's article might help to explain why we regard those objects and places, like Þingvellir, that do still survive as holy.

Margaret Clunies Ross's contribution, 'The cognitive approach to scaldic poetics, from Snorri to Vigfússon and beyond', is one of the few essays in this volume to break genuinely new ground, and at the same time it leans more heavily than any of the others, from beginning to end, on the work of Vigfússon, especially the *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*. She intends her line of inquiry to remedy the lack she finds in current scholarship of 'a definitive study of the deeper structures of Old Norse scaldic poetics which focuses on the cultural categories and cognitive models that underlie the groupings of kenning types into like and unlike sets. It is the grouping of the concepts that are in play in scaldic verse into basic categories, linked to others either through similarities or through differences, that determines the operation of this kind of poetry, for both poet and audience.' It was not immediately clear to me as I read these words that the cognitive domains involved are not those of the referent or the base word alone but of the relationship the kenning stipulates between the two, which can, through the operation of 'proportional metaphor', both narrow the semantic field of the base word and also categorise the social or experiential domain of the referent. Frequently, as in the kenning 'yoke-bear' (*okbjörn*) for ox, there is what Clunies Ross calls a 'baroque dissonance' between the contrastive qualities of the two terms, in this case 'wild' versus 'domesticated', that is a cultivated quality of skaldic verse. There is much to ponder and to learn in this fine study. For example, my own thoughts turned, in response to Clunies Ross's discussion of the analogies between houses and the natural world that are implicit in a number of kennings with the base word *hús*, to the appropriateness in *Beowulf* of singing a song of creation to celebrate the building of a house.

Guðbrandur Vigfússon's huge and fatiguing labour of compiling the monumental *Icelandic-English Dictionary* that had been initiated by Richard Cleasby is well documented in a series of his letters brought together by Svavar Sigmundsson. The work of the lexicographer was not in every respect uncongenial, but it is a story of increasing isolation and servitude to the challenges and drudgery of the great task.

This pleasing and instructive volume concludes with Sverrir Tómasson's discussion of Snorri's attitude toward the function of poetry, especially in the context of its credibility as a record of *res factae* and a source for historiographical research and writing. He quite usefully cites all the allusions to the problem in

relation to the writing of Scandinavian history that are earlier than Snorri's Prologue to *Heimskringla*, as well as a few others from a slightly later time. Among Snorri's several attitudes toward poetry (*soġuljóð*, *skrök*, *háð*) was an acknowledgment of its vatic function, of poetry as a divine gift whose beauty was the best indication of its truth.

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PEOPLE AND PLACES IN NORTHERN EUROPE 500–1600. ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF PETER HAYES SAWYER. Edited by IAN WOOD and NIELS LUND. *Boydell Press*. Woodbridge, 1991. xxii + 248 pp.

For over thirty years Peter Sawyer has been the *enfant terrible* of Viking studies. Thirty years is a long time to remain an *enfant*, but in some eyes Professor Sawyer remains as *terrible* as ever. In her contribution to this volume in his honour Gillian Fellows-Jensen speaks of Sawyer's early study of the density of Danish settlement in England (and by extension one can add parts of his *The age of the Vikings* of 1962); its impact, she claims, was that of a 'hungry cat let loose among the pigeons', and certainly this harmless, perhaps necessary, cat fluttered those innocent pigeons who were more worried by the unorthodoxy than the inadequacy of his arguments.

Professor Sawyer's contribution to medieval studies has been extensive and wide-ranging, as the bibliography printed here reveals. In his appreciation of Sawyer's achievement Ian Wood picks out for special praise his reference works, noting in particular *Anglo-Saxon charters: an annotated list and bibliography* of 1968. Every Anglo-Saxon scholar must agree on the supreme usefulness of such work as this. Wood also comments on Sawyer's 'other writings' which have 'served dramatically to push debates forward', though his added comment makes clear how loosely he uses the word 'forward'. There is no doubt that Sawyer turned his hand to 'creating new vistas'. So did many a Renaissance landskip painter and Baroque designer of stage effects, but their vistas were often artful assemblages of materials from a variety of sources and owed nothing to careful record of fact. Some years ago I wrote of Sawyer's 'kaleidoscopically changing opinions', but I have since wondered if I did not overestimate the capabilities of the kaleidoscope.

This excellent (for the most part) collection is an interesting reflection of the range of Sawyer's published work—possibly also of its limitations. It opens with a group of five essays on aspects of Frankish and Anglo-Saxon history, by Ian Wood, Richard Morris, Patrick Wormald, Janet L. Nelson and Simon Keynes. Richard Hall writes on 'Sources for pre-Conquest York', largely pointing to the way recent archaeological work has illuminated, or failed to illuminate, scanty historical and topographical sources. There is one essay on Old English literature, a typically learned and sprightly work by Roberta Frank: 'The ideal of men dying with their lord in *The Battle of Maldon*:



anachronism or *nouvelle vague*', which also takes in material from Old Norse and early French.

Elsewhere in the book Alexander R. Rumble gives an austere palaeographical 'A Domesday postscript and the earliest surviving Pipe Roll' which only a specialist in that discipline can assess. 'Women and justice in Norway c.1300–1600' by Grethe Authén Blom has a more general interest. It reports a group of legal cases involving women, in which 'they themselves appear to have taken the initiative to have their case heard in court, and judgements were without exception to their advantage'. The purpose, fully carried out, is to show that the legal system of Norway did not discriminate against women, who 'got as fair a deal as men did'. Hans Andersson's 'Ancient monuments act—exploitation— medieval archaeology—research: thoughts on manifest connections' is a short summary of the effects of the 1942 Ancient Monuments Act on archaeological research in Sweden, as it affects the general organisation of archaeology and as it has allowed scholars to exploit the opportunities produced by modern urban development.

There remain nine pieces of particular interest to Vikings. Gillian Fellows-Jensen's 'Of Danes—and thanes—and Domesday Book' is a formidably learned and closely argued discussion of some of the problems of place-name dating in the eleventh and later centuries. She begins with Sawyer on the density of Danish settlement in England (1958), pointing out that onomastic scholars were unwise to reject his arguments for a late dating of many Norse place-names in England merely because they were based on false premises. This leads her to a detailed re-examination of some Yorkshire place-names which contain Danish personal names, notably those in *-ketill* or the contracted *-kell*. Fellows-Jensen discusses in detail the relationship between these variants of the element in an attempt to define what dating limits apply to each. She ably anticipates a number of objections that could be brought against her argumentation (though I do not think she demonstrates that *-ketill* names in combination with a place-name element necessarily followed the same phonological path as those in free use). Her conclusion, modestly enough, is that 'there is still much that we do not understand about the significance of the Scandinavian settlement names in England', a somewhat more reticent statement than Sawyer's 'the main period of Scandinavian name production was in the early years of the tenth century'. Perhaps the difference between these two assessments indicates something of the difference of confidence between philologist and historian working from the same evidence.

In 'Norse settlement in the Hebrides: what happened to the natives and what happened to the Norse immigrants?' Per Sveaas Andersen produces fascinating information but no clear argument. He admits the impenetrable darkness of Hebridean history in the early Middle Ages and tries to penetrate it with the tools of archaeology and onomastics. He asks pertinent questions—for instance, if Norse place-names indicate the presence of Norse speakers, does an absence of Norse place-names necessarily demonstrate there was no Norse immigration?—but does not stay for an answer. He gives some splendid statistics for place-

names in *staðir*, *setr*, *bólstaðr* (these derived from the work of D. K. Olson) and *bær/býr*. They indicate a clear dichotomy between the southern and inner Hebrides and the Scots western littoral on the one hand, and the northern Hebrides and Northern Isles on the other. Some of the distribution maps imply strong Celtic influence on the more southerly and westerly areas of Norse settlement, but I am not clear that they answer either of Andersen's questions or allow him to dispose, as easily as he would, of Iain Crawford's interpretation, of one site only, as a demonstration of 'sudden and total obliteration' of local Celtic material culture.

In 'Jelling from Iron Age to Viking Age' Steen Hvass sums up the great engineering achievements of Haraldr Bluetooth's later years (the Jelling mounds, the Raving Enge bridge and roadworks, and the Trelleborg-type fortresses) and links them to finds of material of an earlier date in the region south of Jelling. He defines an important cluster of settlements of the early Roman Iron Age, and then discusses the excavations at Vorbasse (c.25 km south-west of Jelling) which enabled archaeologists to trace the shifting site of this village community from the first century BC to the eleventh AD. Thus the Jelling monuments 'are no longer isolated in the local environment'. The total finds indicate that this area 'constituted a powerful local centre of gravity', and Jelling itself shows the continuation or re-emergence of a centre of political power. This is a fascinating example of the way archaeology illuminates a Dark Age of the Vikings.

Tinna Damgaard-Sørensen writes on 'Danes and Wends: a study of the Danish attitude towards the Wends', a subject which I for one have shamefully ignored hitherto in considering the Vikings. The point of departure is material from archaeological excavation at Fribrødre Brook, North Falster, which reveals a ship-building and repair site of the eleventh century, with clear indications of Slavonic/Wendish influence on building techniques and on associated pottery and miscellaneous objects. From this arise such questions as: 'Did the Wends settle in Denmark?', 'Would it be possible for Wends to find a home on Danish territory?', 'Were there any reasons for the Wends to leave their country in favour of foreign lands?' Damgaard-Sørensen examines historical sources from the tenth to the twelfth century, draws the not surprising conclusion that the factual situation was more complex than many historians have believed up to now, and ends with a stirring call to them 'to mobilize the written sources, in readiness for future discussions'.

Brita Malmer writes 'On the early coinage of Lund'. She begins 'Coins arguably form the most important source for the history of Scandinavia in the Viking and early Medieval periods', and then neglects to argue it. In favour of coinage as a historical source she claims: 'The coins are *contemporary*, they are *written*, and they appear in *very great quantity*'; which could also be said of late twentieth-century tabloid newspapers in Great Britain, but few would claim they are important historical sources for anything but the vulgarity of tabloid newspapers in late twentieth-century Britain—and I suppose of the readers they attract. That a source is written is not so important if what is

written there is of so limited a range. Certainly the legends on the coins that Dr Malmer treats here are not particularly illuminating of Viking history in the reigns of Sveinn Forkbeard and Cnut the Great, particularly if the place-name form *Lund* can be equally applicable to Lund in Skåne and London, as she reports.

Thorsten Andersson's 'The origin of the *tuna*-names reconsidered' summarises the discussion of Scandinavian place-names containing the plural form of the element *tun* over a period of eighty years or so, and in particular during the last twenty of these. There are two main lines of explanation: one involving Celtic influence from *-dūnum* names, the other assuming a development from the indigenous *tun*, 'fence, enclosure, and so perhaps farm, enclosed cult place'. Andersson aims at airing the problem rather than presenting a solution, and this he does ably and in detail. To the non-specialist the Celtic hypothesis looks unnecessarily cumbersome in view of the common occurrence of the simplex *tun* in place-names from a number of Germanic regions—and Karl Axel Holmberg's monograph on *tuna*-names apparently accepted that they have 'no special meaning but . . . only meant "fence" and "enclosure" in general'. But a number of distinguished scholars have spent their time trying to demonstrate otherwise, and Andersson is perhaps wise in calling for a further airing not only of the answers but of the questions.

Åke Hyenstrand presents a paper of four pages on 'Iconography and rune stones: the example of Sparlösa', but I do not know why, or why the editors accepted it.

Birgit Sawyer entitles her paper 'Women as bridge-builders: the role of women in Viking-Age Scandinavia', but this is a diminution of its content. She deals with a variety of topics here, including the right of women to inherit, their right to hold property (and so to be able to afford a rune-stone), the circumstances under which a woman erected a stone on her own or in collaboration with another woman or in collaboration with a man; and she provides a number of statistics and notes geographical variations between them. Mrs Sawyer interprets rune-stones as documents of inheritance, claiming that we can identify inheritance patterns by a study of relationships between the people who put up stones and the dead they commemorate. Only at this point does she get to the subject of rune-stones that refer to bridge-building, 'considered a meritorious act, earning Divine favour'. Women are, she claims 'over-represented' on such stones, and this is consonant with 'many other signs of women's interest in Christianity and their readiness to obey exhortations to support the church and give alms'.

I have left to the end Niels Lund's "'Denemearc", "tanmarkar but" and "tanmaurk ala"' not because it is the least important of the papers—far from it—but because in a way it reflects the strength and weakness of the contribution Peter Sawyer has made to Viking studies. A strength is his willingness to engage a wide range of material, some of it, like the archaeological and numismatic, often ignored by historians; a weakness his readiness to use sources in languages he cannot adequately command. Lund begins with the Jelling monuments and discusses the dating of Haraldr Bluetooth's reign, and then the significance of the latter's claims on the greater Jelling rune-stone.

This leads him to ponder—like others before him—what ‘all Denmark’ can mean; what overlordship was Haraldr asserting in the inscription? This in turn brings in the ninth-century account of Scandinavia by the man whom Anglo-Saxonists call Ohthere and Norse historians Ottar.

Speaking of Ohthere’s description of his voyage to Hedeby, Lund asserts that he ‘makes a curious distinction between *Denemearcan* and “lands belonging to the Danes” and this distinction corresponds to the one made between North-Danes and South-Danes in the description of northern Europe appended to the Old English Orosius’. The point is worth examining, but it is surely worth examining in more detail than Lund finds necessary—and this will require some philological discussion which Lund avoids. Ohthere was a Norwegian; what language he spoke to Alfred is unknown. How precisely the Old English version represents the detail of what Ohthere wished to say is equally unknown, so the sensible are cautious in making precise and subtle distinctions from the recorded text. What Ohthere is reported as saying is that Hedeby *hyrð in on Dene*. Sailing there from Kaupang he had *Denemearc* to port for three days. Two days before he came to Hedeby there were to port *þa igland þe in Denemearce hyrað*. (I do not know that anywhere Ohthere spoke of ‘lands belonging to the Danes’—nor, as for that, does the form *Denemearcan* occur in his account.) There is an apparent distinction between these islands and *Gotland ond Sillende ond iglanda fela* which were to starboard, and on whose allegiances Ohthere made no comment, though someone (?he or the secretary who took down his statement) added that these were the lands of the Angles before they came to England.

Here *Denemearc* seems to mean the present-day Norwegian and Swedish coastlands south of Kaupang and any islands to port as Ohthere made his journey through straits to South Jutland. Modern translators may blur distinctions which the original may have had: thus they may be satisfied with ‘Hedeby . . . belongs to the Danes’ and ‘those islands which belong to Denmark’ (cf. *Two voyagers at the court of King Alfred* . . . ed. N. Lund (1984), 22, the text quoted by Lund in his article). The Old English text, for what it is worth, uses distinctive idioms: Hedeby *hyrð in on Dene*, the islands *in Denemearce hyrað*. Lund very properly enquires whether ‘belonging to Denmark’ is the same as ‘belonging to the Danes’. What he does not ask is whether the two idioms *hyrð in on* and *hyrað in* have the same meaning. Does the adverb/preposition *in* in the phrase used of Hedeby imply that the town was outside the general territory of Denmark but yet owed allegiance to a central power associated with the Danes? (There is a further complication: Janet Bately’s edition *The Old English Orosius* (1980), has a plate of the primary manuscript here (opposite p. 16), and that shows that the text reads ‘þaigland | þe indene mearce hyrað’ with a later hand (?how late) adding ‘to’ in between ‘in’ and ‘dene’.) What is the implication of the fact that Ohthere gave no details of the overlordship of *Gotland* and *Sillende*? That these were not part of Denmark proper? That there was no point in commenting on them since every educated man, even in England, knew they were the heartland of Denmark? Or did Alfred forget to ask?

Ohthere's fellow-voyager Wulfstan uses a different idiom again. He was, if his name is anything to go by, an Englishman, so his report would need no translator. He tells of the regions identified as Langeland, Lolland, Falster and Skåne: *þas land eall hyrað to Denemearcan*; that the Bornholmers had their own king; but that Blekinge, Møre, Öland and Gotland *hyrað to Sweon*. Again, is any distinction intended by Wulfstan's different usages and those attributed to Ohthere? Does *hyrað to* have a different significance from *hyrað in*? If, as Lund is, you are noting 'curious distinctions' you might well note them all rather than only some. It *may* be that *hyran to* implies allegiance but not identity, *hyran in* identity. Does *hyran to* + a people mean the same thing as *hyran to* + a country? I can well see that after the destruction of the power of the Gautar an inhabitant of southern Sweden might admit he owed allegiance to the Svíar without regarding himself as a Swede (as, I suspect, many a modern inhabitant of Göteborg would confirm).

The surviving material which might help us answer some of these questions is available in the Toronto Microfiche Concordance to Old English. A conscientious search through its citations of the verb *hyran* might be useful, though it might also be tedious and fruitless. A brief run through shows that charters have numerous examples of the verb *hyran* . . . where one piece of property 'belongs to' an estate. Here the common usages are *hyran to* and, rather less common, *hyran into/in to* (which may render the addition of 'to' in the Orosius manuscript of importance). There are also a couple of examples of *hyran* + the adverb *in*, which may well refer to outlying parts of estates—local knowledge is needed here. Charter S713 (bounds edited in M. Gelling, *The place-names of Berkshire* (1973–76), III, 691–92) has the phrase *þer hyrð in an hyrde wic æt bapalacing . . . and an myln æt hyrde grafe*, which Gelling identifies as 'appurtenances of the estate'. Another case which might be comparable occurs in the bounds of property *æt pidwyllan* (charter S901; bounds traced in D. Hooke, *Worcestershire Anglo-Saxon charter-bounds* (1990), 351–53, where *ðeder hyrð inn an haga on port* is translated 'to it belongs a messuage in town'); this is not part of the boundary clause proper but looks like an addition, perhaps defining a piece of land separate from the main estate but belonging to it. It is possible that, to Wulfstan, Langeland etc. were integral parts of Denmark (*hyrað to Denemearcan*); Blekinge etc. were not part of Sweden but had come under the Swedes' control (*hyrað to Sweon*). In that case Hedeby might also be under Danish control but not part of Denmark proper (*hyrð . . . on Dene*). And the adverb (if that is what it is) *in* implies a central authority whose power extended as far as Hedeby. What I have said here does not conflict with Lund's conclusions, but it might add to them. My complaint is not that Lund has not made a careful enough examination of a primary text to support his study, but that there is no evidence he realises the need for it. Prepositions are small words, but this does not mean they have little importance. How long will philologists have to continue asking historians to learn how language works before they try to use texts as evidence?

Ian Wood's introduction to this book includes a number of merry anecdotes about Peter Sawyer showing him as 'one of the most convivial of academics'.

May I add one of my own in which Peter takes but a walk-on part, and which illustrates him in another capacity, one always likely to provoke his fellow scholars. In 1972 I wrote a joint review of Gwyn Jones's *A history of the Vikings* and Peter Foote and David M. Wilson's *The Viking achievement* (*Medium ævum* 41 (1972), 89–94). Commenting on the difficulties they (and earlier scholars) encountered with the evidence for this period, I adduced the salutary example of *The age of the Vikings*. When the review was published I met Dorothy Whitelock, then my Head of Department. 'I liked your review of those two Viking books,' she said. 'I agreed with nearly every word of it.' There was a pause before she added, in her quiet 'smiler with the knife under the cloak' voice: 'Only one thing. You were too kind to Peter Sawyer.' I mention this to put on record that, not only have I been kind to Peter Sawyer in my time; I have even been, in the opinion of one qualified judge, too kind.

R. I. PAGE

VIKING ALE: STUDIES ON FOLKLORE CONTACTS BETWEEN THE NORTHERN AND THE WESTERN WORLDS. By BO ALMQVIST. Presented to the author on the occasion of his 60th birthday. Edited by ÉILÍS NÍ DHUIBHNE-ALMQVIST and SÉAMAS Ó CATHÁIN. Aberystwyth, 1991. xxx + 305 pp.

A certain amount of discussion has taken place, not least in the pages of the present journal (e. g. Christine E. Fell, *Saga-Book* XXII:2 (1987), II 9), as to the respective merits, as congratulatory volumes, of *Festschriften* and of republications of the dedicatee's own *kleine Schriften*. The editors of the present volume, while choosing the latter course, cannot totally disapprove of the former: of the nine studies by Almqvist they chose for reprinting, three originally appeared in *Festschriften*. Three of the articles appear for the first time in English.

Almqvist's formative years, at Uppsala and Reykjavík, coincided with what might be termed an Irish Period in Icelandic studies. The immediate post-war decades saw an increase of interest in Icelandic-Irish relations, proceeding on the one hand possibly from the position of both nations after the War as emergent republics, on the other from the personal contacts of such scholars as Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, Dag Strömbäck and Séamus Ó Duilearga, all three of them formative influences on Almqvist's future studies. It is thus no wonder that the question of Norse-Irish motif-borrowings took an increasingly important place in Almqvist's research interests. His first article on the subject is that which gives the present volume its title.

The nine studies reprinted typify Almqvist's general approach to folklore studies; he is primarily concerned with the establishment of motifs and the tracking of their geographical and chronological distribution. Tales are collected and compared as texts, with aspects of performance and social context being given subsidiary treatment. This prominence of the tale as text ensures that his work is likely to be congenial to folklorist and philologist alike, especially if

the latter inclines to Almqvist's opinion that 'many of the strands in the magnificent web of saga-writing are likely to have been borrowed from folklore and that these strands give the sagas much of their specific appeal' (p. 64).

Four of the studies are concerned with specific sagas. 'The death forebodings of Saint Óláfr, King of Norway' centres on an episode in *Orkneyinga saga* and its parallel in the Legendary *Óláfs saga helga* in which slips of the tongue are regarded as omens of death. This Almqvist attributes to a general folk-belief in the ominous nature of the *lapsus linguae*, though his arguments are by his own admission circumstantial. The concluding section, essentially a plea for the establishment of a Folklore Institute in Reykjavík, has lost something of its urgency now that the need is being catered for under the auspices of the Arnarnagæan Institute. Forebodings of death are also examined in the study 'Some folklore motifs in *Færeyinga saga*', in which it is suggested that the saga-writer drew consciously upon a stratum of folk beliefs, as well as on a corpus of folk-narrative, in order to heighten the literary effectiveness of his work. A similar treatment is to be found in 'The uglier foot', in which an episode in Snorri's *Óláfs saga helga* is isolated as being derived from a migratory folk-tale element. The differences between Snorri's version and the common ground of the collected folk-tale versions permit a degree of insight as to the processes by which such a motif might be rendered 'literary'. The fourth of these studies, 'The mare of the people of Midfirth', on the other hand, draws on Almqvist's researches into *níð* to find an explanation for the curious episode in *Íslendinga saga* ch. 33, in which five natives of Miðfjörðr are described as forming a mare, with the satirical poet Tannr Bjarnason as its anus.

The remaining essays in the volume, apart from the concluding obituary notice for Dag Strömbäck, deal more specifically with folk-tale and belief. 'The Viking ale and the Rhine gold' re-examines the *Atlamál* motif of a secret shared by two alone; in the Irish versions, it is a Viking's son who is executed so that the father can be sure that the secret, a recipe for heather ale, dies with him. Two further essays concentrate on specific motifs, study of 'child-ghost' traditions in Scotland and Man ('Norwegian dead-child legends westward bound') revealing traces of borrowing from Norse, whereas Irish parallels for the expression *fjörfiskur* ('fish of life') elucidate the significance of the term but cannot be conclusively regarded as borrowing. Three appendices give further versions for the motifs of the heather ale, the uglier foot and the child ghost, with accompanying translations where appropriate. The first essay of the collection, a survey of contacts in the Orkney earldom ('Scandinavian and Celtic folklore contacts') serves to some degree as an introduction to the whole, sketching in areas of profitable research and arguing for philology to be complemented in these fields by folklore scholarship.

Editors of volumes such as these are inevitably placed in a quandary. It is generally the scholar's earlier work which is least accessible and thus most rewarding in reprint; on the other hand, this early work may mark stages in a discussion now overtaken by further research. This problem has to some extent

been overcome by the inclusion of copious notes—it is I suppose an unavoidable evil of the times that these have to be relegated to the rear of the volume—in which Almqvist supplements and sometimes retracts views expressed in the body of the text. A particularly sensitive term in this respect is *saga-writer*. It is indicative that Almqvist (p. 126), assessing the literary merits of the ‘writer’ of *Færeyinga saga*, quotes Foote’s comments from 1965: ‘. . . he himself was a skilful teller of stories . . . and not only a writer of stories.’ Almqvist himself, a student of Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, never directly questions the concept of the sagas as products of a single, all-controlling author. In view of the critical scrutiny given the strict *Buchprosaehre* in the light of orality studies, beginning with D. Hofmann in 1962 and T. M. Andersson in 1964 and continuing in subsequent decades, it would have been interesting to have had a more recent statement from Almqvist on this question.

The presentation of the volume is admirable. One slight slip may cause disproportionate confusion: p. 199, n. 1 should read ‘cf. above p. 93 . . .’ and not ‘. . . p. 13’; I have found no other significant errors. In an age where we are generally at the mercy of the computer-thesaurus, it is a delight to read a book in which word-splitting at the line-end is eschewed completely, and this without the slightest impression of artificiality in the spacings. Boethius Press are likewise to be congratulated on the clarity of the type, the high quality of the paper, and the robust but attractive binding.

STEPHEN N. TRANTER

STUDIENBIBLIOGRAPHIE ZUR ÄLTEREN SKANDINAVISTIK. By STEFAN GIPPERT, BRITTA LAURSEN, HARTMUT RÖHN. *Berliner Beiträge zur Skandinavistik, Band 1. Literaturverlag Norden*. Leverkusen, 1991. 112 pp.

The work under review is a kind of ‘do-it-by-yourself’ bibliographical guide to Old Norse–Icelandic studies, based upon the experience of the Free University, Berlin, containing works published up to 1988. It is the first volume in a series on Scandinavian Studies from the Free University, edited by Hartmut Röhn, who is one of the co-compilers of the present volume, along with Stefan Gippert and Britta Laursen.

The bibliography contains 410 numbered items, but a number of these are repeated where they are cited under more than one topic. The material is divided into seventeen chapters: 1. Subject bibliographies; 2. Manuscript catalogues; 3. Reference works; 4. Grammars and linguistic history; 5. Dictionaries; 6. Runes; 7. Subject periodicals; 8. Facsimile editions of manuscripts; 9. Texts series; 10. Literary histories; 11. Literary criticism; 12. Literary genres; 13. Heroic literature; 14. History; 15. Religion and mythology; 16. The conversion and church history; 17. Law. Each chapter is prefaced by a brief summary and there are helpful commentaries on the individual works listed. Section 12 (Literary genres) is subdivided into Eddic poetry, Skaldic verse, and prose—the last being further subdivided into the usual groups of sagas so familiar to



us all. Details include editions, translations and critical works. Periodicals are arranged under four broad groupings, namely 'philological', 'philol.-hist.', 'historical' and 'archaeological'. Basic works are marked with an asterisk and the compilers have consciously listed as many bibliographies and handbooks as possible that will steer the student towards further reading. The scope of the work, as hinted above, covers the language, literature, history and culture of medieval Iceland and Norway; thus the chapter on manuscript facsimiles (8) includes *corpora codicum medii aevi Islandicorum* and *Norvegicorum*, but not *Danicorum* or *Suecicorum*.

The work concludes with an index of authors and editors, along with 'important' titles and catch-words. The last involves the repetition, in this index, of a number of the chapter headings already listed in the table of contents, such as 'Fachbibliographien' and 'Textreihen' (but not 'Runenkunde' or 'Rechtsgeschichte'), among others. This repetition appears a trifle unnecessary and the selectivity seems rather invidious; either all should have been included or none. Some idiosyncrasies of the index should be mentioned. Icelandic persons are indexed under their forenames rather than their patronymics or surnames. This follows current library cataloguing practice but it is not the practice, commonly, of published indexes and bibliographies over here. (*Saga-Book* follows both customs.) In listing even those Icelanders with surnames—such as Sigurður Nordal—under their forenames the bibliography follows Landsbókasafn rather than AACR2. One exception is Zoëga, who *is* indexed under his surname. Guðbrandur Vigfússon is entered under both 'Guðbrandur' and 'Vigfusson, Gudbrand'—presumably as an aid to those students who may not have recognised an Icelander in the form of his name which would be most familiar to them (though only his dictionary finds a place in this work). Texts of Snorri's *Edda* occupy two pages (89–90) of the bibliography but they are indexed separately under 'Edda Snorra Sturlusonar' (89) and 'Snorri Sturluson' (90). The first must be a title entry, but Snorri should have had an entry for the texts on p. 89 as well.

Some random remarks on the main body of the text follow. One of the disadvantages of computer cataloguing is thrown up by certain entries in the bibliography, namely the over-abbreviation of some series citations. Antonsen's runic grammar (item 70) is given as the third volume in a certain 'Reihe A'—but Reihe A of what? Similarly, Jónas Kristjánsson's *Um Fóstbræðrasögu* (227 and 260) is 'Rit I'—but whose 'Rit'? I am not too sure of the value of the chapter on 'Subject' periodicals, which contains, as the compilers acknowledge, a number which carry very little medieval material. Possibly it is useful to direct the attention of students to journals for the sake of the reviews as much as for the articles—reviews of *medievalia* are often commoner than articles of medieval interest—but perhaps it may be better to encourage students to come to periodicals through their own reading rather than to tantalise them with a list of titles which may contain little of interest or relevance. The collection of essays on the *Elder Edda* published by the University of Manitoba in 1983 is cited for one article only (180), though the collection as a whole is not given

an entry. Are we to suppose that there is only one worthwhile piece in it (under the relevant criteria)?

The reviewer is disarmed from the start when faced by a bibliography of limited scope or audience. It is difficult to know what to say. What to one person may seem important, to another may not be really relevant. Why has this been included? Why has that been omitted? Only the judgement of the compiler(s) can say, and who can put his hand on his heart and assert that their judgement was wrong? What can one say about this bibliography, apart from the nit-picking remarks above? It is designed for those studying by themselves and is intended to fill an observed gap in the provision of aids for this class of student. Two obvious qualifications come to mind. The first concerns the scope of the particular course, or courses, upon which the bibliography is based. The second, the language group at which it is aimed. To take the second point first, this work is obviously aimed at a German-speaking readership with a knowledge of at least one Scandinavian language. The text translations cited are mostly German, with some Danish and Norwegian. English translations are never mentioned, except for Anthony Faulkes's *Snorra Edda* in the Everyman edition (364), though students are encouraged to use bibliographies to locate them. Yet, despite this, no reference is made to Donald K. Fry's useful bibliography of *Norse sagas translated into English* (1981). This factor alone would limit the usefulness of the bibliography for English-speaking students.

With regard to the first point, there are a few observations which could be made. The section on the family sagas which lists works on individual sagas contains eight entries which only concern six separate sagas. These do include all-time greats like *Njáls saga* and *Hrafnkels saga* but they do not, for instance, include *Gunnlaugs saga* which is, I believe, a popular text for university syllabuses, at least in this country. The chapter on law, too, is very thin. Seven entries only and no mention either of Halldór Hermannsson's law bibliography in *Ísländica* 4 (1910) or of editions and translations of *Grágas*, which would be a disadvantage for any student who wished to take the legal texts seriously. There are no separate sections for *Íslendingabók* or for *Landnámabók*—the former appears in the index under its title but not under Ari. Nor does *Konungs skuggsjá* find a place anywhere in the bibliography.

To sum up then. Though this bibliography has many merits and could go a long way towards providing a solid basis for private study, its usefulness will obviously be limited according to the student's interests and needs and how far he or she would find helpful translations which are largely German, rather than English or even a selection of both. Teachers, when considering whether to recommend it to students, will have to calculate how far it really suits their purposes, bearing in mind the qualifications outlined above—though it is hard to imagine that any could really unreservedly recommend a work that does not mention *The Viking achievement!*

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