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# IN PRAISE OF ÁSTRÍÐR ÓLÁFSDÓTTIR

By JUDITH JESCH

## I Establishing a text

OF THE saga accounts of Magnús inn góði's return from Russia to claim the throne of Norway, only *Heimskringla* mentions the part played by his stepmother Ástriðr. This account (*Hkr.*, III 4–6) is based on three *dróttkvætt* stanzas attributed to the poet Sigvatr, which are also preserved only in manuscripts of *Heimskringla* (*Skjd.*, A I 248, B I 231–32).<sup>1</sup> As none of the manuscripts provides an entirely satisfactory text of these stanzas, it is necessary to attempt a reconstruction. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson's version in *Hkr.*, III 5–6 may serve as the basis for discussion:

1.      Hrein getum hóla launa  
hnossfjolð lofi ossu  
Óleifs dœtr, es átti  
jofurr sighvatastr digri.  
Þings beið herr á Hongrum  
hundmargr Svía grundar  
austr, es Ástriðr lýsti  
Óleifs sonar mólum.

We will repay well with our praise Óláfr's daughter, wife of the stout and most victorious warrior, for her many bright presents. A substantial army of Swedes assembled east at Hangrar when Ástriðr announced the cause of the son of Óláfr.

<sup>1</sup> When referring to the manuscripts containing these verses, I use the sigla listed in *Hkr.*, III 2 rather than those of *Skjd.* It should be noted that *Skjd.* does not give variants from Jón Eggertsson's copy of *Kringla*, Stockh. Papp. 18 fol. (see Louis-Jensen 1977, 16–37, for the fullest discussion to date of the relationships of the *Hkr.* mss). Until there is a new critical edition of *Heimskringla*, it is thus necessary to check the *Skjd.* A-texts against the manuscript texts (which I was able to do at Det arnamagnæanske Institut, Copenhagen, in the autumn of 1993). I cite variants (especially those common to more than one ms) in normalised form, except where the orthography is significant. For skaldic stanzas that I discuss in detail, I give page references to both *Skjd.* and *Hkr.*; for those requiring briefer reference I give the skald's name in abbreviated form followed by the number of the poem and the number(s) of the stanza(s) as for instance in Fidjestøl 1982. Thus these stanzas of Sigvatr's are *Sigv.* IX 1–3.

2. Máttit hón við hættna,  
 heilróð, Svíá deila  
 meir, þótt Magnús væri  
 margnennin sonr hennar.  
 Olli hón því, at allri  
 áttleifð Haralds knátti,  
 mest með móttkum Kristi,  
 Magnús konungr fagna.

Good advice-giver, she could hardly have dealt better with the daring Swedes  
 had bold Magnús been her own son. She, with the mighty Christ, was the main  
 reason that King Magnús could take up all the inheritance of Haraldr.

3. Mildr á mennsku at gjalda  
 Magnús, en því fognum,  
 þat gerði vin virða  
 víðlendan, Ástríði.  
 Hón hefr svá komit sínum,  
 sónn, at fó mun ɔnnur,  
 orð gerik drós til dýrðar,  
 djúpróð kona, stjúpi.

Generous Magnús owes Ástríðr a reward for her bold deed, we're glad for it,  
 it gave a great realm to the friend of men. Woman of wise advice has helped  
 her stepson as few others would, true words I make to honour the lady.

Although these stanzas present no very serious problems compared with some skaldic verse, there are points that need discussion. The principles for editing the Viking Age verse preserved in Old Icelandic prose texts of the thirteenth century or later have never been fully set out and the practice of editors has often been eclectic. This eclectic approach has never been explicitly justified, but it appears to be based on the assumption (cf. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson in *Hkr.*, III xcv) that scribes were more likely to intervene in the verse passages of the text they were copying than in the prose, so that the manuscript stemma of the work as a whole cannot be used automatically to reconstruct the verses contained within it. Without the support of the prose stemma, editors turn to metrical, grammatical, lexical, stylistic or other criteria to reconstruct the verse texts. This practice implicitly acknowledges that skaldic stanzas operate at a different textual level from that of their prose surroundings, and suggests that medieval scribes felt free to add, rearrange or delete them, to 'correct' them from alternative versions available to them in either oral or written form, or to reinterpret them to their own satisfaction. Thus, in their approach to skaldic verse, medieval scribes often anticipated the efforts of modern editors and we must take their procedures into account when attempting to understand the poems

ourselves.<sup>2</sup> Medieval authors and scribes valued skaldic verse as evidence for the Viking Age, and so still do many modern scholars. The currently fashionable reaction against the earlier privileging of the ‘original’ text now encourages us to recognise the value of each stage in the development of a text as a record of its own time (Haugen 1990, 136, 180). While this is a welcome reminder that we have to work with the knowable, material texts that survive rather than their hypothetical archetypes, for students of the Viking Age (if not for critics of Icelandic literature) it is still more important to reconstruct than it is to deconstruct the verbal artefacts of that period. By reason of its restrictive metre and diction, skaldic verse is better suited to this project than, for instance, Eddic verse, of which it is more easily argued that the preserved texts are simply thirteenth-century manifestations of a ‘bagvedliggende betydningsunivers’ (Meulengracht Sørensen 1991, 224). The following comments on the interpretations of both medieval and modern editors of the three stanzas in praise of Ástriðr are thus intended as an approach to the poem that Sigvatr actually composed and the circumstances in which it was performed.

Most of the problems of reconstructing this poem occur in the first quatrain:

A) *Hrein getum hóla launa / hnossfjolð lofi ossu*. It would appear that we should take *ossu* as neut. dat. sg. agreeing with *lofi*, and *hrein* as neut. acc. pl. agreeing with *hnossfjolð*. However, the simplex *fjolð* is normally fem. sg. A simple way of dealing with this problem is, with Finnur Jónsson, to extrapolate a unique instance of a neut. pl. form in this compound (*LP* s. v. *fjolð* and *hnossfjolð*).<sup>3</sup> The scribes of J and E (or of their archetype), on the other hand, preferred to make the line grammatically ‘correct’ with two minor emendations: *Hveim[<Hrein] getum hóla launa hnossfjolð lofi ossa [<ossu]*. As *launa* takes the dative of the person being paid and the accusative of that which is being paid for, we can construe *ossa* with *hnossfjolð* (both fem. acc. sg.) and take the whole couplet as a question which is answered in the next couplet: ‘Whom do we fully repay for our many treasures with praise? Óláfr’s daughter . . .’ However, all modern editors choose the K/39/F version (as in the text above) over the J/E

<sup>2</sup> I owe this point (and the inspiration for the first section of this article) to David Parsons. The whole question of the editing of skaldic verse certainly needs much more extensive discussion.

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that, according to Kuhn (1937, 56), the simplex *fjolð* does not appear in Old Norse poetry before the thirteenth century, but this involves him in explaining away a number of apparently earlier examples as later replacements for an original *fiol* (neut.).

version. We can only guess at their reasons, which could be that they prefer to follow the main manuscript (K) unless there is good reason not to, or that it seems most natural for the possessive *ossu* to refer back to the immediately preceding noun, or that, although Sigvatr regularly uses rhetorical questions beginning with an interrogative pronoun in his verse (Sigv. XI 10, 11; XII 17; the first two of these begin a stanza), he is never so unsubtle as to answer them. We would probably agree that all these reasons together outweigh any objection to the otherwise unrecorded neut. pl. *-fjolð*, especially since the alternation between fem. sg. and neut. pl. in a collective noun is common (Beito 1954, 95, 180; Janzén 1965, 359).

B) *dætr, es átti*. Kock (*NN*§2775) suggested replacing *dætr, sú es* (K/39/F; in *Skjd.*, B I 231 *dætr, sús*) with ‘det korrekta’ *dætr es*, as found in J and E. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson followed Kock rather than Finnur Jónsson, giving an example of how the reading of the main manuscript (both copies of K, supported by other mss in this class) can be rejected when grammatical criteria favour a variant reading.

C) *sighvatastr*. K/J/E all have *sigrhvatastr* while 39 and F have *sighvatastr*. Although *LP* lists compounds in both *sig-* neut., ‘battle’, and *sigr-* masc., ‘victory’, it is not clear that there was a real distinction between these two elements, especially in a compound (characteristically, Finnur Jónsson translates *sigrgjarn* as ‘kamp-begærlig’ in *LP* and ‘sejrbegærlig’ in *Skjd.*, B I 533). Yet both Finnur Jónsson and Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson reject the form *sigrhvatastr* that is suggested by the stemma, as it is found not only in both copies of K (63 and 18) but also in both the manuscripts of the y-class (J and E). One can only presume that they wished to improve the pun on the poet’s name (beloved of many scholars, see Paasche 1917, 80 and Fidjestøl 1982, 160). But Sigvatr made use of the rhyme between the simplex *sigr* and his favourite epithet for the king, *digri*, on a number of occasions (e. g. Sigv. XII 6, 8; XIII 15),<sup>4</sup> and in this context it seems preferable to keep K’s reading of *sigrhvatastr*. *Sigrhvatastr* also makes for a better rhyme.<sup>5</sup>

These three examples demonstrate that it is not possible to follow any one manuscript in reconstructing the first quatrain of Sigvatr’s first stanza

<sup>4</sup> The collocation was used by other poets, too, when referring to Óláfr in his own right or as the father of Magnús, e. g. Jök. 1, Arn. II 13 and ÞjóðA. I 15. It may have been this common collocation that influenced the scribes of J and E (or more likely their archetype) to write this adjective as two words, *sigr hvatastr*.

<sup>5</sup> According to Kuhn (1983, 77), when *r* followed another consonant (especially *b*, *d* or *g*), both consonants participated in the internal rhyme. Thus, *digri* would presuppose a rhyme in *sigr-*.

in praise of Ástriðr. Finnur Jónsson chose the readings of K in A and B, Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson only in A, and I would follow it in A and C. It could of course be argued that the text of J and E gives a complete version that has meaning, without the need for any eclectic adoption of variants, but reasons have been given above to suggest that although this version may have had meaning for the scribes of J and E (or their archetype), it is unlikely to represent Sigvatr's composition. Even if we were not necessarily interested in Sigvatr's text, but only in a text that makes sense, both J and E still turn out to be unsatisfactory witnesses as we move further into the poem. Thus, while the other manuscripts reproduce three stanzas, J has only one, which is a conglomeration of the first quatrains of stanzas 1 and 2 of the complete text. Whatever the reason for this peculiarity of J, it provides a less satisfactory text than the full three stanzas. E can only remain as a possible sole text for the poem if we are willing to accept its witness to the first word of 1/5 as *ping* rather than *pings*. *Bíða* + acc. is a possible construction, and although the meaning seems less appropriate, it can be made to make sense (the Swedish army 'suffered an assembly at Hangrar').<sup>6</sup> But when we consider two closely-related stanzas by Sigvatr (see III below), it will be seen that E is not a satisfactory sole witness there either.

It is unlikely that we will ever be able to reconstruct the text of these stanzas exactly as they were composed by Sigvatr, although we can be reasonably sure of the text known to Snorri which he incorporated into *Heimskringla*. Nevertheless, it has been possible to construct a 'working text' which fits in well with what we know of Sigvatr's other work. In the attempt at some kind of reconstruction, all the variant readings have to be considered, and evaluated against a number of criteria, of which the manuscript stemma of the prose texts is not always the most helpful.<sup>7</sup> In other words, the eclectic approach seems unavoidable.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> E also has an unsatisfactory form of the place-name in stanza 2: *haumgrom*.

<sup>7</sup> I have not felt it necessary to discuss in detail the following variants (not including mere spelling variants) which are confined to one or two mss, and which do not appear to have any authority: in stanza 1, F *liði* (for *lofi*), 18 *bauð* (for *beið*), 39 + F *hvngrom* (for *Hongrum*); in stanza 2, J *margrnenninn*.

<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that the copies of *Kringla* do generally have the best text, and that there are many instances where Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson keeps the *Kringla* text in his edition, but Finnur Jónsson was willing to admit variants from other branches of the tradition (both in *Skjd. B* and in his edition of *Heimskringla*).

## II Let us now praise famous (wo)men

Sigvatr's three stanzas in praise of Ástriðr have received surprisingly little attention. Admittedly, Paasche (1917, 80) notes 'det paafaldende og sjeldne i, at Sigvat digter et kvad til ære for en kvinde' while Petersen (1946, 150–52) regrets that we have only three stanzas of what must have been a longer poem and praises it for its 'Simpelhed i Stilen'. So unusual was it that other scholars have not known how to deal with it. Hollander (1940) does not mention the poem at all while Fidjestøl (1982), although he mentions it in passing, does not include it in his 'korpus' of 'lovkvad om fyrstar'. He gives no explanation for this omission, but presumably it was because Ástriðr was not a 'fyrste', although it certainly is a 'lovkvad'. In discussing possible models for Snorri Sturluson's lost poem on frú Katrín, Bjarni Einarsson (1969) mentions Óttarr's lost (if it ever existed) *mansongsdrápa* for Ástriðr (see IV below), but not Sigvatr's poem which has survived.

A poem in praise of a woman is anomalous in a genre of poetry designed for the praise of warriors and chieftains, and this is the only example I know of (leaving aside the love poems which belong to a different genre and which may well be post-Viking Age). The closest parallels from this period are in some runic memorials for women which break into a few lines of *fornyrðislag* within the inscription, the Hassmyra stone in Västmanland (Jansson 1964, 69–76) with a full stanza, and the Dynna stone from Norway (Olsen 1941, 192–202) with only a couplet. And these parallels are not very close, for the runic inscriptions praise the dead women for typically female accomplishments: Ástriðr from Dynna was *mær honnurst* in Hadeland, and no better *hifrøyia* than Óðindís will ever run the farm at Hassmyra. Our Ástriðr, on the other hand, is praised not for her house-wifely or craft skills, but for a successful political intervention which puts her stepson on the Norwegian throne. The type of action being praised is entirely suitable for skaldic treatment, even if it was unusual for women to act in this way, and even more unusual for this to be recorded in skaldic verse. There may of course have been other skaldic poems in praise of women that have not survived. We know from archaeological evidence such as the Oseberg burial, and from a number of Danish runic monuments (without verse) to highborn women that important women could achieve public commemoration. It is also a well-known pattern in history that queens could act in areas that were not normally open to other women. Thus, it is not inconceivable that there were *dróttkvætt* praise poems in honour of other highborn Scandinavian women that have simply not been

preserved in the selective and biased transmission of skaldic verse in the Kings' Sagas. Nevertheless, it is tempting to see Sigvatr as an innovator here, for two reasons.

Sigvatr showed more interest in women than most court poets, with females appearing in relatively many of his poems, from his daughter Tófa to the range of Swedish hags and ladies in the *Austrfararvísur*. Moreover, Sigvatr was a poetic innovator in extending the generic range of *dróttkvætt*, as demonstrated by his *Bersögglisvísur*. These two facets of Sigvatr's poetical personality suggest that he may have been the first poet to attempt a proper panegyric of a woman. The *dróttkvætt* genre was well developed for eulogising the brave in battle and the successful sea-captain, but had no vocabulary for praising a woman who could be neither of these things. Sigvatr's strategy was to extrapolate two aspects of Ástríðr's life and actions for which the genre did have a vocabulary, and concentrate on those. In particular, the poem explores Ástríðr's dynastic role as daughter, wife and stepmother, and engages in a complex paralleling of her public persuasion of the Swedes with Sigvatr's public praise of her for doing this.

While the three extant stanzas may or may not have been part of a longer poem originally, they form a well-rounded whole as they stand. The poem is neatly framed by two first-person references by the poet to his poem. He begins conventionally by stating that he can repay (*launa*) with his praise (*lofi ossu*) the many bright treasures (*hrein hnossfjolð*) Óláfr's daughter has given him and ends with a reference to the 'true words' he has made to the glory of the lady (*sønn orð gerik drós til dýrðar*). That this is not just a matter of cosy reciprocity between skald and patron is indicated in the third stanza, where the theme is extended to apply to Magnús, the beneficiary of the queen's actions. He ought to repay (*gjalda*) her for her *mennska*, and the hint is underlined by the use of the adjective *mildr* 'generous'. Thus, both Sigvatr and Magnús owe Ástríðr a debt.

Within this frame of praise and repayment, Sigvatr emphasises Ástríðr's actions at the assembly, at which she proclaimed Magnús's case (*lýsti mólum*). This last phrase uses the legal language appropriate to speeches at the assembly, but in this context it has further resonances, for in skaldic verse, both *lýsa* and especially *mól* commonly have a metatextual reference to the poetry itself, as is easily demonstrated by the examples listed in the entries for these two words in *LP* (for *mól* see also Kreutzer 1977, 86). Thus the reciprocity between skald and queen is not only in his composition of a poem repaying her for gifts given earlier, but in the parallel between their public speech acts on behalf of the Norwegian royal dynasty, Sigvatr's being his poetry, and Ástríðr's her speech at the assembly.

In the second stanza, Ástriðr's speech is translated into action, with verbs like *deila* and *valda* indicating how active her persuasion of the 'bold' Swedes was. Then comes the unexpected statement that in this Ástriðr acted *með móttkum Kristi*. I cannot see that there is any way of reading this other than as suggesting a parity in the influence of queen and Christ. Thus, Ástriðr's power is, if not exactly equal to, then certainly complementary to that of Christ. The second and third stanzas also contain two adjectives in *-ráðr* applied to the queen (*heilrágð* and *djúprágð*). The giving of advice (both good and bad) is a proper female activity in Old Norse literature, and we may wish to translate these as praising her for her advice (as I have done above). Yet it is not clear whom Ástriðr is advising (her persuasion of the Swedes is more forceful than mere advice), and the root *-ráð-* can have a more active connotation. In LP Finnur Jónsson gives two translations for *heilráðr*, '1) som giver oprigtige, gode, råd' and '2) som tager gode, hele, fuldstændige, råd, bestemmelser, som tænker og handler derefter fuldtud'. He assigns this passage to the first of these interpretations, but there is no reason other than his (and our?) expectations of female behaviour why his second translation should not be equally appropriate. Certainly there is plenty of evidence that Sigvatr used the verb *ráða* in a highly active sense (Sigv. XI 12, XII 20, XIII 3, 6). This active sense would also accord better with the fact that Ástriðr is praised for her *mennska*, a word that I would argue has a connotation of 'manly behaviour' in this context.<sup>9</sup> The queen

<sup>9</sup> Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson (*Hkr.*, III 6n.) also translates *mennsku* as *mannód* (*dugnað*) rather than using the modern Icelandic *mennska* which has the implication of 'humanity'. Although the Christian context of Sigvatr's stanza may suggest that this meaning is also appropriate here, there is simply not enough contemporary evidence to establish the full semantic range of *mennska* at this early date. However, there is a useful parallel involving the adjective *mennskrin* in *Hervararkviða* 19–20 (Heusler and Ranisch 1903, 18) which plays on both the possible contrasts of human/not human and male/female. According to her father, Hervor is not *þónum lík* both because she is wandering around burial mounds at night and because she is kitted out in war gear. He repeatedly calls her *mær ung*, in contrast to the adult male status implied by her armour. Her reply is *Maðr póttumk ek / menzkr til þessa, / áðr ek sali yðra / sækia réðak*, and she goes on to repeat her request for the sword Tyrfingr. In this context, *menzkr maðr* must refer to Hervor's male garb (note that the herdsman at the beginning of the poem assumes she is male) as well as to her crossing of the boundary between human and non-human. Both Hervor and Ástriðr are judged by a standard in which humanity and maleness intersect. It is Hervor's aspiration to be like a man that enables her to take on the supernatural (i. e. non-human) threat of the accursed sword. Similarly, Ástriðr's praiseworthy 'humanity' arises from her speaking out like a man.

qualifies for praise because she has acted like a man, in speaking successfully at a public assembly and thereby being primarily responsible (along with Christ) for putting Magnús on the throne of Norway.

Thus poet and queen act together in the service of Magnús, who represents the continuity of the Norwegian dynasty. This is of course women's traditional role in an hereditary monarchy. In the first stanza, Sigvatr emphasises Ástríðr's central position in the dynastic web: Ástríðr is a person in her own right (she is named), but she is also the daughter of the Swedish king Óláfr and the wife of the *jofurr sigrhvatastr digri* (i. e. St Óláfr), while acting for the son of the latter. The second stanza elaborates these relationships. She could not have done more for Magnús were he her son (thus emphasising that he is not). His name appears twice in this stanza, culminating in his becoming *Magnús konungr* as a result of her considerable efforts. And his prize is *átteifð Haralds*. Despite the unanimous agreement of editors and translators that this refers to Haraldr hárfagri, I would like to suggest the possibility that it actually refers to Haraldr grenski, Magnús's paternal grandfather. Sigvatr's poem deals not in the longer reaches of Norwegian history, but in a narrower dynastic perspective: the immediate problem of restoring the son of Óláfr to his father's throne. Sigvatr regularly referred to Óláfr as the 'heir of Haraldr', meaning the father rather than the remote ancestor; the concept of Norway as the inheritance of Haraldr hárfagri was only just emerging at this time, and was not fully established until the time of Haraldr harðráði (Krag 1989). The dynastic relationships result, in the third stanza, in a personal relationship between the two main participants, Magnús and Ástríðr. Sigvatr explains to Magnús how he, the stepson, is to be grateful to Ástríðr, whose actions made him *víðlendr*. The very last word (*stjúpi*) puts Magnús in his proper place, at least in the context of this poem which stresses his stepmother's role in making it all possible. But even when praising the dowager, Sigvatr cannot desist from his role of advising the king.

### III *The contexts of the poem*

Sigvatr's fatherly tone may be explained by the fact that Magnús was only ten years old at this time (see Arn. III 1) and that Sigvatr had known him since birth and was his godfather. The *Bersoglisvísur* show that the poet always felt able to address Magnús in an older-and-wiser tone that was not entirely consonant with the respect due to crowned kings. Sigvatr's advice to the young king in the Ástríðr stanzas suggests a link with two stanzas that also are preserved only in *Hkr.* (III 18–19; see also *Skjd.*, A I 274, B I 253–54). The working text is once again supplied by Bjarni

Aðalbjarnarson (but I give the two stanzas their *lausavísa* numbering from *Skjd.*):

30. Heim sóttir þú hættinn  
 hond, en vel mátt londum,  
 þinn stoðak mótt, sem mōnum,  
 Magnús konungr, fagna.  
 Fœrak vist, þvit vórum  
 varðr at þér, í Garða,  
 skrifnask skírinafna  
 skript, þjóðkonungr, niptar.

You boldly made your way home, King Magnús, and you'll be glad of both lands and men; I support your rule. I would certainly have gone to Russia, since I was responsible for you, king of the nation; (his) kinswoman's document was written for (my) godson.<sup>10</sup>

31. Minn hug segik mōnum,  
 Magnús, at ek fagna,  
 guðs lán es þat, þínu  
 þingdrífu vel lífi.  
 Ætti drengja drótinn  
 dýrðar son, ef yrði,  
 þjóð mætti fó fœðask,  
 feðr glíkr, konung slíkan.

I tell people what I think, Magnús, that I am glad of your royal performance [lit. ‘your life attending assemblies’], that is a gift of God. The lord of men<sup>11</sup> [Óláfr] would have a splendid son if he turned out like (his) father; few nations could rear such a king.

Again, the text has to be reconstructed using the eclectic procedures outlined above, and no one manuscript has an entirely satisfactory text, with minor errors scattered across all the manuscripts. In these stanzas the errors suggest scribal inattention and minor misunderstandings rather than any major editorial activity. Thus, K is unsatisfactory because it has *varðat* instead of *varðr at* in 30/6, the meaningless *sán* instead of *lán* in 31/3,<sup>12</sup> átti

<sup>10</sup> In the most recent edition of *Heimskringla* (Bergljót S. Kristjánsdóttir *et al.* 1991, 567) there is a suggestion, though it can be no more, that this was a written confirmation by Ástriðr that her stepson was legally entitled to inherit the kingdom. Kock’s interpretation of these lines (*NN* §1879) makes no sense in the context of the stanza.

<sup>11</sup> For Sigvatr’s special use of the term *drengi* in his relationship with King Óláfr, see Jesch 1993, 166.

<sup>12</sup> This particular error should be ascribed to Ásgeir Jónsson’s copying rather than to K, since 18 has the reading *lán*.

instead of *aetti* in 31/5 and *ferð* instead of *feðr* in 31/8. E, on the other hand, has *vørðr at* in 30/6, *dýrðan* instead of *dýrðar* and *er* instead of *ef* in 31/6, and *má til* instead of *mætti* in 31/7 (with J sharing the first and last of these). 39 and F are more consistent, but even they have at least one minor error each which would disqualify them as sole witnesses to the text.

If establishing a text causes no particular problems, understanding that text is not so simple: Finnur Jónsson was unable to translate the last two lines of 30. Since then, some progress has been made, and Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson's suggested interpretation (see the notes to *Hkr.*, III 18–19) at least accounts for everything in the two stanzas. I am unable to add to this interpretation and move on to considering the status of these two stanzas in their prose context. They are both presented as *lausavísur* in *Hkr.*, introduced with *Þá kvað Sigvatr* and *Sigvatr kvað*. Although the context is Magnús's return to Norway, these stanzas are separated from the earlier account of Ástriðr's intervention.

The saga of Magnús inn góði (*Hkr.*, III 3–67) begins with his journey from Russia to Sweden, supported by a couple of Arnórr's verses. In Sweden, Ástriðr was waiting for him, and Snorri describes her generous welcome and her immediate calling of an assembly. In a long speech at that assembly she tries to persuade the Swedes to help Magnús by emphasising her own support for him, which includes both men and money. Her clinching argument is that those who were wounded or lost relatives fighting for St Óláfr should travel to Norway to seek revenge. She persuades a large troop to accompany Magnús to Norway. At this point, Sigvatr's three stanzas for Ástriðr are adduced as evidence for this. The first chapter ends with a stanza by Þjóðólfr describing Magnús's sea journey. The second chapter continues the description of his journey, supported by two of Arnórr's verses. Chapters 3–6 describe Magnús's successful bid to become sole king of Norway, having seen off Sveinn Álfifuson and come to an agreement with Hørða-Knútr of Denmark. Chapter 7 returns to Ástriðr and describes her strained relationship with Magnús's mother Álfhildr; Magnús welcomes Álfhildr to the court and she wants to be properly honoured there. This ought to be the cue for Sigvatr's half-stanza (XII 32, see below) in which he favours Ástriðr over Álfhildr, but in fact that does not come until later, at the end of chapter 9. First Snorri has to introduce Sigvatr as a character rather than just as the author of poems cited as evidence. This leads to quite a lengthy digression explaining how Sigvatr was in Rome at the time of Stiklarstaðir, and about his return to Norway, interspersed with some of his best-known poetry about the death of Óláfr. At the end of chapter 8, Sigvatr, who is unhappy in Norway, goes

to Sweden to be with Ástriðr ('for a long time'), waiting for news of Magnús. Chapter 9 then returns to Magnús's arrival in Sweden and the joy of poet, queen and prince at being together. In this chapter, Sigvatr speaks the two *lausavísur* 30 and 31, and joins Ástriðr in accompanying Magnús to Norway. In Norway, Sigvatr recites the *lausavísa* in which he tells Álfhildr to give precedence to Ástriðr (*Hkr.*, III 20; *Skjd.*, A1 275, B1 254):

32. Ástriði láttu œðri,  
Álfhildr, an þik sjálfa,  
þér þótt þinn hagr stórum,  
þat vildi guð, batni.

Álfhildr, let Ástriðr take precedence over yourself, even though your status has greatly improved; God willed that.

Snorri is clearly combining two narratives here, in such a way that we can detect the two strands. One strand concerns Magnús's return from Russia via Sweden, roughly as described in other Kings' Sagas (with some of the same supporting verses).<sup>13</sup> Snorri combined this with a narrative which is not recorded in any other Kings' Saga and which concentrates on events in Sweden, particularly Ástriðr's role in assisting Magnús's return. Her actions in Sweden, and the supporting verses, are brought forward into the main thread of the narrative (chapter 1), but in fact they belong to a narrative centred on Sigvatr and his poetry which is picked up again in chapter 7. Even here, Snorri seems to have tampered with the narrative logic, for the account of the enmity between Ástriðr and Álfhildr should have come towards the end of this section, when everyone is safely in Norway, just as indeed the verse supporting this anecdote comes at the end of chapter 9. The logic of the story that Snorri has dismembered is as follows (with chapter numbers of *Magnúss saga* in *Hkr.* in brackets):

- A) Sigvatr in Rome at the time of Óláfr's death, and his poetic reactions to that death (7)
- B) his return to Norway and restlessness there (8)
- C) his journey to Sweden to join Ástriðr in awaiting Magnús (8)
- D) Ástriðr's persuasion of the Swedes to back Magnús's attempt on the throne of Norway and Sigvatr's poem in praise of her (1)
- E) Magnús's eventual arrival in Sweden and Sigvatr's two stanzas addressing him (9)
- F) the reunion in Norway with Álfhildr and Sigvatr's poem supporting Ástriðr against her (7, 9)

<sup>13</sup> This strand begins at the end of *Óláfs saga helga* (*Hkr.* II, 414–15), with the journey of Einarr þambar-skelfir and Kálfur Árnason to Russia to fetch Magnús.

This narrative structure can easily be reconstructed from the somewhat clumsy way in which Snorri has incorporated these events into his basic account which is otherwise roughly the same as in other Kings' Sagas. All the events described by Snorri that are not found in other Kings' Sagas seem to depend on skaldic stanzas by Sigvatr. It is noteworthy that not one of the poems associated with these episodes is preserved outside Snorri's own writings. The two stanzas addressed to Magnús, the three in praise of Ástriðr and the half stanza addressed to Álfhildr are preserved only in manuscripts of *Hkr.* The *lausavísur* of chapters 7 and 8 (Sigv. XIII 21–27) are preserved in *Hkr.* and in part in *ÓSH*. The rather clumsy way in which Snorri integrated the events based on these stanzas into his account might suggest that he was following a prose source which had already linked these stanzas to one another. However, there is evidence that at least some of these stanzas belonged together from the beginning. In fact, I would like to suggest that Sigvatr composed the poem in praise of Ástriðr and the two stanzas addressing Magnús at the same time, for the same occasion, and with deliberate verbal echoes between them indicating the link.

A list of the verbal echoes between the two sets of stanzas demonstrates this link:

30/1: *hættinn*, applied to Magnús, recalls the *hættna Svía* of 2/1–2.

30/4: the line *Magnús konungr fagna* exactly repeats 2/8, and the echo is strengthened by the presence of the syllable *mótt(-)* in the previous line (and alliterating with *Magnús*) in both cases.

31/2: the rhyme of *Magnús . . . fagna* is again repeated, and recalls the rhyme of a different form of the same verb with *Magnús* in 3/2, i. e. in the same position (second line) of the stanza. Again the effect is strengthened by the alliterating use of the same root (*menn-/mønn-*) in the previous line. (And the same is true of 30/4.)

31/4–8: *bing-*, *dýrðar*, *son*, *fó* and *konung* repeat words that have appeared in 1/5, 3/7, 1/8 + 2/4, 3/6, and 2/8 respectively. Although not significant individually, the cumulative effect of these is to echo the stanzas in praise of Ástriðr.

I would argue that it is the two stanzas about Magnús that deliberately echo the three about Ástriðr rather than the other way round. There are indications of progression between the two sets of stanzas. Thus, the poet's indirect address to Magnús in 3/1–2 anticipates his more direct address in 30 and 31.<sup>14</sup> Three of the four couplets in 30 (lines 3–8) have the same alliterating sounds, in the same order, as the first three couplets of 3 (i. e. *m/v/s*), giving an auditory link between the end of the first poem (for

<sup>14</sup> In 3/1, the scribe of F in fact uses a second- (rather than third-) person form of the verb *átt*. This may suggest that he was influenced by the verses addressing Magnús.

Ástríðr) and the beginning of the second (to Magnús). There are also echoes within the two stanzas about Magnús (*mǫnum, Magnús... fagna, þjóðkonungr*) which contribute to the build-up to Sigvatr's climax in 31: his pronouncement that Magnús will be a good king if he is like his father.

These links do not necessarily mean that these five stanzas were part of one poem. The internal evidence shows that 1–3 are in praise of Ástríðr, without direct address. On the other hand, 30–31 show Sigvatr in god-fatherly mood, advising the young king (with probably a reference to Ástríðr in *niptar*), welcoming him home, promising to support him (*binn stoðak mótt*) and telling him how to be a good king by imitating his father. The repetition of the forms of the verb *fagna* are the clue to the relationship between these verses. Although they are not all one poem, the stanzas were probably composed for one occasion, a ceremonial one in Norway to welcome Magnús and celebrate his accession to the throne. At this ceremonial occasion, one might speculate, the court poet declaimed a panegyric on the dowager queen, gave a wise old man's welcome to the young king, and possibly even put the concubine Álfhildr in her place. This half-stanza is too short to establish any verbal links with the other five stanzas, but Sigvatr does refer to God's will in it, echoing the emphasis he put on divine intervention in 2/7 and 31/3. The whole occasion no doubt reflected the new ideology of the Christian, divinely-appointed king.

#### *IV Remembering Ástríðr*

Although Sigvatr's poems on the return of Magnús to Norway are not recorded in any texts other than *Hkr.*, they appear to have been known to later poets. A half stanza attributed to Kali Sæbjarnarson (*Skjd.*, A I 434, B I 404) echoes the first stanza of the Ástríðr poem (with the verbal parallels italicised):<sup>15</sup>

Hvé *launa* þér þínir  
*þingríkir* hqfðingjar;  
 vestr bifask rong í rostum  
 (reyn oss *jofurr*) *hnossir*?

<sup>15</sup> The text in *Skjd.* B quoted here is a good example of the eclectic reconstruction of a skaldic stanza from a number of not entirely satisfactory manuscripts. However, I have decided to keep the B-text here, as all the words significant to a comparison with Sigvatr's stanza appear in all manuscripts, with the exception of *jofurr*, which is replaced by *konungr* both in the *Orkneyinga saga* tradition and in Bergsbók. In the latter, the half-stanza appears in the lower margin of fol. 195v, and is attributed to Þormóðr kolbrúnarskáld (*ÓSH*, 1014–15).

Einarr Skúlason specifically refers to his predecessor Sigvatr in st. 12 of his poem on St Óláfr, *Geisli* (*Skjd.*, A I 459–73, B I 427–45), and he has many faint echoes of the older poet’s work that are not worth detailing. But two stanzas of *Geisli* are more closely modelled on Sigvatr’s work.<sup>16</sup> The first stanza of the Ástríðr poem is echoed in:

69.      *Óláfs hofum jofra*  
*orðhags kyni sagðar*  
*(fylgði hugr) ens helga*  
*happsdáðir (því ráði);*  
*laun fóm holl, ef hreinum*  
*hræsiks þrimu likar,*  
*gofugs óðar létt, geði,*  
*goðs blessun, lof, pessa.*

In the stanza just before the reference to Sigvatr, Einarr comes close to plagiarising the last couplet of the second of the Magnús stanzas, with the parallel words in the same positions as in Sigvatr’s stanza:

11.      *Þreklynds skulu Þröndir*  
*þegnprýðis brag hlýða*  
*(Krists lifir hann í hæstri*  
*höll) ok Norðmenn allir;*  
*dýrð es ágæt orðin*  
*eljunhress (í þessu)*  
*þjóð- (né þengill fœðisk*  
*þvílikr) -konungs ríki.*

It may be too speculative to see Sigvatr’s continuing influence in the mid-twelfth century in an echo of the third stanza of his Ástríðr poem in Ívarr Ingimundarson’s *Sigurðarbølkr* (*Skjd.*, A I 495–502, B I 467–75):

14.      *Risu við vísa*  
*vestan komnum*  
*Þröndr ok Mœrir,*  
*þeirs þrifum níttu;*  
*brugðusk hólðar*  
*í huga sínum*  
*mensku mildum*  
*Magnús syni.*

<sup>16</sup> Again, it should be noted that the parallels depend to some extent on Finnur’s reconstructed text in *Skjd.* B, and two of the words which demonstrate the parallel with Sigvatr appear in only one of the two manuscripts of the poem (both in st. 69: *hrein* and *lof*).

The name Magnús (here, as in Kali's verse, referring to Magnús berfœttr) would naturally attract alliterating words, and it is likely that *mennska . . . mildr* was a formula used in a conventional way here, but unconventionally by Sigvatr. Fidjestøl (1982, 160) has also suggested an echo of *sig(r)hvatastr* in a stanza by Ívarr's contemporary, Boðvarr balti, but this quatrain is too short to provide any verbal echoes other than the adjectival phrase *bøðvar hvatr* applied to the king (*Skjd.*, A I 505, B I 478).

If Sigvatr's verses were remembered, then the occasion for them must also have been remembered. The verses celebrate Ástriðr's eloquence, and there are other indications in prose texts that she was remembered for her rhetorical gifts and her powers of persuasion. Thus, a number of the versions of the saga of St Óláfr preserve an account of how Ástriðr came to be married to Óláfr. Óláfr had intended to marry Ástriðr's half-sister Ingigerðr, a legitimate daughter of the Swedish king, but this never came about and she married the Russian king Jaroslav instead. Both the *Legendary saga* of St Óláfr, on the one hand, and, on the other, a number of texts ultimately deriving from a lost saga of St Óláfr by Styrmir fróði Kárason, tell roughly the same story (*LegS*, 102–04; *ÓSH*, 769–71): Ástriðr takes the initiative and visits the king, ostensibly with messages and gifts to him from her sister Ingigerðr. Twice, she visits him, makes a little speech, only to get silence from him in return. On the third occasion, her speech includes a proposal of marriage. As she is getting up to go, the king finally agrees to speak to her and, indeed, to marry her. *LegS* concludes with the statement *Gladdezt nu konongrenn oc giætte nu rikis sins*. By getting the king to cheer up and marry her, Ástriðr uses her persuasiveness to the benefit of the kingdom of Norway, as in her intervention in favour of Magnús. Even if the account of Ástriðr's proposal is apocryphal, it confirms the message of Sigvatr's verses, that here was a woman who was not afraid to speak out in an unwomanly fashion at significant moments, and suggests that she was remembered for this.

Snorri did not include this anecdote in his saga of St Óláfr, however. According to Sigurður Nordal (1914, 65), this was because it was too naive and improbable a tale for either Snorri or the author of *Fagrskinna* to include. However, scholars seem to agree that Snorri knew the anecdote, but rewrote the account of Óláfr's courtship for his own purposes (e. g. Bagge 1991, 103). In Snorri's version of how Óláfr got married (*Hkr.*, II 144–46), Sigvatr acts as intermediary. He is the one who has long conversations with Ástriðr, and he reports back to the king on her *friðleikr ok málsmilld*. But it is the eloquence of the poet, not of the princess, that persuades the king to marry her.

Although Sigvatr's three stanzas are the only ones preserved that celebrate Ástriðr Óláfssdóttir, at least some Icelandic writers believed that there once had been others. Again, an account deriving from the work of Styrmir Kárason is preserved in *LegS*(p. 132) and *ÓSH*(pp. 688–89, 702–06), telling how the Icelandic poet and nephew of Sigvatr, Óttarr inn svarti, displeased King Óláfr because he had once composed a *mansongsdrápa* for Ástriðr while he was at the Swedish court. This poem was apparently full of improper suggestions and Óttarr had to compose his *Hofuðlausn* to save his life. Unfortunately, the anecdote does not preserve Óttarr's suggestive poem, and we may doubt whether it ever existed. But it is interesting to note that such an anecdote should attach itself to the one queen about whom we know that a more proper praise poem was composed. And several of the versions of the anecdote demonstrate the *málsnilld* that Ástriðr was famous for. Thus, Óláfr gives Óttarr, as a reward for his head-ransom poem, not only his life but a large gold arm-ring. The queen then takes a small gold ring off her finger to give to the poet, saying *Taktu, skáld, gneista þann ok eig.* When the king protests at this show of friendship, she replies *Eigi megu þér kunna mik um þat, herra, þó ek vilja launa mitt lof sem þér yðvart.*

As neither of these anecdotes is supported by any verses about Ástriðr, we do not need to make any great claims for their historicity. Probably Snorri did not believe in them either, though his reference to Ástriðr's *fríðleikr* and *málsnilld* may be based on knowledge of similar traditions. Snorri was more impressed by Sigvatr's three stanzas in praise of Queen Ástriðr and the two advising King Magnús, and these give us an idea of the role played by all three of them in putting the Norwegian royal house on a firm footing. We have Snorri to thank for broadening our understanding of the possibilities of skaldic panegyric. Not only could it celebrate the bloody deeds of men in battle, or the salty joys of sailing, but a consummate poet like Sigvatr could also adapt the genre to acknowledge the political achievement of a clever and resourceful woman.

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## SCANDINAVIAN SACRAL KINGSHIP REVISITED

By RORY McTURK

IN A REVIEW article published in 1975–76 (p. 156), I defined sacral kingship as follows: ‘a sacral king is one who is marked off from his fellow men by an aura of specialness which may or may not have its origin in more or less direct associations with the supernatural.’ Since this definition was presented as a general definition of sacral kingship, it should be emphasised that it arose for the most part out of a discussion of specifically Scandinavian kingship, ancient and medieval, as indeed did Ström’s definition of 1967 (p. 55), on which mine was largely based.

While my own definition has in general been kindly received by subsequent writers on early Scandinavian kingship (cf. Lindow 1988, 273–74; Martin 1990, 378), some of these (notably Mazo 1985, 754; Steinsland 1991, 312, n.7) have found it too broad to be helpful. Even my critics, however, seem to acknowledge that the uncertain nature of the evidence for early Germanic kingship, whether in Scandinavia or elsewhere, makes precise definition difficult; one of them, indeed (Steinsland 1991, 312), implies that the definition of sacral kingship will vary according to the nature or range of evidence examined. This may be illustrated by a comparison of two recently published lists of defining characteristics of sacral kingship, in a Germanic and a Scandinavian context respectively: in Eve Picard’s book *Germanisches Sakralkönigtum?* (1991, 33), and in an encyclopedia article by myself on medieval Scandinavian kingship, published in 1993 (p. 353). The two lists were prepared quite independently of each other; although my article appeared well after Picard’s book, it had been submitted finally for publication in 1989. Picard (whose own position on Germanic sacral kingship is highly sceptical, as will emerge below) is careful to emphasise that writers on sacral kingship seldom define it as decisively as might appear from her list, and that by no means all writers on the subject would accept all items on the list as part of their definition.

Picard’s list, which it should be noted covers Germanic kingship in general, rather than specifically Scandinavian kingship, is as follows: (1) the king is believed to be of divine descent; (2) an essential element of the godhead is believed to be vitally present in the king; (3) the king is regarded as the representative of the deity on earth, either in perpetuity or on occasions when worship is conducted; (4) the king is a priest; (5) the king’s

'luck' or 'sanctity' (*Königsheil[igkeit]*) is believed to form the basis of his power; and (6) the society to which the king belongs has a fundamentally religious orientation, of which the sanctification of his rule is just one aspect. Related considerations are that (7) early Germanic law also has its basis in religion, inasmuch as it punishes crimes because they offend against the divine order rather than against the interests of individuals or of the community; and that (8) early Germanic communities define themselves in religious terms, each political group expressing its basis in religion either by the public conduct of worship or through traditions of divine descent. Finally, (9) Germanic kingship shows a continuity from pre-Christian to Christian times in respect of the foregoing notions.

The question of whether Scandinavian kingship shows a continuity of the kind referred to in Picard's item (9) is one that I raise at the beginning of my encyclopedia article in introducing my own list. Pre-Christian Scandinavian sacral kingship, I suggest there, if it existed at all, involved one or more of the following: (1) the belief that kings were descended from gods; (2) the dedication of princes for purposes of vengeance to gods or semi-deified kings; (3) the ritual education of kings in numinous knowledge; (4) the ritual marriage of the king to a bride who personifies the well-being of his realm; (5) the priestly function of kings; (6) the attribution to kings of a *mana*-like quality of luck, and also of supernatural powers; and (7) the sacrificial slaying of kings in order to bring fertility.

While my list consists of only seven items as opposed to Picard's nine, it may be said that I take account of Picard's item (9) in the remarks with which I introduce my list, which in any case refers solely to pre-Christian kingship, as do items (1)–(8) of Picard's list. If we concentrate on the pre-Christian period and compare Picard's (1)–(8) with McTurk's (1)–(7), we find that Picard's list has only three items that correspond at all closely to any of mine, namely Picard's (1), (4), and (5), corresponding respectively to McTurk's (1), (5), and (6). If Picard's book and my encyclopedia article may be taken as reasonably comprehensive treatments of their respective subjects, the differences between her list and mine surely indicate that the problem of definition is no easier to solve now than it was at the time of my earlier article, published in the mid-seventies.

It will not be the business of this paper to discuss all the aspects of sacral kingship covered by these two lists, which I reproduce here simply to give an idea of the extent and complexity of the subject. My main purpose here is to discuss three important recent books on the subject, all published in 1991: Eve Picard's *Germanisches Sakralkönigtum?*, Claus Krag's *Ynglingatal og Ynglingsaga: en studie i historiske kilder*, and Gro

Steinsland's *Det hellige bryllup og norrøn kongeideologi*. (The second and third of these, both in Norwegian, are provided with English summaries.) First, however, it will be necessary to give some space to a discussion of Walter Baetke's *Yngvi und die Ynglinger: eine quellenkritische Untersuchung über das nordische 'Sakralkönigtum'* (1964), which has influenced these three books in different ways, as it also influenced my own definition of sacral kingship in 1975–76, quoted above.

Baetke's book is mainly taken up with a critical examination of one of the most important of the supposed sources for pre-Christian Scandinavian sacral kingship, the scaldic poem *Ynglingatal* ('list of the Ynglingar'), ascribed by the Icelander Snorri Sturluson (1178–1241) in his *Ynglinga saga* (on which see further below) to the late ninth-century Norwegian poet Þjóðólfr of Hvinir, an ascription which Baetke accepts, though with some reserve. This poem gives an account in chronological order of the lineage of the kings of Vestfold in eastern Norway, presenting them as direct descendants of the ancient kings of the Swedes, who ruled at Uppsala. *Ynglingatal* has been preserved as a result of being systematically quoted by Snorri Sturluson in the course of his prose *Ynglinga saga*, which forms the first major section of his encyclopedic history of the kings of Norway (known as *Heimskringla*), and consists largely of an exposition of the information given in *Ynglingatal*. In its present form the poem begins by recounting the death of a certain Fjolnir, who according to Snorri's prose account, but not according to *Ynglingatal*, was a son of *Yngvi-Freyr*. Although the latter name does not occur in *Ynglingatal*, it does occur, as Baetke himself shows (p. 108), in two other scaldic poems from before Snorri's time, in the *Haustlōng* also attributed to Þjóðólfr of Hvinir, and the tenth-century *Háleygjatal* by Eyrvindr skáldaspillir, in both of which it is applied to the god Freyr. In the prose of Snorri's *Ynglinga saga*, the name *Yngvi-Freyr* is explained by the statement that Freyr, an early ruler of the Swedes who was worshipped as a god, was also known by a second name, *Yngvi*, as a result of which his descendants were called the Ynglingar. Many prior to Baetke's time of writing had supposed that a number of lines at the beginning of *Ynglingatal* had been lost, in which the ancestry of the kings was traced 'all the way back to Ingunar-Freyr, whom heathen people called their god', as Snorri himself seems to confirm in the Prologue to another of his major prose works, the separate Saga of St Óláfr (see however Baetke 1964, 93–96). The precise significance of the name *Ingunar-Freyr*, which is applied to the god Freyr in the eddic poem *Lokasenna*, dating very likely from c.1000, is uncertain, but Baetke (p. 109), at any rate, has no difficulty in seeing it as a variant of the form *Yngvi-*

*Freyr* as used in scaldic poetry, and in taking it, consequently, as an alternative name of the god Freyr. He does not however believe that the beginning of *Ynglingatal* has perished, or that the poem provides any evidence of a pre-Christian belief in the descent of kings from gods. (Norway, it may be noted, effectively became Christian in the first third of the eleventh century; *Ynglingatal*, if it was indeed composed in the late ninth century, would thus date from well within the pagan period.) In Baetke's view, the poem begins, in its original as in its preserved form, with its account of the death of Fjolnir, a purely human ancestor of the Ynglingar, and Snorri's idea that the latter were descended from Yngvi-Freyr, whom the heathens saw as a god, has arisen under the influence of the Icelandic historian Ari Porgilsson (1067–1148), who in an appendix to his *Íslendingabók* (*Libellus Islandorum*), written in the first half of the twelfth century, heads his own genealogy with the following figures: Yngvi, King of the Turks; Njorðr, King of the Swedes; Freyr; and Fjolnir. In thus presenting Freyr as Fjolnir's father, Ari might seem to lend support to the view that the opening lines of *Ynglingatal* have been lost; but this view, according to Baetke, is unnecessary. Baetke sees the name *Yngvi* as ultimately related to that of the Ingaevones, a group of Germanic tribes whose eponymous ancestor is referred to, though not actually named, in ch. 2 of Tacitus's *Germania* (see further below), as one of the three sons of Mannus, himself the son of the earth-born god Tuisto. This grandson of Tuisto, whose name from other sources as well as Tacitus would seem to emerge as \**Ing*, was never regarded, according to Baetke, as more than a human ancestor of the Ingaevones, and was never revered as a god, any more, indeed, than was Yngvi, who as Baetke notes is not included among the gods described in the part of Snorri's prose *Edda* known as *Gylfaginning*, a major albeit late source for pre-Christian Scandinavian mythology and religion. In making Yngvi King of the Turks, Baetke argues, Ari betrays the influence of a notion deriving from the seventh-century Frankish Latin chronicle attributed to Fredegar: that the ancestors of the Franks hailed from Asia Minor. This idea has led Ari to present Njorðr, a god of the Old Norse pantheon, as King of the Swedes, a euhemeristic move in the sense that Ari, from his perspective as a writer within the Christian period, is treating Njorðr as a historical personage, whom the heathens in their ignorance worshipped as a god; his inclusion of Freyr in the genealogy may be explained in the same way. Snorri has then borrowed the name of Yngvi from Ari, and for similarly euhemeristic reasons has combined it with that of Freyr to give *Yngvi-Freyr* as the name of the founding father of the Ynglingar.

While Baetke thus gives the impression that Snorri was the first to create the form *Yngvi-Freyr* out of two proper names, he seems to leave unexplained the forms *Yngvi-Freyr* and *Ingunar-Freyr* that survive (as Baetke is well aware, see the preceding paragraph) from before Snorri's time, in scaldic and eddic poetry respectively. As far as *Yngvi-Freyr* is concerned, Picard (1991, 209–19) suggests that *Yngvi* was originally a common noun which, like the Latin word *pater*, could be variously applied to a god, to a social leader, or to a member of a class, and could indeed be used in conjunction with a proper name, with some such meaning as, for example, 'our lord Freyr', or 'Freyr the father'; only in the hands of Icelandic historians such as Ari and Snorri, according to Picard, did it come to be used as a proper name. She adduces for comparison the application by Roman authors of the term *Silvius* to the kings of Alba Longa, and the use in Latin of the term *Cæsar*, suggesting that Snorri was influenced by ideas derived from Latin sources in his use of the term *Yngvi*. Like Baetke, however, she seems to leave *Ingunar-Freyr* unexplained.

The Roman orientation of Picard's remarks in this context is typical of her book as a whole, which deals more with Tacitus's *Germania* than with Old Norse literature as a supposed source of evidence for pre-Christian sacral kingship. Picard argues that Tacitus (c.55–c.120), a Roman author writing for a Roman public, was deeply influenced by Roman preoccupations in his ambivalent portrayal of early Germanic social and political life, of which he gives a predominantly 'Republican' impression in the aristocratic, Roman sense of the term, while at the same time presenting it as 'barbarian' in its untamed closeness to nature. Tacitus does not seem to have had a unified view of Germanic kingship, or to have regarded it as a theme of the *Germania*, where he refers to it only incidentally and sometimes contradictorily. His presentation of the North and East Germanic tribes known collectively as the Suebi as exceptional in having different grades of monarchical authority (chs 44–45) is probably stimulated by a view of the primitive, pre-Republican stages in the history of Rome as marked by different stages in the development of Roman kingship. Tacitus gives Germanic names (*Tuisto* and *Nerthus*) for only two Germanic deities, referring to others by the names of Roman deities, which raises questions about the identification, and even the existence, of the deities so referred to. His use of the word *nobilitas* in connection with kings in his famous distinction between kings and commanders in ch. 7 (*reges ex nobilitate, duces ex virtute sumunt*) need not in the context have anything to do with descent from the gods, and even if that were its implication, it could still be a Roman rather than a Germanic view of kingship that Tacitus

is here conveying, as is suggested by a comparable distinction in Cicero's *De re publica* II, 12 (23) in which divine descent is clearly presented as the Spartan criterion for entitlement to kingly rule, and is disparagingly contrasted with the Roman criterion of election on merit. It is true that Tacitus presents the Germanic peoples as collectively descended from a god, Tuisto (through the latter's son Mannus, whose name seems to identify him as human rather than divine), but he says no such thing about the descent of individual tribes or other groups, and makes no association of divine descent with kingship. His presentation of Tuisto as an earth-born god (*terra editus*), which underlines the indigenous character of the Germanic peoples, may indeed be intended to contrast them with the Romans, who saw themselves as of mixed origin (*gens mixta*).

Picard further discusses Tacitus's account in *Germania*, ch. 39, of the sacrificial slaying of a human victim by members of the Suebian tribe known as the Semnones in a grove which no one may enter unless bound by a chain (*vinculo ligatus*). Höfler (1952, *passim*; 1959, 674–76) has related this to the three eddic poems known as the Helgi poems (*Helgakviða Hundingsbana* I and II, and *Helgakviða Hjorvarðssonar*), dating variously from the ninth to the eleventh century, preserved in the Codex Regius of the second half of the thirteenth, and dealing with two heroic kings, both named Helgi, one of whom (Helgi Hjorvarðsson) is betrothed to a certain Sváva, a name reminiscent of that of the Suebian tribes, while the other (Helgi Sigmundsson Hundingsbani) dies near a place called *Fjoturlundr* ('Fetter-grove'). Picard argues against Höfler on these points, and also against his view that Tacitus's account and the Old Norse poems reflect ritual practices in which a king or prince was first wedded to, and later sacrificed by, a priestess representing his tribe, the marriage signifying his dedication as a sacred person (*Helgi* = 'holy'), originally, perhaps, to a fertility deity, but by Tacitus's time to the god of war and the dead known later in Old Norse as Óðinn; according to Tacitus the grove of the Semnones was the dwelling-place of the supreme god (*regnator omnium deus*), to whom all things are subject and obedient (*cetera subiecta atque parentia*). In Picard's view this account of Tacitus's is strongly influenced by Roman memories of the Latin cult of Jupiter Latiaris, and his reference to a chain is probably intended to emphasise the relatively primitive character of the Semnones by recalling the disciplining of the Romans by religion in the pre-Republican days of Numa Pompilius's kingship.

Kings are mentioned neither in Tacitus's account of the Semnones nor in his account in ch. 40 of the cult of the goddess Nerthus, or Terra Mater, which is thus relevant to the discussion of sacral kingship only insofar as

the name *Nerthus* is clearly related to that of the Old Norse god Njörðr, which appears, as we have seen, just after that of Yngvi in Ari Þorgilsson's genealogy written in the twelfth century. Picard defends Tacitus against those who, in seeking to claim that the connection between Njörðr and Yngvi is ancient and pagan (rather than antiquarian and euhemeristic, as Baetke claims) have argued that Tacitus was mistaken in placing the cult of Nerthus among a group of Suebian tribes, rather than among the Ingaevones. She also suggests that in presenting Nerthus as a goddess who inspires both joy and terror and is apparently ritually washed, Tacitus has been influenced by different aspects of the Roman cult of Cybele or Magna Mater, a Phrygian goddess whose cult was adopted in Rome in c.200 BC. Nowhere in Tacitus's *Germania*, Picard repeatedly emphasises, are kings said to have priestly functions.

It is clear, then, that Picard, with her sceptical view of pre-Christian Germanic sacral kingship, is writing very much in the same tradition as Baetke, even if the focus of her attention is rather different from Baetke's, and even though she disagrees with him on a number of points. As far as sacral kingship is concerned, Claus Krag is clearly also writing in the same sceptical tradition, even though the focus of his attention is not sacral kingship in the first instance, but rather *Ynglingatal* itself.

Krag finds traces of euhemerism (in the sense explained above) actually in *Ynglingatal*, not just in the prose surrounding it; he notes that the names of the first two kings mentioned in the poem, *Fjölnir* and *Sveigðir*, occur elsewhere in Old Norse poetry as names for Óðinn, and argues that the names of the third and fourth kings, *Vanlandi* and *Vísburr*, may similarly be taken as alternative names for Freyr and Óðinn respectively. *Ynglingatal*, then, as Krag sees it, is presenting these kings as historical figures whom gullible pagans came to regard as gods. Another noteworthy feature of these four kings, for Krag, is that each of their deaths as described in the poem seems to involve one of the four elements: Fjölnir drowns, Sveigðir disappears into a rock, Vanlandi is suffocated and Vísburr is burnt. Knowledge of the doctrine of the four elements (which can hardly have reached Scandinavia until the late eleventh century) also seems to lie behind two of the poetic circumlocutions (or 'kennings') used in *Ynglingatal* for 'fire', namely *Fornjóts sonr* ('son of Fornjótr') and *sævar niðr* ('kinsman of the sea'); one version of the doctrine was that the element 'earth' contained the other three elements within itself at the first stage of the creation of the world, and could thus be seen as their father—an idea apparently reflected in the short prose narrative *Hversu Noregr byggðisk*, preserved in the fourteenth-century part of *Flateyjarbók*, in which Fornjótr,

a king in Finland, is said to have had three sons, governing fire, the winds, and the sea respectively (see Krag 1991, 47–58, 255–56). For these and other reasons, including the fact that the poem sometimes seems to present paganism in a demonic light, Krag concludes that it was composed not in pre-Christian ninth-century Norway, but in a learned environment in Iceland c.1200, some two hundred years after the conversion. Only the final stanza of the poem, the one dealing with the Norwegian king Rognvaldr heiðumhaeri, who lived in the ninth century, *may*, according to Krag, have been composed by the ninth-century Norwegian poet Þjóðólfr of Hvinir (about whom little is known in any case), and its preservation together with the remainder of the poem may have led Snorri to ascribe the poem as a whole to Þjóðólfr, which he seems to have done in good faith. Krag does not in fact believe (any more than Baetke, see above) that any lines from the beginning of the poem have been lost, but his view of when and how the poem was conceived makes the question of whether he does so or not almost irrelevant to the present discussion.

Krag's examination of *Ynglingatal*, *Ynglinga saga*, and related texts leads him to the conclusion that the original stimulus for traditions of the Ynglingar came from two works by Ari Porgilsson: the genealogy appended to his *Íslendingabók*, already referred to, and a work no longer extant to which he refers in *Íslendingabók*, his *Konunga ævi*, or 'Lives of Kings'. From this combined source Krag (p. 165) traces three lines of descent: firstly, a line leading directly to the anonymous *Historia Norvegiæ* of the late twelfth or early thirteenth century; secondly, one leading to a group of interrelated texts of which the youngest is *Ynglingatal* (c.1200) and the others are prose sagas, with the anonymous twelfth-century *Af Upplendingakonungum* (preserved in *Hauksbók* of the early fourteenth century) as their one extant representative; and thirdly, one leading directly to Snorri's *Ynglinga saga*, written in the thirteenth century before 1241, the date of Snorri's death. Of these three lines the first, leading to the *Historia Norvegiæ*, is quite independent of the others. *Ynglinga saga*, on the other hand, to which the third line leads, has clearly been influenced by the group of texts to which the second line leads, as is especially evident from *Ynglingatal*, but also from *Af Upplendingakonungum*; and *Ynglingatal* itself was composed on the basis of one or more of the sagas within that group, perhaps indeed as a poetic embellishment to a saga text.

Krag's discussion of the term *ynglingr* (the singular form of the plural *Ynglingar*) may be interestingly compared with Picard's discussion of *Yngvi*, referred to above. The occurrence of *ynglingr* in scaldic poetry from the ninth century onwards obviously needs to be explained if, as Krag

maintains, it was not used specifically in connection with a dynasty of kings until after the time of Ari. He notes that in scaldic poetry the term is never used in the plural, is not applied exclusively to members of the family that came to be called the *Ynglingar*, and seems to have been a standard expression for 'ruler'. Furthermore, the Uppsala kings, from whom the Norwegian *Ynglingar* came to be seen as descended, were originally called not 'Ynglingar' but 'Skilfingar', as the term *Scylfingas*, applied to the Swedish kings in the Old English poem *Beowulf*, seems to confirm. Only in the course of the twelfth century, when the genealogy of the Swedish–Norwegian dynasty described in *Ynglingatal* came to be constructed on the basis of Ari's genealogy, did the term *Ynglingar* come to be applied to members of that dynasty, and act as a stimulus to the joining together of the proper names *Yngvi* and *Freyr* that had been used in Ari's genealogy, a conjunction which Krag seems to suggest took place before Snorri's time of writing (see Krag 1991, 208–11, 264).

Krag's removal of *Ynglingatal* from the ninth to the twelfth century, and his placing of it in a learned, antiquarian tradition, obviously imply that it cannot safely be used as a source for any kind of pre-Christian sacral kingship, whether this is defined in terms of a belief in the descent of kings from gods or in terms of certain religious practices involving kings for which the poem has been thought to provide evidence, notably in its account of the slaying of King Dómaldi, which Ström (1967) saw as a sacrificial act performed because Dómaldi's 'luck' as a king was believed to have failed him. Those who are reluctant to abandon the idea of pre-Christian Scandinavian sacral kingship, even after reading Baetke, Picard, and Krag, may, however, turn for encouragement to the work of Gro Steinsland, who in a helpful article published in 1992 has reasserted the major arguments of her book published in the previous year.

Since Picard's and Krag's books appeared in the same year as Steinsland's, she naturally does not take their views into account (nor does she in her article of 1992, which is essentially a summary of her book's conclusions). She is nonetheless well aware of Baetke's arguments, and of the nature of euhemerism as discussed above. She keeps *Ynglingatal* firmly in the ninth century, and like Baetke does not believe that any part of it has perished. She has more respect than Baetke, however, for the thirteenth-century prose of *Ynglinga saga* as a repository of information dating from pre-Christian times; she does not look everywhere for euhemerism, as seems to be the tendency of Baetke and Krag. She draws particular attention to Snorri's information in *Ynglinga saga* that Fjölnir was the son of Freyr and his wife Gerðr, and relates it to the eddic poem *Skírnismál*, preserved in

the Codex Regius and (in part) in the early fourteenth-century AM 748 I 4to.

This poem describes how the god Freyr sends his messenger Skírnir to the giantess Gerðr to sue for her hand in marriage on his behalf, lending him for the purpose his horse and sword. Skírnir communicates Freyr's wishes to Gerðr, offering as inducements eleven apples and a ring. When Gerðr refuses these and Freyr's offer of marriage, Skírnir threatens her with Freyr's sword and a magic staff, and proceeds to curse her so vehemently that she at last agrees to meet Freyr in nine nights' time in a grove. A brief prose introduction to the poem describes Freyr as having sat down in Hliðskjálf—described elsewhere as the throne of the god Óðinn—and first seeing Gerðr from there. Although Steinsland does not date *Skírnismál* precisely, she regards it as a poem embodying mainly pagan ideas while at the same time showing an awareness of Christian ones, and indeed tending to oppose the former to the latter; ending as it does with a planned meeting of a male and a female in a grove, the poem may be seen as an inversion of the Eden story. It would thus have been composed in the eleventh century or later.

According to Steinsland, *Skírnismál* is essentially about kingship. The throne, the ring, the apples and the staff are all symbols of royalty, the last two symbolising the orb and sceptre respectively. Freyr's projected marriage to Gerðr symbolises a holy marriage, the king's marriage to his realm, and the difficulty he has in obtaining her consent symbolises the king's difficulty in subduing the land to his control. Snorri shows relatively little interest in this aspect of *Skírnismál* in his prose *Edda*, even though the latter shows clearly that he knew the poem. In *Ynglinga saga*, however, he seems in presenting Fjölnir as the son of Freyr and Gerðr to be aware of a pre-Christian tradition according to which their marriage took place and bore fruit, a tradition which, according to Steinsland, underlies *Ynglingatal*, even though it is not made explicit in the poem itself. Behind this tradition, Steinsland argues, lies the conception that the prototypal king or ruler was the offspring of a god and a giantess, a conception which, though no more than latent in *Ynglingatal*, is manifest in the tenth-century *Háleygjatal*, which seems to have been modelled on *Ynglingatal* and clearly presents the first in the line of the Norwegian jarls of Hlaðir as the son of the god Óðinn and the giantess Skaði.

The king's sacral nature thus consists in the fact that he is thought to be the product of an accommodation between two mythical extremes, the gods and the giants, representing respectively order and chaos, an idea reflected on a more realistic level in frequent accounts in the sagas of kings

and heroes being the offspring of marriages in which the partners are of markedly different extraction and social class.

A further aspect of the king's sacral nature is that he is particularly subject to fate, which often means that the deaths of kings are presented in literary sources not as heroic, but as accidental or the result of treachery, and sometimes even as slightly comic. The deaths of the first four kings in *Ynglingatal*, already mentioned, provide examples of this (a point since developed in Bakhtinian terms by Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, 1994), but the archetypal example of such a death in Old Norse literature is the death of the god Baldr, which, as Snorri describes it in *Gylfaginning*, comes about as a result of the god Loki turning comedy into tragedy by subterfuge. Baldr is hardly a king, it is true, but his name means 'lord' or 'prince', as Steinsland (1991, 235) points out. *Skírnismál* makes an explicit link with the story of Baldr's death when Skírnir states that the ring offered to Gerðr is the one placed on the pyre of Óðinn's son (i. e. Baldr) and elsewhere called Draupnir; and Steinsland seeks to make another such link by comparing the eleven apples in *Skírnismál* with the eleven gods said to have been present at the slaying of Baldr in the eddic poem *Hyndluljóð* (preserved in *Flateyjarbók*), a poem traditionally regarded as late and composite, but considered by Steinsland to be a unity and a genuine source of pagan tradition, not least in the emphasis it lays on the importance of giants and giantesses in the past and future history of the universe.

Finally, Steinsland suggests in the light of her findings certain modifications to what she sees as the traditional view of pre-Christian Scandinavian sacral kingship. Up to now, sacral kingship has been defined in three main ways: firstly in terms of descent from the gods; secondly in terms of the king's luck; and thirdly as priest-kingship. Steinsland does not disagree with the first of these definitions, but believes that the role of the giantess as the king's mythical ancestor was just as important as that of the god, and should now be recognised as such. With regard to the second definition, Steinsland believes that it is not so much the king's luck as his lack of it that should be emphasised, since his exceptional origins were believed to make him particularly subject to fate, the workings of which could sometimes appear in almost as much of a comic as a tragic light. As for the third definition, Steinsland does not deny that kings could on occasion function as cult leaders, but does not regard this as a universal or defining characteristic of pre-Christian Scandinavian sacral kingship. Furthermore, the fact that the king was believed to be a new kind of being, the offspring of a pair of opposites but not identical with either of them, meant that he was not regarded as a god, and could not, therefore, be the object of a cult, or

sacrificed in the manner of a fertility god that is believed to die and rise again, a concept which, according to Steinsland, was unknown to Old Norse mythology.

Before concluding this paper I shall briefly refer to three recent articles relevant to the present discussion which I do not have space to treat here, and which are not taken into account in my encyclopedia article. Wormald (1986) argues that early Irish and Germanic kingship were not as different from one another as the sources make them appear, concentrating as they do on different aspects of kingship; Schjødt (1990) argues that pre-Christian Scandinavian kings became sacral by ritual initiation into the possession of hidden knowledge; and Drobin (1991) maintains that the euhemeristic presentation of figures such as Freyr and Fjolnir as human kings depends in part on knowledge of genuine pagan traditions of sacral kingship.<sup>1</sup>

In the definition quoted at the beginning of this paper, I used the word ‘supernatural’ rather than ‘divine’ partly in order to allow for the possibility, not admitted by Baetke, that a king may become sacral through magical, rather than specifically religious, associations; and I used the phrase ‘more or less direct associations with the supernatural’ in order to make room for priest-kings as sacral kings, even if their priestly status is not thought to confer divine or superhuman status upon them, which Baetke seems to imply has to be the case if they are to qualify as sacral. So far, I would stand by the wording of my original definition. I would now suggest, however, that there is little point in talking about sacral kingship unless the supernatural is thought to be involved somewhere, even though it may be more in the foreground in some cases of sacral kingship than in others. The ‘may or may not’ in my statement that the king’s ‘aura of specialness’ which marks him off as sacral ‘may or may not have its origins in more or less direct associations with the supernatural’ was intended to allow for the possibility that his sacrality might be thought to derive from a natural source, such as his family or his personality, rather than from a supernatural one, such as a god, or supposed magical powers. I would now

<sup>1</sup> Although it is less immediately relevant to the present discussion, being concerned specifically with Anglo-Saxon and Irish kingship, I would also refer to Clare E. Stancliffe’s article of 1980, and to the attention it draws (p. 75, n. 97) to the relative neglect suffered by H. Munro Chadwick’s article of 1900 on the ancient Germanic priesthood, a neglect of which, to my discredit, I am no less guilty than the two eminent scholars (Jan de Vries and Georges Dumézil) referred to by Stancliffe in this connection. I am indebted to Dr Peter Orton, of Queen Mary and Westfield College, London, for the reference to Stancliffe’s article.

suggest correcting the phrase ‘may or may not have’ to ‘has’, since I have come to think that a king’s family connections (unless thought to be divine) and his personality (unless reminiscent of that of a god) are not enough, in themselves, to make him sacral. With this in mind, I would tentatively rewrite my original definition as follows: ‘a sacral king is one who is marked off from his fellow men by an aura of specialness which has its origins in more or less direct associations with the supernatural.’

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# A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FINAL THREE SECTIONS OF *HÁVAMÁL* AND ON THE ROLE OF LODDFÁFNIR.<sup>1</sup>

By ELIZABETH JACKSON

**H**ÁVAMÁL has long been interpreted as a poem containing internal divisions. Scribes of early paper manuscripts, for instance, added the title *Loddfáfnismál* to the section beginning at strophe 111, and later editors followed suit. Müllenhoff (1891–1908, V 255–76) divided the poem into six sections which still command acceptance today, although the exact boundaries of the sections are not always agreed. Their presence, however, encouraged the belief that the poem was a collection of earlier material: of single separate strophes, of earlier collections of strophes, or of both (e. g. Sievers 1922, 187). Some critics argued for corruption of the text and proposed various excisions and rearrangements of the strophe order (e. g. Müllenhoff 1891–1908, V 260–61; Heusler 1969, 200–09, 216–20), often in an attempt to reconstruct what they believed to be the original text. Two major works on *Hávamál* written in the last forty years represent opposite views of the poem. Ivar Lindquist (1956) sees it as a mix of two poems, one early and one later, both with close connections to the ritual and moral philosophy of the old pagan religion, in fact as the initiation of a young man by Óðinn. Lindquist, however, also believes that a pious scribe scrambled the text in order to make the pagan religion less accessible to Christian readers, and he devotes much space to a very radical reconstruction of the text. Klaus von See (1972) sees the poem as a unified whole to be interpreted in its extant form, but he also sees it as a product of the assimilation of western and southern European influences after the Viking Age; that is, not as a relic of the old religion. Most modern readers reject Lindquist's extreme reconstruction of the text, but not all accept von See's argument for its underlying unity. David Evans, the poem's most recent editor (*Hávamál* 1986), cautiously keeps the question open and

<sup>1</sup> The first draft of this paper was read to the NEH Seminar ‘*Beowulf* and the Reception of Germanic Antiquity’, Harvard University, 1993, and I am grateful to the leaders of that seminar, Joseph Harris and T. D. Hill, for several valuable suggestions. My greatest debt of gratitude, however, is owed to Anthony Faulkes for his meticulous supervision of the doctoral thesis from which this paper was drawn, and for his subsequent advice and encouragement.

reiterates some of the earlier arguments for believing the strophe order to be confused (for instance in his discussion of strophes 111 and 162). Richard North (1991, 122–23), leaning towards Lindquist, stresses the origin of *Hávamál* in separate poems; Carolyne Larrington (1993, 65–67), leaning towards von See, argues for its thematic unity and overall coherence.

Strophes 111–64 encompass the most clearly differentiated of Müllenhoff's divisions of *Hávamál*, the last three: *Loddfáfnismál* (111–37), *Rúnatal* (138–45) and *Ljóðatal* (146–64). The common critical view of them, endorsed by Evans, has been: (1) that these three were brought together, like the rest of *Hávamál*, because of a general similarity of subject and the fact that all are spoken by Óðinn (Hávi); (2) that only the first was originally addressed to Loddfáfnir; and (3) that they are essentially independent poems. This paper will argue that, on the contrary, they are interdependent, were intended to be read together as one unit, and are to be interpreted as having all been addressed to Loddfáfnir on the same occasion. In other words, I propose that Hávi's speech to Loddfáfnir, spoken in his hall and overheard by the *pulr* who reports it to the poem's audience, extends from strophe 112 to strophe 163 and does not end, as convention has it, at strophe 137. This is not a new proposal: von See holds a similar view, although he believes that a *Redaktor* imposed this unity on originally independent texts, and Lindquist suggests that the whole of *Hávamál* is addressed to Loddfáfnir. However, it is not the generally accepted view. This paper will re-examine the evidence for it from within *Hávamál* itself, and then offer further evidence from comparison with other list poems in the *Edda*. In addition, although the following argument concerns only strophes 111–64, I hope that it will lend some support to Lindquist's perception of the roles of Óðinn and Loddfáfnir and his view of the poem's background, while at the same time endorsing von See's belief in a unifying concept underlying the poem and in the overall integrity of the Codex Regius text.

### *The text*

The three final sections of *Hávamál* are all list poems, and each is clearly separate from the others both in its subject and in its structure. *Loddfáfnismál* is a list of counsels which has strong affinities with the wisdom Instruction as defined by scholars of Near Eastern wisdom literature. Its unity of subject is complemented by a structural unity achieved by the consistent use of personal address (*Ráðomc þér, Loddfáfnir, . . . þú . . .*), an admonitory tone backed up by verbs in the imperative mood (*farðu, hafðu*

etc.) and, especially, by the use of a refrain to introduce each new item. The boundary between *Loddfáfnismál* and the second, central section, *Rúnatal*, is clearly marked in the manuscript: strophe 138 starts on a new line with a large, inset, decorated capital letter.<sup>2</sup> *Rúnatal* is an account of Óðinn's ordeal on the tree, of how he acquired the runes and of how the runes were distributed. It is primarily concerned with information rather than advice and combines narrative with a series of lists contained in apparently fragmented strophes. The lists in *Rúnatal* use quite different techniques from those employed in *Loddfáfnismál*. In contrast with those in *Loddfáfnismál*, which each fill a strophe or more, the items in *Rúnatal* are brief, most occupying no more than a half-line each, and there is no refrain to provide unity. Instead the items are arranged in series with parallel grammatical structures. In addition, the text of *Rúnatal* moves from narrative related in the first person (*ec*), through direct address to a second person (*þú*), to report in the third person (*Svá þundrum reist etc.*). This last change of voice marks the close of the section. There is no indication from the scribe of the Codex Regius that a new section begins at strophe 146, but the list which follows, *Ljóðatal*, is again clearly distinguished by its subject and structure. It comprises a catalogue of eighteen charms which the first-person speaker claims to know but does not reveal. Like those in *Loddfáfnismál*, the items are strophe length, more or less, and each begins with a repeated formula, this time incorporating explicit enumeration: *Pat kann ec annat (it briðia, it fiórða etc.), er (ef) . . .* The catalogue is brought to a close in the eighteenth item (*pat fylgir lióða locom*, 163.6), and this is followed by a strophe (164) which provides the conclusion for the whole of *Hávamál*. In spite of this clear differentiation, it can be argued that the

<sup>2</sup> It is possible that the scribe of the Codex Regius also intended to mark the beginning of *Loddfáfnismál*, in strophe 111, as a new section. Evans (*Hávamál* 1986, 1) believes this to be so (see also Larrington 1993, 15) and Neckel–Kuhn prints the initial 'M' of 111 as a large capital. However, although this 'M' is large and distinct, it is hardly more so than some of the other capitals set off in the margin when the beginning of a strophe happens to coincide with the beginning of a new line on the page. This is especially true of the 'I' at the beginning of strophe 108, which occurs on the same manuscript page and which Neckel–Kuhn also prints as a large capital, but which is mentioned by neither Evans nor Larrington. North (1991, 126) regards the 'M' as of 'conventional capital size' but believes it to be different from the other marginal capitals because it is followed by a space the width of one letter. However, in contrast with strophe 138, strophe 111 follows no line break and its initial letter is neither decorated nor significantly inset into the text. For these reasons it is not clear that the scribe intended to indicate a new section beginning here.

three sections are carefully joined together into one unit; that is, that they have the same speaker and the same addressee, refer to the same fictional situation and are contained within a single narrative frame, and are provided with internal linking devices.

### *The speaker and the addressee*

There is general critical agreement that the first-person speaker in the bulk of all three sections is Óðinn/Hávi, who dispenses advice in *Loddfáfnismál*, recounts his own experience in *Rúnatal*, and lists the charms he knows in *Ljóðatal*. There is, however, another speaker involved, the *ec* of strophes 111 and 164, whose function is to report the speeches of Óðinn which he has overheard. This speaker addresses the audience of *Hávamál* directly and his role will be discussed further below. In the reported speeches Óðinn indirectly addresses the wider audience, but directly addresses another character within the poem. In *Loddfáfnismál* the person so addressed is named repeatedly as Loddfáfnir, but no information is given about who Loddfáfnir may be or why he is being counselled. The first part of *Rúnatal* is a narrative addressed to no one in particular, but in strophe 142 and again in 144 direct address to *bú* returns; no name, however, is given. In the same way, *Ljóðatal* begins with no specific addressee, but in strophe 162 *bú* is again introduced and again explicitly identified as Loddfáfnir. If we read these three sections as separate poems, we will leave open the identity of *bú* in strophes 142 and 144, and we will agree with Evans that the recurrence of the name Loddfáfnir in 162 is ‘mysterious’ (*Hávamál* 1986, 27). But there is no mystery if we read them as one unit. Then, as there is no indication that a new addressee has entered at any point, it would seem reasonable to assume that Loddfáfnir is being addressed throughout and that *bú* in each of its occurrences refers to him. Once his identity has been firmly established by the repeated namings in strophes 112–37, *bú* is brought into both *Rúnatal* and *Ljóðatal* as a reminder to the audience that Loddfáfnir is still being addressed and as a link between the three parts of the text. In *Ljóðatal*, for good measure, his name is given again.

### *The frame*

The frame opens the unit in strophe 111 and closes it again in strophe 164. Both strophes are spoken in the first person by a speaker who identifies himself as a *pulr*, or at least as someone who chants from the seat of the *pulr*. In strophe 111, at the beginning of *Loddfáfnismál*, this speaker sets

up the fictional situation within which the speeches he reports are to be understood:

Mál er at þylia þular stóli á,  
 Urðar brunni at;  
 sá ec oc þagðac, sá ec oc hugðac,  
 hlýdda ec á manna mál;  
 of rúnar heyrða ec dœma, né um ráðom þogðo,  
 Háva hollo at, Háva hollo í;  
 heyrða ec segia svá:

He states that he was present in person in Hávi's hall and that there, as a thoughtful observer remaining silent himself, he listened to the speech of men. In a line which leads straight into the list of counsels (*heyrða ec segia svá*), he claims to report what he had heard on that occasion. In strophe 164, at the end of *Ljóðatal*, he states that Hávi's words spoken in his hall have now been recounted and brings the whole poem to a conclusion, hailing the speaker, an individual (*sá* in 164. 6 and 7) who understands the words and who he hopes will make good use of them, and, finally, all his listeners:

Nú ero Háva mál qveðin, Háva hollo í,  
 allþorf ýta sonom,  
 óþorf iqtna sonom;  
 heill, sá er qvað, heill, sá er kann!  
 niótí, sá er nam,  
 heilir, þeirs hlýddo!

The reference back to strophe 111 is unmistakable and is emphasised by repetition of the phrase *Háva hollo í*. As the text stands in the Codex Regius, what the speaker had heard must include all the speeches between his remark in strophe 164.1–2 and the opening strophe 111: that is, he heard *Loddfáfnismál*, *Rúnatal* and *Ljóðatal*. This interpretation has not been accepted by critics who have read the three sections as independent poems. They have seen 111 as the introduction only to *Loddfáfnismál*, and they have pointed out that it is not altogether appropriate as an introduction to that section. In his discussion of strophe 111, for example, Evans (*Hávamál* 1986, 26) cites earlier objections that the elevated style of the strophe does not match what many have seen as the rather mundane, or even farcical, contents of *Loddfáfnismál*. In addition, he specifically notes 'the reference in line 7 to runes, which are not in fact dealt with in *Loddfáfnismál* (apart from a very cursory allusion in 137)'. He concludes: 'The strophe would in fact be more appropriately placed among the miscellaneous fragments of *Rúnatal*; it is even conceivable that it was at one time intended to

introduce *Ljóðatal*.’ Some critics (e. g. Heusler 1969, 214; Boer 1922, II 45) recommend moving the strophe to a position before the beginning of *Rúnatal*. Others (e. g. de Vries 1964, 159), recognising that 111 is intended to open the section of text closed by 164, move it to the beginning of *Ljóðatal* (the section which ends at 164). Müllenhoff (1891–1908, V 253), for the same reason, believed 164 to belong to the end of *Loddfáfnismál* (the section which opens at 111). Most editors, including the most recent ones (Neckel–Kuhn 1983; Evans, *Hávamál* 1986), restore 164 to its manuscript position, no doubt because it provides such a strong conclusion for the whole of *Hávamál*. However, both the framing link with strophe 111, sought by Müllenhoff and de Vries, and the preferred conclusion for *Hávamál*, can be retained without any violence to the manuscript order of the strophes if we read all three sections as one unit.

As regards strophe 111, when it is read as introductory not just to *Loddfáfnismál* but to all three sections, its elevated style can be seen as appropriate to the tone of the whole unit. In fact, 111 fits this introductory position particularly well. The speaker tells us that, while he was listening and observing in Hávi’s hall, he heard about two subjects: runes and counsel (*of rúnar heyrða ec dæma, né um ráðom þogðo*). He then goes on to recount what he heard (*heyrða ec segia svâ*), reciting the list of counsels given to Loddfáfnir. If *Loddfáfnismál* were an independent poem, he would stop his reporting at strophe 137 and say nothing (as Evans pointed out in the above quotation) about runes. However, if we include *Rúnatal* as part of his speech, then his promise in strophe 111 is fulfilled: he will have recounted what he heard about runes and what he heard about counsel. The reversed order (he tells us first about the counsel, then about the runes) is natural if we regard the list which follows as ‘triggered’ by the last topic he has mentioned: *um ráðom* leads directly to *ráðomc*. Expanding first on the last point mentioned is, in any case, a common rhetorical technique. It is true that there is no mention in the introductory strophe of charms, the subject of *Ljóðatal*, but it does seem that the connection between runes and charms is very close (see Elliott 1959, 67–69). *Rúnatal* itself recounts that when Óðinn took up the runes at the culmination of his ordeal on the tree he also seized/learned *fimbullioð nío* (140.1), and one of the charms in *Ljóðatal* requires the carving and colouring of runes (157.4–7). Heusler’s objection (1969, 214) to regarding 111 as introductory to all three sections, on the grounds that if *of rúnar heyrða ec dæma* points forward to *Rúnatal* then *á manna mál* must point to *Loddfáfnismál* and *um ráðom* to *Ljóðatal* and that this is manifestly not so, is a logical but, I believe, over-methodical reading of the text. Evans (*Hávamál* 1986, 26, quoted above) shows that

strophe 111 could plausibly be placed in any of the three sections. If it is read as introductory to them all, then it can be seen to prepare the audience for what they will hear in all of the latter part of *Hávamál*.

### *The links between the sections*

Besides the unifying functions of the main speaker and the addressee and of the frame, the four component parts of the unit which ends *Hávamál* (the frame and the three sections of reported speech) are all joined by syntactical, stylistic or verbal links. The introductory strophe is joined to *Loddfáfnismál* syntactically by the use of *svá* ('thus') and verbally by the association of *um ráðom* (111.8) and *ráðomc* (112.1). The link between the first and second sections of the reported speech, that is between *Loddfáfnismál* and *Rúnatal*, is made by a transitional strophe (137). This strophe, while remaining firmly rooted in *Loddfáfnismál*, introduces a new topic and a new style signalling that the first admonitory list is ending and a new informative section is about to begin:

Ráðomc þér, Loddfáfnir, enn þú ráð nemir,  
 nióta mundo, ef þú nemr,  
 þér muno góð, ef þú getr :  
 hvars þú ól dreccir, kiós þú þér iarðar megin!  
 þvíat iorð tecr við ólðri, enn eldr við sóttom,  
 eic við abbindi, ax við fiolkyni,  
 holl við hýrógi —heiptom scal mána qveðia—,  
 beiti við bitsóttom, enn við bolvi rúnar;  
 fold scal við flóði taca.

The hortatory formula (137.1–4) which begins the strophe clearly makes it a part of the list of counsels, which uses this refrain for twenty (including this one) of its twenty-seven strophes. In the second part of 137 (i. e. beginning at 137.7) the abrupt change from advice to information, specifically information of a magico-medical nature, prepares the way for *Rúnatal*. The allusion to runes (*enn við bolvi rúnar*) in the penultimate half-line, which Evans sees as 'very cursory' (*Hávamál* 1986, 26, quoted above), seems to be deliberately placed to introduce the topic of *Rúnatal*. It serves (as von See suggests, 1972, 60) to join these two sections together. A transitional passage like this one, linking two lists by looking back to one and then forward to the next, occurs earlier in *Hávamál* (strophe 84, see Jackson 1991, 131–32). A similar bridging technique, though on a smaller scale, is also used to link individual strophes in the poem (see de Vries 1964, 49). A further link between *Loddfáfnismál* and *Rúnatal* is made in strophes 142 and 144 when, as was pointed out above, the speaker returns

to the direct address and use of *pú* that were so prevalent in the list of counsels.

The transitional passage (145) between *Rúnatal* and *Ljóðatal* can be interpreted in a similar way:

Betra er óbeðit,   enn sé ofblótið,  
ey sér til gildis giof;  
betra er ósent,   enn sé ofsóit.  
Svá þunðr um reist   fyr þiða rōc;  
þar hann upp um reis,   er hann aprt of kom.

The first part (145.1–5) belongs with the preceding strophe 144, being linked to it by the repetition of ideas in *biðia/óbeðit*, *blóta/ofblótið*, *senda/ósent*, *sóa/ofsóit*, and so anchors the strophe in *Rúnatal*. The last part (145.6–9) provides *Rúnatal* with a clear conclusion: in the summing-up comment *Svá þunðr um reist*, in the change of voice to the third person, and in the parallel structure of the last two half-lines which form a closing couplet. Structurally parallel couplets or triplets are used as closing devices elsewhere in the *Edda* (compare, for example, the item closure effected by similar means in *Hávamál* 134.10–12, 155.6–7, 156.6–8 and *Sigrdrífomál* 13.9–10). But the final lines of strophe 145 function not only as a closure for *Rúnatal*, they also make the transition to *Ljóðatal*. Sijmons–Gering (I 154) states that the events referred to in 145.6–9 are not to be ascertained and that the lines constitute an out-of-context fragment. On the other hand, Boer (1922, II 48; see also *Hávamál* 1986, 137 and Larrington 1993, 62) believes that the last long line of 145 refers back to the events in 139.6 (*fell ec aprt þaðan*). If he is right (and a connection between *fell ec aprt þaðan* and *þar hann upp um reis* does make good sense), we can interpret the line as a reminder to the poem’s audience of what happened on that occasion: Óðinn took up the runes, ‘fell back from there’, and received *fimbullióð nio* from the son of Bolþorr. At the end of 145 the audience, having heard more about runes, is reminded of the earlier narrative as a preparation for hearing more about the other reward of Óðinn’s ordeal, the *fimbullióð*, in *Ljóðatal*. There is, of course, a discrepancy between the nine charms Óðinn says he received (*fimbullióð nio*, 140.1) and the eighteen he lists in *Ljóðatal*. One explanation might be that *Ljóðatal* is an editorial conflation of two lists, but I have found no convincing evidence for this. A more likely explanation is that we are expected to understand that Óðinn learned the additional charms from other sources which he does not mention. Further, remembering the use of *um ráðom/ráðomc* to link strophe 111 to the list of counsels, and the introduction of *rúnar* in 137.14 to lead into *Rúnatal*, we can see the reference in 145.7 to mankind (*fyr þiða rōc*) as a deliberate verbal link

with the opening of *Ljóðatal* (*er kannat þiόðans kona*, 146.2). The words are not identical in meaning, but they do share the same root and sound. As it did between *Loddáfñismál* and *Rúnatal*, the return to direct address and to the use of *pú* in strope 162 completes the link between *Rúnatal* and *Ljóðatal*.

Strophe 162 is the poet's final strategy for linking the three sections. Because of its break with the established item pattern of the list, as well as because they have seen the name Loddáfñir as out of place, some critics have dismissed this strophe as an interpolation (e. g. Sijmons—Gering, I 160; von See, 1972, 62, believes it was written by the *Redaktor*). However, it is not uncommon in early verse lists to introduce a break in an established pattern of list items to add emphasis, to mark the middle of the list, or to signal its approaching end. The latter type of pattern break may be relatively slight or quite dramatic and often occurs in the penultimate line or, as here, the penultimate item. This technique is employed elsewhere in *Hávamál* (for instance 81.5, 88.1–3, 137.12). It is also found in *Sigrdríformál* 12, where the sequence *pær um . . . pær um . . . pær um* in the penultimate item of the rune catalogue replaces the *á . . . oc á* pattern of the preceding items. Examples of the more dramatic kind occur in *Völuspá* 20.5–8 and in the Old English *Maxims II* 4b. In the context of these other examples, especially the one in *Hávamál* 137, the pattern break introduced in strophe 162 is not exceptional, and there is no need to suppose the hand of an interpolator to explain it. The recurrence of the name Loddáfñir and Evans's comment that it is 'mysterious' were discussed above. Evans suggests (and this accords with von See's explanation) that the name may have been inserted to provide a link with the earlier part of *Hávamál*. He is surely right about the link, but his use of the word 'inserted' indicates that he too is thinking of interpolation. He may, of course, be right about this as well, but there is no evidence that *Ljóðatal* had an existence prior to its association with *Loddáfñismál*, and it is possible that the link was there all along. In any case, the link extends to more than just the recurrence of the name. There is the return to the personal address *pú* (noted by Lindquist 1956, 146) which reminds us that Loddáfñir is still being addressed. In addition, there is a return to the admonitory tone of the list of counsels with a clear echo of the earlier refrain, especially in the repetition of the phrases *ef pú nemr* and *ef pú getr*. This reminds the audience of the whole instructional situation (see von See 1972, 62) and of the scene at Hávi's hall in the introductory strophe. The changes signal the approaching end of the list of charms (as Lindquist noted, though only in connection with the recurrence of *pú*, 1956, 146), which is concluded with the eighteenth item

in strophe 163. Reminding the audience of the narrative situation, they also prepare for the return of the voice of the *purl* in the final strophe (164), where he says that now what had been said in the hall has been recounted.

There is no syntactical link between the end of *Ljóðatal* and the concluding strophe 164, as there was between the opening strophe 111 and *Loddfáfnismál*, but there is in 164.7 (*nióti, sá er nam*) an echo of 162.8 (*nýt, ef þú nemr*). Both phrases recall the repeated advice to Loddfáfnir in the initial list of counsels (*nióta mundo, ef þú nemr*). In addition, strophe 164 is joined to the rest of the unit by its association with 111.

The linking devices that have been detailed here do not, of course, prove that the final three sections of *Hávamál* form a discrete unit. Such links are found elsewhere in the poem, specifically for instance, between *Loddfáfnismál* and the Gunnlög episode which immediately precedes it (see von See 1972, 59). They do show, at the very least, a careful hand joining the sections of the poem together in accordance with some concept of their underlying unity. The evidence of the frame is stronger and indicates that whoever put *Hávamál* into its present form intended the final three sections to be read as a unit. For von See this person was a *Redaktor* who worked with previously independent poems, joining them together and adding where necessary lines of his own (e. g. strophes 137 and 162, see von See 1972, 60; 62). For North it was ‘yet another poet’ (1991, 123) who was preceded, as far as the last three sections of the poem were concerned, by a series of earlier poets culminating in ‘a tidier mind’ who ‘added stanzas at the beginning and end to create a spurious unity’ (1991, 122). We might rather think of one poet who worked in a tradition which expected the re-use of older material, and who very probably incorporated such material into his own poem, but who composed the latter part of *Hávamál* with care and in accordance with a clear concept of the relevance of its different parts to one another. In any event, whether it was shaped by a *Redaktor* or a poet, the case for regarding *Hávamál* 111–64 as a unit (which, for convenience, I will call ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’, referring to its first section as either ‘the *Hávamál* list of counsels’ or ‘the conventional *Loddfáfnismál*’) is supported by the close resemblance between this unit and another eddic list poem, *Sigrdrífomál*.

#### *The comparison with Sigrdrífomál*

One of the heroic lays recorded in the Codex Regius, *Sigrdrífomál*, also has the form of a wisdom Instruction and also comprises three separate lists, one admonitory (corresponding to the conventional *Loddfáfnismál*), one

concerned with the origin of runes (corresponding to *Rúnatal*) and one a catalogue of runes and their uses (corresponding to *Ljóðatal*). The text of the poem in the *Edda* begins with a prose section incorporating a few fragmented verses, which sets the scene for the following poem in much the same way as does the introduction to *Grímnismál*. In this case, however, the prose narrative links several poems together and *Sigrdrífomál* is part of a series concerning the story of Sigurðr. The introduction to *Sigrdrífomál* tells us that Sigurðr, having killed Fáfnir, comes upon a sleeping warrior surrounded by flames. He passes through the flames and awakens the sleeper, whom he discovers to be the *valkyria* Brynhildr (*Sigrdrífa*), cast by Óðinn into a magic sleep. Sigurðr asks her to teach him wisdom and she responds, first by offering him a magical drink, and then by reciting the three lists which make up the rest of the poem.

As with ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’, the three sections of *Sigrdrífomál* are clearly distinct, not only in their content, but also in their structure. They employ different listing techniques. The first, the rune catalogue, has long items incorporating sub-lists and a repeated formula which begins each item but not each strophe (some items are extended with additional information). The second, the section concerned with the origin of the runes, employs short items arranged in grammatically parallel series. The third, the list of counsels, has long items and introduces explicit enumeration incorporated in another repeated formula. These techniques exactly parallel those employed by the first, second, and third sections respectively of ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’. Further, just as the separate components of ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’ are linked into one structural unit, so are the three sections of *Sigrdrífomál*, and in very similar ways. In ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’ the first-person speaker of all three sections is Óðinn, in *Sigrdrífomál* it is Sigrdrífa. In ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’ the speaker directly addresses a named individual, sometimes as *þú* and sometimes as Loddfáfnir. Similarly, in *Sigrdrífomál* one named person, Sigurðr, is addressed throughout. It is also possible to argue that in both texts a frame is provided by a narrator acting as a reporter of the action. In ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’ this narrator is the *þulr* who sets the scene in the introductory strophe, reports the speeches he has heard, and completes the frame in his own voice in the concluding strophe. In *Sigrdrífomál* the frame is provided by the third-person narrator of the prose passages linking the poems in the Sigurðr series. The narrator’s report, *enn hon vacnaði, oc settiz hon up oc sá Sigurðr oc mælti* (*Sigrdrífomál* prose 10–11), which leads straight into the poem’s first speech, is directly comparable with the statement of the *þulr* at the end of *Hávamál* 111

(*heyrða ec segia svá*). The frame at the end of *Sigrdrifomál* is lost in the lacuna, but we can infer its existence on the model of the narrative frames around the other poems in the Sigurðr series, *Fáfnismál*, *Brot af Sigurðarquiðo*, *Guðrúnarquiða in fyrsta* and so on, the poems which immediately precede and follow *Sigrdrifomál* in the manuscript. This inference is supported by the occurrence of a narrative frame around the *Völsunga saga* version of the material covered in *Sigrdrifomál*. In *Völsunga saga* the admonitory list is replaced by a prose paraphrase (1906–08, 54–55) but it is still spoken by Brynhildr (*Sigrdrífa*) and, at the end of her speech, after a brief exchange between her and Sigurðr, the narrator's voice returns to close the section. In addition to the frame, *Sigrdrifomál* is provided with internal links and transitions between its sections which are very similar to those in 'the extended *Loddfáfnismál*'.

First, like the initial list in 'the extended *Loddfáfnismál*', the first list in *Sigrdrifomál* is headed by an introductory strophe (5), although this one is spoken by the giver of instruction rather than by the narrator. In this strophe Sigrdrífa offers Sigurðr beer which is blended with powerful magic: charms, spells, and *gamanrúnar*. The precise meaning of the last word is debatable. In its two occurrences in *Hávamál* it seems to refer, not to runes as such, but to an intimate (120.6), or more particularly to a sexual (130.6), relationship. Fritzner (1883–96) glosses these occurrences as *morende Samtale*, and Faulkes (1987) as 'pleasant private intercourse, relationship'. However, the association with *lióð*, *lícnstafir* and *galdrar* indicates that in *Sigrdrifomál* 5 *gamanrúnar* refers rather to runic letters used as a spell, perhaps a spell to secure for the user the affections or the sexual favours of another. The word *manrúnar* is used in just this sense in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* (1933, 238), indicating that runes were believed to have been used for such a purpose. Neckel–Kuhn glosses *gamanrúnar* as it occurs in *Sigrdrifomál* 5 as *freude bringende runen*. So it can be argued that in this instance, standing at the head of a catalogue of runes, the reference to *gamanrúnar* introduces the subject of that catalogue in the same way as the mention of runes in *Hávamál* 137 does for *Rúnatal*. Further, placed at the end of strophe 5 and immediately followed at the beginning of strophe 6 by *sigrúnar*, the word *gamanrúna* triggers the catalogue of runes in the same way as *um ráðom* triggers the *Hávamál* list of counsels.

Second, the concluding strophe (13) of the *Sigrdrifomál* rune catalogue provides a close parallel to the concluding strophe (137) of the first list in 'the extended *Loddfáfnismál*'. That strophe, as we saw, acts as a transitional passage: it looks both back to the list of counsels which is ending by

repeating its refrain and forward to the list of rune lore that is beginning through a change from advice to information and a specific allusion to runes. *Sigrdrífomál* 13 begins in exactly the same way, repeating the formula which has acted as a refrain for the first list in this poem:

Hugrúnar scaltu kunna, ef þú vilt hveriom vera  
geðsvinnari guma.

This repetition anchors it firmly in the catalogue of runes. However, the strophe then makes a change of subject matter even more dramatic than that in *Hávamál* 137:

þær of réð, þær of reist,  
þær um hugði Hropr,  
af þeim legi, er lekið hafði  
ór hausi Heiddraupnis  
oc ór horni Hoddrofnis.

Instead of providing information on the use of the runes as the preceding items have done, this passage introduces mythological lore concerning Hropr/Oðinn, so beginning, in an obscure and allusive fashion, the narrative of the origin of the runes which corresponds to *Rúnatal*. Although the change of subject is so abrupt, the second part of the strophe is fully integrated with the first, both in sense and grammar: the repeated *þær* in 13.4, 5 and 6 refers directly to the *hugrúnar* with which the strophe opens and, more widely, to all the runes which have been listed in this catalogue. The *þær of... þær of... þær um* sequence, repeating the pattern introduced in the preceding strophe, is a further link with the rune catalogue that is ending. In the catalogue up to this point, Sigurðr has been the subject of the verbs in all the sub-lists detailing the use of the runes (*þú scalt kunna... oc rísta* etc.). In strophe 13, however, although Sigurðr remains the subject of the first two verbs (*scalt kunna, vilt vera*) the subject of the next three verbs (*réð, reist, hugði*) is Hropr, and the sub-list refers to the origin of the runes rather than their present use. The personal address, which was maintained in the first three half-lines as part of the link between this strophe and the rest of the catalogue, is dropped when the new subject is introduced, and the verbs are put into the third person and the past tense. All these changes look forward to the next section of the poem, which will deal in the third person, and in the past tense, with Hropr/Oðinn and the origin of the runes. The strophe ends with a *galdralag* couplet (13.9–10) which closes the rune catalogue in the same way as the couplet at the end of *Rúnatal* (145. 8–9) closes that section of ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’. *Sigrdrífomál* 13, therefore, both closes the catalogue of runes and introduces the narrative

of Óðinn which is to follow. It is more complex than *Hávamál* 137 but, looking both backward and forward, it performs the same function.<sup>3</sup>

The central rune lore section of *Sigrdrífomál* ends in strophe 19, which gives advice (*nióttu, ef þú namt* 19.8) very similar to that in the refrain in the *Hávamál* list of counsels (*nióta mundo, ef þú nemr*). The introduction of an admonitory formula here prepares for the coming list of counsels, in the same way as the change from admonition to information and the mention of runes in *Hávamál* 137 prepared for the beginning of *Rúnatal*; and the return of direct address (*nióttu... þū*), reminding the audience that Sigurðr is still being spoken to, prepares both for the return of Sigrdrifa's own voice in strophe 20 and for Sigurðr's reply in strophe 21. Strophes 20–21 embody an exchange between the speaker and the recipient of her lore which introduces the poem's final, admonitory list:

‘Nú scaltu kiósa, allz þér er kostr um boðinn,  
hvassa vápna hlynar;  
sogn eða þogn hafðu þér siálfri í hug!  
qlí ero mein of metin.’

‘Munca ec flœia, bott mic feigan vitir,  
emca ec með bleyði borinn;  
ástráð þín ec vil qlí hafa,  
svá lengi sem ec lifi.’

This exchange returns us to the initial narrative situation in a way reminiscent of the reminder of the narrative situation in ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’ strophe 162, when Loddfáfnir's name recurs with an echo of the refrain. Sigrdrifa offers Sigurðr a choice between speech or silence in lines which have been understood (Sijmons–Gering, II 217) to refer to their betrothal, and she warns him that she foresees misfortune. Despite the warning he replies that he will not flee, but rather *ástráð þín ec vil qlí hafa / svá lengi sem ec lifi* (21.4–6), whereupon she begins the list of counsels. There has been some discussion about these two strophes of dialogue and about the *ástráð þín qlí* which Sigurðr chooses to have as long as he lives. Gering proposes (Sijmons–Gering, II 205) that the strophes

<sup>3</sup> It may be objected that strophe 13, as it appears in Neckel–Kuhn, is not in fact a single strophe. Sijmons–Gering (II 213) regards it as two strophes, the first of which included the first three half-lines printed here, together with other lines which are now lost, and the second being the rest of strophe 13 as it stands in Neckel–Kuhn. The *Volsunga* saga version ends the strophe at the name Hropt. However, in defence of Neckel–Kuhn's reading of the Codex Regius version, it may be said that the strophe as it stands here does follow the pattern established by earlier items in this catalogue and its two halves are fully integrated grammatically.

belonged to an original *erweckungslied*, to which strophes 2–4 also belonged, and that the intervening strophes were lost. He also suggests (II 217) that the poem ended after this exchange with two strophes concerning the betrothal of Sigurðr and Brynhildr, strophes which are paraphrased in the *Völsunga saga* version. With this situation in mind he argues (following Müllenhoff, 1891–1908, V 162) that *ástráð þín oll* should be construed as *deine ganze liebe* and has nothing to do with counsel. He adds that an interpolator, misunderstanding the word *ástráð* here, and thinking it meant ‘counsel’ or ‘advice’, appended the admonitory list. Perhaps Müllenhoff and Gering felt that a lecture on behaviour was an inappropriate response for Sigrdrífa to make to Sigurðr’s choice of marriage. However, it does seem likely that the primary meaning of *ástráð* here is ‘counsel’ or ‘advice’, and that the word was intended to lead into the list of counsels which follows. *Ástráð* clearly means ‘counsel’ or ‘advice’ in its other eddic occurrences (*Fáfnismál* 35.3; *Hymisqviða* 4.7 and 30.3), as it does in its prose uses (see Cleasby–Vigfusson). Fritzner (1883–96) glosses it as *venligt, kjærligt Raad* and Neckel–Kuhn as *liebevoller, wohlgemeinter rat* (see also Boer 1922, II 198). If we understand *ástráð* to mean ‘counsel’ here then, like *um ráðom* in *Hávamál* 111 and *gamanrúna* in *Sigrdrífomál* 5, it introduces the topic of, and triggers, the list which follows. The verbal association *ástráð/ræð* linking the second and third lists in *Sigrdrífomál* parallels that between the second and third lists of ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’ (*þiða/þiðans, Hávamál* 145.7; 146.2).

As well as the structural similarities detailed here, there are similarities in the content and style of the corresponding sections of ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’ and *Sigrdrífomál*.

First, both lists of counsels include advice against adultery (*Hávamál* 115; *Sigrdrífomál* 32), against exchanging words with a foolish man (*Hávamál* 122; *Sigrdrífomál* 24), about friendship (*Hávamál* 119–21; *Sigrdrífomál* 37) and about avoiding ill-luck in battle (*Hávamál* 129; *Sigrdrífomál* 26–27). In addition, both lists of counsels include, amongst all the advice, one sub-list which gives practical information. In ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’ it is the list of remedies (strophe 137) and in *Sigrdrífomál* it is a list concerning the preparation of corpses for burial (strophes 33–34).

Second, the rune catalogue in *Sigrdrífomál* corresponds in content to *Ljóðatal* but in position to the conventional *Loddfáfnismál*, and it has some stylistic affinities with the latter. It is more overtly didactic than *Ljóðatal*, being couched in the imperative mood (*scaltu*) and being

emphatically addressed to Sigurðr (*þū*). This similarity probably results from the fact that both the *Hávamál* list of counsels and the *Sigrdrífomál* rune catalogue occupy the initial position in their respective texts and need to establish the instructional mode. It is the admonitory list in *Sigrdrífomál*, corresponding in content to the *Hávamál* list of counsels, which corresponds in position to *Ljóðatal*, and we may note that both of these concluding lists employ a numerical formula. In spite of their differences in style, the content of *Ljóðatal* does correspond quite closely to that of the *Sigrdrífomál* rune catalogue. The former lists charms and their uses, but the magic formulae themselves are not given. The latter lists runes which will be useful to the hero, specifies the words and/or actions which should be employed when the runes are used, but does not name the runes themselves. (Possible exceptions are items one and two, in strophes 6 and 7 respectively, in each of which one rune name, *Týr* and *Nauðr*, is given. This information is only partial, however, since in both items, as in all the others, the word that heads the item is plural.) In addition, as with the two admonitory lists, these two lists of magical lore show specific correspondences in content. For example, both have spells that affect weapons (*Hávamál* 148, 150; *Sigrdrífomál* 6) or the behaviour of a desired woman (*Hávamál* 161, 162; *Sigrdrífomál* 7), that ensure safety at sea (*Hávamál* 154; *Sigrdrífomál* 10), and that can be used to calm or avert hatred among men (*Hávamál* 153; *Sigrdrífomál* 12). In addition, both mention spells particularly for the use of doctors (*Hávamál* 147; *Sigrdrífomál* 9, 11).

Third, and most interesting, is the similarity of content, structure and style between the two central sections of rune lore. Both begin with a narrative concerning Óðinn's acquisition of the runes. In 'the extended *Loddfáfnismál*' this narrative (*Hávamál* 138–41) starts with an account of Óðinn's ordeal on the tree, hanging for nine nights, wounded with a spear, sacrificed to himself:

Veit ec, at ec hecc vindgameiði á  
nætr allar níó,  
geiri undaðr oc gefinn Óðni,  
siálfri siálfom mér,  
á þeim meiði, er mangi veit,  
hvers hann af rótum renn.

As a result of this ordeal Óðinn gained not only the runes and the nine powerful charms, but also a drink (*oc ec drycc of gat ins dýra miaðar, / ausinn Óðreri*, 140.4–6). In *Sigrdrífomál* 13–14 the narrative seems to refer to two stories, known from other sources, of how Óðinn acquired wisdom from Mímir:

Hugrúnar scaltu kunna, ef þú vilt hveriom vera  
 geðsvinnari guma;  
 þær of réð, þær of reist,  
 þær um hugði Hropr,  
 af þeim legi, er lekið hafði  
 ór hausi Heiddraupnis  
 oc ór horni Hoddrofnis.

Á biargi stóð með Brimis eggjar,  
 hafði sér á hofði hiálm.

Þá mælti Míms hofuð  
 fróðlict iþ fyrrsta orð,  
 oc sagði sanna stafi.

As noted above (p. 45), *þær* in its three occurrences in strophe 13 refers grammatically to the *hugrúnar* with which the strophe opens, and it can also be interpreted as referring to all the runes listed in the preceding catalogue. In strophe 13 Óðinn gains control of them, carves and ponders them, as a result of drinking the liquid (*af þeim legi*, see Neckel–Kuhn II, under *af* IIb) which had dripped out of Heiddraupnir's skull and out of Hoddrofnir's horn. It is not certain, but seems likely, that Heiddraupnir and Hoddrofnir are names for Mímir (compare the reference to Hoddmímir in *Vafþrúðnismál* 45.3), who is named in strophe 14. According to the account in *Gylfaginning* (Snorri Sturluson 1982, 17), Mímir owned a well containing *spekð ok mannvit*, he drank its wisdom-giving waters from a horn (*hann drekkr ór brunninum af horninu Gjallarhorni*), and he gave Óðinn a drink from his well after the god had given his eye as a pledge (see also *Voluspá* 28). Elsewhere (Snorri Sturluson 1941–51, I 13) we are told that Mímir's severed head was a source of wisdom consulted by Óðinn (see also *Voluspá* 46). The bringing together of a skull, a horn, a wisdom-giving liquid, and the acquisition of knowledge by Óðinn suggests that strophe 13 is alluding to these stories about Mímir (see Boer 1922, II 196). Strophe 14 refers more directly to the story of Óðinn's acquisition of knowledge from Mímir's head. Hropr (Óðinn), introduced in the preceding strophe, would be the subject of *stóð* here (Boer 1922, II 196–97; Sijmons–Gering, II 213), and it would be to him that Mímir's head spoke wisely, telling him true staves, namely the 'rune-location list' which follows in strophes 15–17. The list is grammatically linked to this strophe by the verb *qvað*(15.1), the subject of which must be *Míms hofuð* (Boer 1922, II 197).

In spite of their differences, there are some connections between the narratives of Óðinn in 'the extended *Loddáfánismál*' and *Sigrdrífomál*. First, in 'the extended *Loddáfánismál*' Óðinn hangs on a tree, usually

assumed (see, for instance, Fleck 1971a, 385–88; *Hávamál* 1986, 32–33) to be the world ash, Yggdrasill, and he searches downwards (*nýsta ec niðr*, 139.3) to take up the runes. In other words, he acquires the runes from the base of Yggdrasill. In his account in *Gylfaginning*, Snorri tells us that Mímir's well was situated among the roots of Yggdrasill. If *Sigrdrífomál* 13 does refer to Mímir's well, then Óðinn acquired his power over the runes from the same place in *Sigrdrífomál* as he did in ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*'. Second, in ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*', Óðinn states that he received nine mighty charms *af inom frægia syni / Bolþors* (140.1–3). Sijmons-Gering (I 151) points out that a son of Bolþorr is mentioned nowhere else but that there is repeated evidence that Óðinn owed his wisdom to Mímir, and accepts the identification of Mímir with Bolþorr's son. This identification remains unproved, but it is relevant that an agent, Mímir in *Sigrdrífomál* and Bolþorr's son in ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*', is involved in both stories of Óðinn's acquisition of runic wisdom. Third, in the poem *Fjólsvinnsmál* (20.1–3) the world ash is called Mímir's tree in words that otherwise seem to be directly parallel to the last three lines of *Hávamál* 138 quoted above:

Mímameiðr hann heitir,  
en þat mangi veit,  
af hverjum rótum renn.

Fleck (1971a, 387–88) argues that both this Mímameiðr and the tree of Óðinn's ordeal are identical with Hoddmimir's wood mentioned in *Vafþrúðnismál* (*í holti Hoddmimis*, *Vafþrúðnismál* 45.3) and in *Gylfaginning* (Snorri Sturluson 1982, 54). Fourth, in both texts the acquisition of the runes is accompanied by a special drink, the precious mead of *Hávamál* 140.5 and the liquid which had dripped out of Heiddraupnir's skull and Hoddrofnir's horn in *Sigrdrífomál* 13.7–10.

The narrative of Óðinn in ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*' is followed (142–43) by an account of the origin of the runes. They were carved by named individuals for (or among) the different races of rational beings: Æsir, elves, dwarves, and giants.

Óðinn með ásom, enn fyr álfom Dáinn,  
Dvalinn dvergom fyrir,  
Ásviðr iotnom fyrir,  
ec reist siálfir sumar.

The identity of the *ec* of the last half-line has caused some discussion. The speaker would seem to be Óðinn, who is certainly the speaker of strophes 138–41, but Óðinn has already been mentioned in this list. The problem is

compounded by the last two lines of strophe 145 where Óðinn (Pundr) is referred to in the third person. Who is the speaker of this part of *Rúnatal*? It could be Óðinn; he does at times regard himself objectively, as in strophe 138.5–6, and the final line of the list could be understood as a reflective, concluding comment. However, it is also possible that some lines in 142–45 are spoken by someone else. Larrington (1993, 61) states unequivocally that *ec* in 143.5 is ‘the poet, the *hroptr* for the race of men, who are otherwise the only class of creation<sup>4</sup> missing from the the verse’. Sijmons-Gering (II 152) suggests that the strophe is spoken by a wandering *bulr*, adding that the listed lore deals with the origin of rune knowledge for those gifted with reason and speech: that is gods, elves, dwarfs, giants and men. If the final line of strophe 143 does refer to the acquisition of runes by men, the awkward repetition in the list would be avoided. There seems no need, however, to introduce another character, a wandering *bulr*, as the narrating *bulr*, the *ec* of strophe 111, is already available. If he does interpose his voice here, between the narrative of Óðinn and *Ljóðatal*, this return of the narrator’s own voice would correspond to the return to the narrative situation in *Sigrdrífomál* 20. Whoever speaks them, strophes 142–45 are allusive and very mixed metrically. The same is true of the whole of the central section of *Sigrdrífomál*.

Just as in ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’, the *Sigrdrífomál* narrative of Óðinn is followed by an account of the origin of the runes, this time a list of places where they were carved (15–17), and then of their distribution to the different races of rational beings (18). All those which were carved on (i. e. onto the objects listed in the preceding three strophes) were scraped off, mixed with the holy mead, and sent ‘on wide ways’:

Allar vóro af scafnar, þær er vóro á ristnar,  
oc hverfðar við inn helga mioð,  
oc sendar á víða vega.

In this way they were distributed to the *Æsir*, the elves, the Vanir and men:

Þær ro með ásom, þær ro með álfom,  
sumar með vísom vñom,  
sumar hafa mennzcir menn.

The dwarfs and giants are notably absent from this list, but the presence of men lends some support to the interpretations of *ec* in *Hávamál* 143.5 favoured by Sijmons-Gering and Larrington. The holy mead (18.3), like the dripping liquid of *Sigrdrífomál* 13.7–10, may be compared with the

<sup>4</sup> She must surely mean ‘of rational beings’; the list does not attempt to include all classes of creation.

precious mead in *Hávamál* 140.4–5. Obscure and allusive as they are, the narratives of Óðinn and the accounts of the origin and distribution of the runes contained in these two poems seem to represent two versions of what was essentially the same story.

Finally, in addition to the similarities between *Sigrdrifomál* and ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’ already described, there are specific verbal parallels between the two texts. For example, both Sigrdrifa and Óðinn tell the recipients of their instruction that they must have knowledge of runes, and Sijmons–Gering (II 213) and Evans (*Hávamál* 1986, 136) draw attention to the verbal parallels between their words in *Sigrdrifomál* 13 and *Hávamál* 142:

**Hugrúnar scaltu kunna,** ef þú vilt hveriom vera  
geðsvinnari guma;  
þær of réð,    þær of reist,  
    þær um hugði **Hroptr**,  
af þeim legi,    er lekið hafði  
    ór hausi Heiddraupnis  
    oc ór horni Hoddrofnis.

As well as a knowledge of runes in general, both Loddafáfnir and Sigurðr must have knowledge of the art of healing (*Hávamál* 120 and 137; *Sigrdrífomál* 4, 5, 9 and 11). In this connection too there are verbal parallels:

**góðan** mann teygðo þér at **gamanrúnom**  
oc nem **lícnargaldr, meðan þú lifir.** *Hávamál 120.5–7*

fullr er hann líða oc **lícnstafa,**  
**góðra galdra** oc **gamanrúna.** *Sigrdrífomál 5.5–7*

mál oc manvit gefit ocr mærom tveim  
oc **læcnishendr, meðan lifom!** *Sigrdrífomál 4.4–6*

And the admonitory words both instructors use are very similar:

**Ráðomc þér**, Loddáfñir, at þú . . .  
níota mundo, ef þú nemr. *Hávamál* 112.1–3 etc.

**Pat ræð ec þér** íþ fyrsa, at þú . . . *Sigrdrifomál* 22.1–2  
níóttu, ef bú namt. *Sigrdrifomál* 19.8.

One last correspondence demands to be noted, although there is no reason to think that it is anything but a tantalising coincidence, and that is the common element *fáfnir* in the names of the two recipients of instruction: Loddáfánir and Sigurðr Fáfnisbani.

The similarities between *Sigrdrífomál* and ‘the extended *Loddáfánismál*’ may be summarised as follows: a supernatural authority figure who dispenses instruction (Óðinn and Sigrdrífa); a named individual recipient of the instruction (Loddáfánir and Sigurðr); a framed three-list format; a correspondence between the subject matter (counsel, lore concerning runes and charms) and between the purposes (admonitory, informative) of the lists in each case; correspondences between the content of individual list items; a rune origin and distribution narrative, allusive and obscure, in the central section of each text; exactly parallel listing techniques; closely similar linking and transitional techniques, in and between the corresponding sections of each text; and specific verbal parallels. It seems reasonable to conclude that in *Sigrdrífomál* and ‘the extended *Loddáfánismál*’ we have two parallel texts.

#### *The comparison with Grímnismál*

There are no other three-list instructions in the *Edda*, but there is another instructional list poem. This is *Grímnismál*, and Haugen (1983, 14–16) has drawn attention to its close relationship with *Hávamál* and *Sigrdrífomál*. *Grímnismál* does not have an admonitory list and so lacks the affinities with the wisdom Instruction possessed by *Loddáfánismál* and *Sigrdrífomál*, but it does combine a narrative about Óðinn, lists of mythological lore and the instruction of a young man. The narrative provides the framework for the lists which make up the bulk of the poem. The story is as follows: Óðinn visits his foster-son, King Geirrøðr, in disguise in order to test his hospitality. Geirrøðr has the stranger seized and, because he will not talk, tortured by being fastened between two fires and left without food or drink for eight days. On the eighth day Geirrøðr’s young son, Agnarr, takes pity on the stranger and offers him a horn full of drink. Óðinn responds by telling Agnarr that he will have good luck, called down upon him by Veratýr (that is, by Óðinn himself), and that he will never receive a better reward for a single drink. Óðinn then recites a series of lists of mythological lore, ending with a catalogue of his own names during which his identity is revealed. Geirrøðr jumps up to release him, stumbles on to his own sword and dies. Óðinn vanishes and Agnarr becomes king.

The similarities in the pattern of this narrative and the two poems discussed above are evident. As in ‘the extended *Loddáfánismál*’, Óðinn is

the giver of instruction and an important place is given to an ordeal suffered by him. In *Grímnismál* his ordeal is by fire, and we may compare Sigrdrífa's situation at the beginning of *Sigrdrífomál* where, in her magic sleep, she is surrounded by flames through which Sigurðr has to pass to rescue her. In *Grímnismál* Óðinn is deprived of food and drink for eight days (2.1–3) and in 'the extended *Loddfáfnismál*' he hangs for nine days and is similarly deprived of food and drink (138.3, 139.1–2). In *Grímnismál*, as in *Sigrdrífomál*, the recipient of instruction is a young prince, and a horn of drink changes hands. The relief offered to Óðinn by Agnarr parallels the rescue of Sigrdrífa by Sigurðr, and in both cases the instruction follows immediately. In 'the extended *Loddfáfnismál*' Óðinn does not suffer the ordeal on the same occasion as he gives the instruction, rather he recounts his experience as part of his instructional speech, and Loddáfñir plays no part in his rescue. However, there is a form of relief at the climax of the ordeal when Óðinn grasps the runes, falls from the tree and receives a magic drink (*oc ec drycc of gat ins dýra miaðar, / ausinn Óðreri*, 140.4–6). This drink, which causes him to prosper and become wise or fruitful (*Pá nam ec frævaz oc fróðr vera / oc vaxa oc vel hafaz*, 141.1–3) and which was compared above to the empowering liquid of *Sigrdrífomál* 13.7–10 and the rune-filled mead of *Sigrdrífomál* 18, may also be compared to the magic-filled beer which Sigurðra offers Sigurðr when he asks her to teach him wisdom:

‘Biór færí ec þér, brynbings apaldr,  
magni blandinn oc megintíri;  
fullr er hann lióða oc lícnstafa,  
góðra galdrar oc gamanrúna.’ *Sigrdrífomál* 5

The correspondences in the content of the three poems, despite their similarity, are inexact. Unlike *Grímnismál* and *Sigrdrífomál*, for example, 'the extended *Loddfáfnismál*' has no fire ordeal (although a hanging ordeal is substituted) and no rescue. Further, although Óðinn does receive a drink in 'the extended *Loddfáfnismál*', it is offered neither by the recipient of the instruction, as in *Grímnismál*, nor by the giver of instruction, as in *Sigrdrífomál*. The horn offered by Agnarr to Óðinn, although it produces an extraordinary response, is full of ordinary drink, unlike the magical, wisdom-giving potions of *Sigrdrífomál* and 'the extended *Loddfáfnismál*'. The setting for the instruction in *Sigrdrífomál* is the open fell, not the hall of a king, as it is in both 'the extended *Loddfáfnismál*' and *Grímnismál*. Nevertheless, the similarities do seem too persistent to be coincidental, and it is worth considering what the underlying pattern might mean.

*The comparison with Rígsþula and the role of Loddfáfnir*

One possibility is suggested in the work of Jere Fleck (1970, 1971b), Einar Haugen (1983) and Jens Peter Schjødt (1988) who believe that the poems in the *Edda*, or at least some of them, may have had a ritual function. Fleck, for instance, suggests that ‘a ritual education in numinous knowledge as a part of a younger/youngest son’s individual consecration to a godly figure formed the decisive factor in the succession to a Germanic sacred kingship’ (1970, 42). He bases this suggestion on the case of Konr ‘the young’ (*ungr*) in another eddic list poem, *Rígsþula*. Towards the end of this poem (43–44) we are told that Konr, who was to assume the title and position of his father Jarl, was distinguished from his older brothers because he had knowledge of runes and other special skills:

Enn Konr ungr   kunni rúnar,  
ævinrúnar   oc aldrúnar;  
meirr kunni hann   mönnum biarga,  
eggiar deyfa,   ægi lægia.

Klög nam fugla,   kyrra elda,  
sæva of svefia,   sorgir lægia,  
afl oc eliun   áttu manna.

If *biarga* here refers to help in childbirth (see Neckel–Kuhn II), then all of Konr’s special skills find parallels in the stories of Sigurðr and Loddfáfnir. Sigurðr must know *biargrúnar* and *brimrúnar* (*Sigrdrífomál* 9–10), he understands the speech of birds (*Fáfnismál*, prose section between strophes 31 and 32) and possesses great strength (*Frá dauða Sinfiotla*, lines 33–35). The catalogue of charms recited for Loddfáfnir includes charms to soothe sorrow, to dull a weapon’s edge and to quell fire (*Hávamál* 146, 148, 152). We are not told how Konr acquires his knowledge, only that he bests his father Jarl in a contest of runes (*Rígsþula* 45). However, Jarl himself had learned the runes directly from the god-like figure Rígr (36.1–4), who would seem to correspond to the givers of instruction in *Sigrdrífomál*, *Grímnismál* and ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’.

In *Rígsþula* the instruction of Jarl and the special knowledge and skills of Konr are alluded to only briefly, but the king-making context is illuminating. Fleck (1970, 44–45) draws a parallel with the story of Geirrøðr and his succession to the kingship as it is told in the prose introduction to *Grímnismál*. In a later paper (1971b, 58–61) he applies his theory to Agnarr, concluding that ‘in order to succeed to the throne, Agnarr must receive ritual instruction’ (1971b, 61). Schjødt criticises some details of Fleck’s overall idea but agrees with him in principle. Haugen also agrees

with Fleck's idea but, rather than restricting the ritual function of the eddic poems to the initiation of a king, he extends it to 'the whole ceremonial pattern of Germanic religion in which the king priest, or sacred magician, acts out the role of the gods he tells about' (1983, 20). He includes *Sigrdrífomál* in his discussion, saying (1983, 16):

I hesitate to say that Sigrdrifa . . . is another mask of Odin, this time in the shape of a woman, but she talks exactly like him, and I believe she is simply Odin's mouthpiece. Again a slender story has been grafted on to a recital of numinous knowledge, which serves the purpose of preparing Sigurd to become a king, just as it did Agnar in the *Lay of Grímnir*.

If Fleck and Haugen are right, it may be possible to discern behind the poems discussed in this paper some initiatory rite, and this would accord with Lindquist's view of *Hávamál*. The ritual would include some or all of the following: the recital of epic narrative concerning Óðinn or a surrogate, the listing of mythological lore and/or magical lore concerning runes or charms, and an admonitory list of advice addressed to the initiate. It might also include re-enactment of some ordeal involving hanging or fire and relief or rescue, and the offer or acceptance of a drink. The similarities between the texts might be explained if they all reflect variations of the same, or very similar, rites.

Loddfáfnir's name occurs only in *Hávamál*. The results of attempts to interpret its meaning, for example *spielmann*, *gaukler* (Sijmons-Gering, I 132) and *Laffe* (Lindquist 1956, 32), have been unflattering and seem inappropriate for a member of a group which includes Sigurðr and Agnarr. We know nothing about Loddfáfnir except what the conventional *Loddfáfnismál* tells us: that he was personally counselled by a speaker whom we can assume to be Óðinn. However, the extension of his instruction to include *Rúnatal* and *Ljóðatal*, and the parallels between his situation and those of Sigurðr and Agnarr, allow us to infer a little more: that Loddfáfnir was a young prince about to become a king, ready for instruction in numinous knowledge, and deemed worthy of the attention of the highest god—in fact, that he was a protégé of Óðinn's, as Agnarr was and Geirrøðr had been, and as were also the Volsungs. If we accept Fleck's and Haugen's interpretation of the roles of Agnarr and Sigurðr, then we must conclude that Loddfáfnir too was a candidate for sacred kingship.

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## BJARNE FIDJESTØL

The sudden death on February 9, 1994, of Bjarne Fidjestøl, Professor of Nordic Philology at the University of Bergen, at the age of 56, is a particularly sad blow to the Viking Society, of which, over the past few years, he had become an increasingly close friend. Many of the Society's members attended the Seventh Biennial Conference of Teachers of Scandinavian Studies in Great Britain and Northern Ireland held at University College London in March 1987, at which Bjarne gave, at the invitation of the Conference organisers (who have since published it in the Proceedings) a paper in Norwegian on scaldic poetry and the Conversion, with special reference to the kingship of Haraldr hárfagri. At the Society's centenary symposium in 1992 Bjarne also gave, at the Society's invitation, a paper in English on the contribution of scaldic studies to current scholarly engagement with the problem of the extent of the Christian impact on pagan beliefs in the Viking Age; this paper is published in Anthony Faulkes and Richard Perkins, eds, *Viking Revaluations* (1993), the volume in which the papers given at the symposium are collected. Bjarne's books *Sólarljóð: Tyding og tolkingsgrunnlag* (1979) and *Det norrøne fyrstediðt* (1982) are, as it happens, reviewed by the former and current Presidents of the Society in *Scandinavica* 20 (1981), 219, and 25 (1986), 74–76, respectively. Neither review does justice to the book with which it deals, but each at least offers a way into the book in question for readers whose *nynorsk* may not be entirely up to scratch.

At the Conference in 1987, mentioned above, Bjarne was asked by Michael Barnes in my hearing to make an after-dinner speech on behalf of the Norwegian delegates at the end of the Conference. He immediately replied: 'Oh, no; I can't possibly give a speech in English.' 'But we want you to do it in Norwegian,' said Michael. 'Oh; then I'll have to think of some other excuse,' Bjarne replied. Fortunately he was persuaded to give the speech in Norwegian, and did so to the great pleasure of his hosts and no doubt also to that of his fellow Norwegian guests. In addition to the unassuming modesty and gentle sense of humour that this story illustrates, Bjarne also had a moral courage and integrity that led him to risk making himself unpopular in order to stand up for what he believed in. Not everybody will have agreed with his position on the Seventh International Saga Conference at Spoleto in 1988, which included in its programme a contribution from a representative of the University of South Africa, but few can have failed to admire the openness and painstaking persistence with which Bjarne made his position clear, both at the Conference itself

and in letters written to many of its members beforehand. It is a particular sadness that he did not live to hear of the forming of the new government in South Africa; he would have rejoiced at the news.

Our deep sympathies go to his wife Eva, to his children Mari, Ragna, Alfred and Ane, and to his students and colleagues at the University of Bergen.

R. W. McT.

## PETER HALLBERG

January 25, 1916–March 4, 1995

It is a great sorrow to find oneself in the position of writing two obituaries in the same number of *Saga-Book*. Although Peter Hallberg was perhaps not as well known personally to members of the Viking Society as Bjarne Fidjestøl, his books on *The Icelandic Saga* and *Old Icelandic Poetry*, available in English from 1962 and 1975 respectively, must for many members of the Society have formed part of their basic introductory reading when they first encountered Old Icelandic literature. Peter attended one of the Society's meetings in London early in 1981, when on a lecturing visit to Leeds from Gothenburg; and in 1987 he gave a lecture on 'Recent Trends in Saga Research' at a plenary session of the Seventh Biennial Conference of Teachers of Scandinavian Studies in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, held at University College London in March of that year, and attended by many of the Society's members; this paper is published in the Conference *Proceedings* (1987), 78–95. Perhaps the most significant of his visits to Britain for the advancement of Northern research, however, and certainly the most dramatic of them, was the one he made in 1944. In the previous year, as he explains in a lecture on Laxness published in Elín Bára Magnusdóttir and Úlfar Bragason, eds, *Halldórsstefna* (1993), 11–19, he had been offered the post of Swedish lecturer at the University of Iceland, but had been prevented from taking it up by the sheer difficulty of reaching Iceland from Sweden in wartime. In order to do so, he had to travel first to Britain; but Swedish aeroplanes flying to Britain at that stage of the war were exposed to the risk of German attack. He managed eventually to fly to Edinburgh, however, and proceeded from there by train to Hull, where he boarded an Icelandic trawler for a six-day voyage to Iceland, arriving in time to take up the lecturing post just under a year late. On this journey he had with him a well-filled mailbag, 'about the size of myself', as he puts it, which he had been enjoined by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs never to let out of his sight and to deliver without fail to the Swedish diplomatic mission in Reykjavík. Although this was not Peter's first visit to Iceland, it was surely the one that was most important for the course his life was later to take. He remained in the lecturing post until 1947. In 1951 he became Docent in Literary History at the University of Gothenburg, and in 1975 Professor of Comparative Literature, also at Gothenburg. In 1945 he married Rannveig Kristjánsdóttir, from Dagverðareyri, just north of Akureyri, in northern Iceland; she died in 1952

at the tragically early age of thirty-five. They had two children, Kristján and Maria. In 1955 he married Rannveig's sister, Kristín, who died, also after an heroic struggle against illness, in 1985. Both marriages were, in their different ways, wonderfully happy ones, as was clear to anyone who knew Peter well.

It would need more than just a mailbag—even one of the size Peter describes—to contain all his publications on Old and Modern Icelandic literature and related subjects. Indeed, when introducing his lecture at the London conference in 1987, his namesake Peter Foote said that Peter Hallberg, with his tall, imposing figure, towered above most of us physically as well as academically, and that his list of publications was 'even longer than himself'. While some might think that his statistical investigations of saga authorship (set out most fully in his *Stilsignalement och författarskap i norrön sagalitteratur* (1968), and summarised in Ture Johannesson, ed., *Språkliga signalement* (1983), 81–102) have been largely superseded by the advent of the computer, he may be said to have prepared the way for the use of computers in Northern research by his wise assessment of the kind of information that needs to be fed into them; and it should be remembered that his statistical approach was by no means confined to problems of saga authorship, but touched on matters as widely different as sacral kingship in ancient Scandinavia and free indirect style in the novels of Halldór Laxness. Even if his methods and conclusions are questioned, his work will remain an inexhaustible source of valuable insights and observations. It is perhaps in his work on Laxness that he comes across, as a scholar, at his most humane. In his *Halldór Laxness* (1971), 128, he praises Laxness for 'placing Iceland in the midst of the world'. This is something that Peter Hallberg may be said to have done for Halldór Laxness, by providing in his books *Den store vävaren* (1954) and *Skaldens hus* (1956) an international context for the study of Laxness's work, which he discusses in relation to the work of writers as varied as André Breton, Dante Alighieri, Knut Hamsun, Ernest Hemingway, James Joyce, August Strindberg and Lao-tse. For the magnificent example of the breadth and depth of his reading, and for his authoritative presence as a bastion of Northern research over many years, we thank him warmly, while sending our deep sympathies to his relatives in Iceland and Sweden.

R. W.  
McT.

# THE MILL IN NORSE AND FINNISH MYTHOLOGY

By CLIVE TOLLEY

THE MILK ocean is churned, in Indian myth, with an outlier of the world mountain to produce the *soma* of immortality, as well as a host of other guarantors of the world's fertility and well-being, such as the sun and moon, along with destructive forces such as the poison Kālakūṭa and the goddess of misfortune.<sup>1</sup> No myth relating anything precisely comparable to this striking event appears to exist in Norse, yet the image of a cosmic mill, ambivalently churning out well-being or disaster, may be recognised in certain fragmentary myths.

The image of the cosmic mill is better developed by the neighbours of the Norsemen, the Finns. The tale of the *sampo* provides a poetically elaborated myth against which the Norse remains may be assessed; I shall also consider some of the possibilities of Norse/Finnish influence.

## The Sampo

The Finnish *sampo* is never described in detail, nor is its precise function determined; nonetheless, investigation reveals that it represents a highly developed expression of the image of the world mill: the cosmic turning regulates fertility, 'grinding out' well-being like a mill. At the same time, fertility is not perfect, and efforts are made to explain this fact in the *sampo* myths.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The myth is recounted in the *Mahābhārata*; I have consulted O'Flaherty's translation (1975, 274–80). She gives the passages translated as being from the *Mahābhārata* I.15.5–13; I.16.1–40; I.17.1–30; 7 lines after I.61.35; 3 lines after I.61.32; 3 lines after I.16.36; 3 lines after I.16.40; 3 lines after I.17.7. For a study of this myth alongside Scandinavian analogues (but not involving consideration of any cosmic mill aspects of the Scandinavian myths) see Dumézil 1924, esp. chs 2–3.

<sup>2</sup> Four versions of the Finnish *sampo* poems are given in *FFPE* nos 12–15; see also the commentary there (526). Kuusi has carried out a thorough analysis of the poem's variants elsewhere (Kuusi 1949). By the twelfth century three poems of different age (but going back at least to c. AD 800)—'The Creation of the World', 'The Forging of the *Sampo*' and 'The Theft of the *Sampo*'—had become established in a fixed sequence (Kuusi 1949, 350–52). This group of poems, forming the so called 'Sampo Epos', had three main redactions in different geographical areas (Häme, Pohjanmaa, Karelia).

In summary, the three main episodes of the epos were:

*The Creation of the World.*

Väinämöinen, the cosmic sage, is shot by an enemy and drifts wounded for several years at sea where he performs various acts of creation.<sup>3</sup>

*The Forging of the Sampo.*<sup>4</sup>

Finally, he is washed ashore at Pohjola, whose mistress undertakes to return him to his own people on condition that he forges<sup>5</sup> her a *sampo* (which is not defined). He promises that his fellow hero Ilmarinen will do this and is allowed to return home. Ilmarinen agrees to forge the *sampo*, in return for which he is told he will receive the daughter of the Mistress of Pohjola. Thus the *sampo* is made and provides the inhabitants of Pohjola with great wealth.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> ‘The Creation of the World’ was also sung as a separate poem: motifs vary in the different redactions (*FFPE* nos 2–5):

- a. The common motif is that of the bird (duck, swallow, eagle) which lays its eggs, either on a hummock (Väinämöinen is not present in many versions of the myth), or on Väinämöinen’s knee; the eggs are broken (e. g. by a storm) and from them are formed parts of the world (e. g. the sun from the yolk, the firmament from the upper half of the shell, the earth from the lower).
- b. Another motif often found is that of the bird diving down to the sea-bottom to bring up mud, from which the world is formed (see Schier 1963 on this common Siberian mythologem, and its analogues in Norse). This motif can be combined with a; for example, in *FFPE* no. 2 the bird dives down to find pieces of the shattered eggs, which are used to create the world.
- c. Only in some versions does Väinämöinen appear; he is presented floating on the ocean (often as a result of shooting by a Lapp, a motif introduced from another poem, *FFPE* 523), and his function (other than to offer his knee as a nesting place for the bird) is to fashion the sea-bottom (i. e. possibly a variant of b).

In surviving versions of the Sampo Epos Väinämöinen’s creative activities are not usually stressed; for example, in *FFPE* no. 12 (one of the fullest versions), the only remaining sign of creative tasks is Väinämöinen’s successful prayer to the god Ukko to raise lumps of black slime on the waters, which reflects the motif of b.

<sup>4</sup> In the Karelian redaction of the cycle ‘The Forging of the Sampo’ is replaced by a version of ‘The Courtship’ (*FFPE* nos 16, 17), in which Väinämöinen woos the daughter of the Mistress of Pohjola, and is set as his task the forging of the *sampo*.

<sup>5</sup> The *sampo* is not clearly of metal, but the Finnish word *takoa*, used for the fashioning of the *sampo*, is usually translated as ‘forge’; its maker, Ilmarinen, is chiefly a metal-smith in Finnish mythology. In the folk poems vaguer phrases are often used to describe the forging, such as *saada sampo valmihiksi*, ‘to get the *sampo* ready’.

<sup>6</sup> In some versions explicitly by grinding (*jauhaa*), e. g. *FFPE* no. 12, ll. 165–70.

### *The Theft of the Sampo.*<sup>7</sup>

Jealous of this, Väinämöinen and Ilmarinen sail to Pohjola and steal the *sampo*. They are pursued and a furious battle takes place at sea, during which the Mistress of Pohjola changes into a *vaakalintu*, 'griffon', the *sampo* is smashed and the pieces are lost in the sea. These and some fragments that are washed ashore bring fertility to the land and sea.

The epos was sung in a rigid form for some time, for the poem had a ritual function, being sung at the spring sowing, before it began to fragment and diversify.<sup>8</sup>

The word *sampo* derives from an earlier \**sampoi*, an adjectival formation from \**sampa*, a word of no obvious meaning, but which appears originally to have signified 'pillar' (Setälä 1932, 479).<sup>9</sup> This places the

<sup>7</sup> Kuusi and Branch (FFPE 527–28) regard the theft episode as showing clear signs of Norse influence; I consider this below.

<sup>8</sup> Other poems, such as *The Golden Bride* (FFPE nos 21, 22), became incorporated in the epos.

<sup>9</sup> Two main interpretations have been proposed—and have been so fiercely contested that it has been to the detriment of an understanding of the poetic significance of the *sampo*. A meaning 'pillar' for the base word *sampa*, as Harva argues (1944; 1943, 29; 1948, 47), seems more likely than Haavio's 'mill base' (1967, 197–200). Lönnrot (1958 s. v. *sampa*) records a saying *ei hän tuo toki eläne maasammaksi* which he glosses as 'icke må denne lefva till jordstolpe, till Methusalems ålder' ('he cannot live to [be a] world pillar, to Methusalem's age'); thus *maasampa* is used in the sense 'world pillar'. Turunen (1979, s. v. *sampo*) notes that *sammas*, a derivative of *sampa*, is used in compounds such as *rajasmamas* in the sense '(border) stone' in Finnish, but in Vatja and Estonian the same word means 'pillar'.

Lexical connexions with 'mill' words are to be viewed as secondary: the standard word for 'mill-base', *sammakko*, is itself to be viewed as a derivative of *sampa*, with the meaning 'that which supports a *sampa* [i. e. the central axle]'; Haavio (1967, 199) points out that in Veps *samba* is equivalent to Finnish *sammakko*, and indeed *sampa* in this sense was recorded in Tyrvää in 1853; since *sammakko* is the standard word, however, *sampa* may be a back-formation; the evidence for *sampa* in this sense is outweighed by the evidence for the sense 'pillar'.

*Sampo* is a formation with two possible significances, both of which could have been inferred by poets:

1. 'Something fitted with a *sampa*': Haavio (1967, 200) concludes 'since *sampa* (cf. *sammakko*, *sammakka*) means that part of a rotating machine in which the vertical axle is supported and in which it turns without moving to the sides, *sampo(i)* is a rotating machine, of which the important part is the *sampa*' ('koska *sampa* (vrt. *sammakko*, *sammakka*) merkitsee rotaatiokoneen sitä

Finns in the well-documented class of peoples who realised the support of the world under this image (see Harva 1922–23, 9–33). Harva (1943, 42) points to sayings such as *seisoo kun taivaan pönkkä* ‘he stands like the pillar of heaven’ (from Vermland) to show that the world pillar was regarded as unmoving. Whilst the *sampo* itself may have been fixed, however, a mill-like motion is not precluded: with the *sampo* is closely associated the *kirjokansi*, ‘speckled lid’; *kansi*, ‘lid’, is used to mean ‘sky’ in folk poetry, and the *kirjokansi* most likely stands for the sky, speckled with stars and the other heavenly bodies (Harva 1943, 52); Harva (1943, 97; cf. 1922–23, 11) notes some evidence that the *sampo* was thought of as having a nail in its head, around which the heavens turned, the rotation being called *sammajauho*, ‘pillar/*sampo*-grinding’. Indeed, poets have made full use of connexions of the word *sampa* with parts of the mill, so that the *sampo* was conceived as a mill, and is sometimes called *mylly* or *mellitsa*, ‘mill’, grinding out salt, wealth, and so forth (Harva 1943, 80),<sup>10</sup> perhaps increasingly so as the concept of the world pillar became blurred.

The world pillar and the firmament nailed to it act as an integral unit. The milling arises as a result of the turning of the firmament about the pillar, which produces the seasons, and is hence responsible for the fertility of the world. Whilst this idea is not explicit in any Finnish traditional poetry (Kettunen 1940–41, 38–39),<sup>11</sup> it may be surmised to have been the original mechanism, on the basis of pillars with coverings representing the heavens, i. e. equivalent to the *kirjokansi*, amongst other peoples (Harva 1922–23, 15).

The proper place for the *sampo* is clearly Pohjola; the Finns once called the North Star *pohjan naula*, ‘nail of the north’ (Harva 1922–23, 10). The *sampo*, as the world pillar, would be fixed to the firmament, the *kirjokansi*, at the North Nail [= Star]. The reason for the *sampo*’s presence in Pohjola is, as Setälä suggests (1932, 535), that Pohjola, ‘North Land’, was specifically the ‘land at the North Star’, where the world pillar is nailed to

osaa, johon vertikaalinen akseli tukeutuu ja jossa se sivuille liikkumatta pyörii, *sampo*(i) on rotaatiokone, jonka merkityksellinen osa on *sampa*’).

2. ‘Small *sampa*’. This is in line with Harva’s suggestion (1943, 101–04) that the Sampo Epos concerns a cult representation of the world pillar, rather than the pillar itself.

<sup>10</sup> For example SKVRI:1:34: *Laai sampu valmeheksi, / Laai laitah jauhomylly, / Toisell' laiall' suolamylly, / Kolmanelle rahamylly* (‘Get a *sampo* ready, a grain mill on one side, a salt mill on another side, and a money mill on a third’).

<sup>11</sup> Kettunen dismisses the evidence of Kaisa Vilhunen, a ‘forest Finn’ (i. e. a descendant of the seventeenth-century Finnish settlers of Vermland), as her talk of the sky ‘grinding’ was, he believes, prompted by her questioner.

the firmament. As the centre of cosmic rotation, it would be from Pohjola that fertility spread; the jolting of the *sampo* from its home resulted in the uneasy progression of the seasons along with a loss of unending fertility. Setälä (1932, 544–47) notes an obscure verse in which Väinämöinen went *nouva naula pohjolasta*, ‘to fetch the nail from the north’ (i. e. presumably the North Star), which could be equivalent to his fetching the *sampo* from Pohjola.

The fertility aspects are clearly fundamental to the *sampo*.<sup>12</sup> The *sampo* songs were originally sung as accompaniments to the ploughing and sowing of the land.<sup>13</sup> The myth of the theft and shattering of the *sampo* explained why the fertility of the land was not boundless. As Kuusi notes, the actual shattering of the *sampo* may be derived from the shattering of the egg in the myth of creation (FFPE 526),<sup>14</sup> the original conception may have been of a broken, but not shattered, world pillar; clearly there is still the seasonal return of fertility, but it is not as great as it may be imagined to have been originally, when the *sampo* was in place. The concept is one of a shattered ‘Golden Age’.

### Grotti in *Grottasongr* and Snorri’s *Edda*

The myth of the mill Grotti is told by Snorri in *Skáldskaparmál* (*SnE* 135–38) and in the poem *Grottasongr*, which he quotes.<sup>15</sup> The elements of the myth may be summarised thus:

#### *The Mill of Wealth*

King Fróði of Denmark is renowned for his peace and his wealth (*SnE*). He buys two strong slave girls Fenja and Menja (*Grs*) from Sweden (*SnE*). The

<sup>12</sup> In rejecting any mill-like aspects of the *sampo*, Harva (1943, 101–04) caused himself unnecessary problems, for, confronted with the difficulty of explaining why the world pillar should be connected with fertility, he proposed that the *sampo* was a cult representation of the world pillar which was worshipped as the guarantor of well-being. In itself this idea is quite possible, for representations of the world pillar are found in all the peoples that have the concept at all; it is however unacceptable to propose that the cult representation was endowed with powers that its cosmic prototype was not.

<sup>13</sup> Thus Jyrkiini Iivana explained (SKVR I:1:88b): ‘when the spring sowing was done, first the ‘sowing words’ were sung and then the song of the forging and theft of the *sampo*, and of the driving back of the Mistress of Pohjola’ (‘Kevätkylvöjä tehtäessä laulettiin ensin kylvösanat ja sitten laulu Sammon taonnasta ja ryöstöstä, sekä Pohjolan emännän takaa-aistosta’). The ‘sowing words’ are recorded in SKVR I:4:1743.

<sup>14</sup> The creation myth is recounted in poems nos 2–5 in FFPE.

<sup>15</sup> There are brief mentions elsewhere (see Eiríkur Magnússon 1910, 11–13).

quernstones that are to form Grotti are found in Denmark and are given to Fróði by a man with a giant's name (Hengikjöptr) (*SnE*). In *Grs* 10–12 Fenja and Menja claim to have discovered these millstones long ago. They caused earthquakes when they dislodged the stones from the earth. Grotti would produce whatever the grinder bade. No one but Fenja and Menja was strong enough to turn it. Fróði made the giantesses grind gold, peace and prosperity. He granted them almost no rest. They sang *Grottasongr* as they worked. Furious at Fróði's cruelty to them they ground out an army, and a sea-king Mýsingr came and slew Fróði (*SnE*); in *Grs* there is merely a foretelling of Fróði's overthrow. The quern breaks, and the milling must stop (*Grs*). The end of Fróði's reign is marked by thunderings and lightnings, earthquakes, the disappearance of the sun, and the upsetting of prognostications (*Skjoldunga saga* only, see *Danakonunga sagur* 1982, 39–40). Thus Fróði's peace came to an end.

#### *The Salt Mill*

Mýsingr takes Grotti, Fenja and Menja. He bids them grind salt. They grind until the excess of salt sinks the ship. This causes the sea's saltiness.

#### *The Whirlpool Mill*

There is now a whirlpool where the sea fell into the eye of the quern.<sup>16</sup> Comparable are traditions about the Maelström, which was regarded as a 'grinder of ships', if not a mill (see below).

Of the three motifs, the poem contains only the first; the salt mill and the whirlpool mill may be later additions of common folk tales to the myth. However, the poem focuses on the demise of Fróði after the cracking of the stone, and may have excluded these elements deliberately.

### **The Maelström**

Purportedly factual reports of the Maelström, the whirlpool off Lofoten in northern Norway, lie very close to the more imaginative concept of a mill in the depths, grinding everything in its stones, and causing a whirlpool with its circular motion, such as is found in the myth of Grotti. Traditions about this real whirlpool may reflect beliefs about Grotti; it is difficult to ascertain whether the myth of Grotti has influenced the picture of the Maelström, or conversely whether the traditions about the Maelström have influenced the depiction of Grotti.

The Maelström is first mentioned in the eighth century by Paulus Diaconus (1878, 55–56); he sites the 'navel of the ocean' near the Scritobini (northern Lapps), i. e. 'on the edge of the world', like Grotti in

<sup>16</sup> According to AM 748 I 4to and 757 a 4to (*SnE* 259) this is in the Pentland Firth; Snæbjörn (see below) places his whirlpool 'out on the rim of the world'.

Snæbjørn (see below), and says that the whirlpool sucks in and regurgitates the currents twice in a day, and ships are pulled down as fast as arrows, then cast back out again just as fast.

A similar description is given by Olaus Magnus (1555, 67), who notes that any ships returned from the eddy were whittled down by rocks. The cause of the phenomenon is assigned to a spirit bursting forth capriciously. Schönnебöl (Storm 1895, 191) gives a similar report in 1591:<sup>17</sup>

But I am told by reliable people that there must be some sharp rocks concealed out in that same current, since it flows so terribly strongly, and everything that enters that current must go entirely under and to the bottom.

### **Snæbjørn's Verse on Grotti**

A *lausavísá* attributed to a certain Snæbjørn, perhaps, as Gollancz (1898, xvii) suggests, to be identified with Snæbjørn Hólmsteinsson, an Arctic adventurer of the late tenth century mentioned in *Landnámaþók* (1968, 190–95), alludes to a mighty water-mill turned by nine women (*Skj B I* 201):<sup>18</sup>

Hvatt kveða hræra Grotta  
hergrimmastan skerja  
út fyr jarðar skauti  
eylúðrs níu brúðir,  
þær es, lungs, fyr löngu  
líðmeldr, skipa hlíðar  
baugskerðir rístr barði  
ból, Amlóða mólu.

They say

the nine brides		
of the island quern-frame [the ocean]		{the waves}
turn vigorously		
a most army-cruel Grotti [mill]		
of the skerries,		{whirlpool}
out at the rim of the earth [the ocean],		
they who long since have ground		
the meal		
of Amlóði's liquor [sea],		{sand}

<sup>17</sup> ‘Men mig er berettet af trofaste folk, at der skal være nogle hemmelige skarpe klipper udi den samme ström, efterdi han ber saa saare stærk, og alt det, som kommer udi den samme ström, det maa alt under og til grunde’.

<sup>18</sup> The following prose word-order is suggested: *Kveða níu brúðir eylúðrs hræra hvatt hergrimmastan Grotta skerja út fyr jarðar skauti, þær er mólu fyr löngu líðmeldr Amlóða. Baugskerðir rístr barði lungs ból hlíðar skipa.*

The ring-diminisher [prince] cuts  
 with the prow of his vessel  
 the habitation  
 of the hillside of ships [the waves]. {the ocean}

‘The nine brides of the island quern-frame’ are the waves of the ocean (the daughters of Ægir); *lúðr* is the frame of a hand-mill;<sup>19</sup> that which frames islands is the sea (cf. *eyja hringr*, ‘ring of [i. e. around] islands’, in the same sense) (Meissner 1921, 94); the same sense is found in *jarðar skaut*, ‘rim of the earth’, i. e. the sea, but in this case there is the additional implication of the action taking place ‘out at the edge of the world’ where, it is to be surmised, the mythological ocean mill was to be encountered.

Snæbjörn makes his picture of the terrible (and supposedly real) whirlpool vivid by using the metaphor of the mill, identified by metonymy with the mythical Grotti. *Grotta hergrimmastan skerja* appears to identify Grotti as the grinder of the skerries:<sup>20</sup> ‘The most army-cruel Grotti [= mill, grinder] of skerries’.<sup>21</sup> *Grotta skerja*, ‘mill of skerries’, would then be parallel to *eylúðr*, ‘mill of islands’, if *lúðr* is taken as a synecdoche for ‘mill’.<sup>22</sup> The ‘mill’ which grinds up skerries, or at least is sited there, is a whirlpool (cf. the Maelström).<sup>23</sup> An allusion to the ‘grinding out’ by Grotti of the army which destroyed Fróði is also clear.

<sup>19</sup> Alternatively or additionally, *lúðr* could stand for the whole mill; that which grinds up islands is, again, the sea (cf. *Grotta skerja* below).

<sup>20</sup> *Skerja* is either an objective genitive following the verbal sense ‘grinder’ implied in *Grotti*; or a partitive genitive following *hergrimmastan*.

<sup>21</sup> It is possible, but less likely, that the ‘army’ could refer to the skerries: ‘Grotti, most cruel to the army of skerries’ (Krause 1969, 89).

<sup>22</sup> The same meaning is apparent in another verse, attributed to Þórðr Særeksson (*Skj* B I 304, retaining *snýtir*, see *Skj* A I 330):

Svát ór fitjar fjöttri,  
 flóðs ásynju blóði  
 (raust byrjask römm systra),  
 rýtr, eymylvir snýtir.

The island-miller [sea, whirlpool] snorts out the blood of the flood-goddess [water], so that it bellows from the beach-fetter [sea]; a strong roaring of the sisters [waves] begins.

<sup>23</sup> Alternatively, Grotti may be seen as a skerry: ‘Grotti, most army-cruel of skerries’ (or ‘most cruel to an army’: *her*, ‘army’, may be either the root for use in a compound word; or the dative case, *grimmastan* then being taken as a separate word; or the intensive, ‘very’ (cf. *hermargr*). The masculine form, rather than the neuter, would stem from the word’s being in agreement with *Grotta*); this would be an allusion to the sunken rocks in the whirlpool (as with the Maelström),

*Liðmeldr Amlóða*, ‘the meal of the liquor of Amlóði’. ‘The liquor of Amlóði’ (*liðAmlóða*) must refer to the sea, the meal of which is sand.<sup>24</sup> The details of Amlóði’s connexion with the sea are now lost to us; that such a connexion existed however is witnessed by Saxo; Prince Amlethus, feigning madness, is walking with some companions along the beach (Saxo Grammaticus 1931, I 79 (III:vi:10)):

Arenarum quoque præteritis clivis, sabulam perinde ac farra aspicere jussus,  
eadem albicantibus maris procellis permolita esse respondit.

Also, as they pass the sand-dunes they bid him look at the meal, meaning the sand; he replies that it has been ground small by the white tempests of the ocean.

Krause (1969, 94) proposes that Amlóði began as a personification of the irrational tossing sea, which is suggested by his etymology of the name.

### Bergelmir

In answer to Óðinn’s question, who was the oldest of the Æsir or of Ymir’s descendants, the giant Vafþrúðnir replies that before the world was made, Bergelmir was born, son of Prúðgelmir and grandson of Aurgelmir (*Vm* 29). He repeats the first half of his reply in *Vm* 35 in answer to the question of what he first remembered, and continues with more information on Bergelmir:

<p>Ørófi vетra, áðr væri iqrð um skopoð, þá var Bergelmir borinn; þat ek fyrst of man, er sá inn fróði iqtunn var á lúðr um lagiðr.</p>	<p>Countless winters before the earth was fashioned Bergelmir was born; that is the first thing I remember, when that wise giant was laid on the mill-frame.</p>
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identified as the broken mill-stones of Grotti, which cause such havoc to any ship sucked down.

<sup>24</sup> Kock (1923–44, nos 572, 573, 1791, 3221) suggests a somewhat different reading of the second part of the stanza. He emends *lungs* to *lyngs*, ‘ling’ ('the ling of the hillside of ships' being sea-foam), and assumes the following prose word-order: *þær es fyr longu mólu liðmeldr lyngs skipa hlíðar; baugskerðir rístr barði ból Amlóða*, ‘som för länge sedan malde böjeskummets mjödmäld; ringförödarn skär ijenom sjökungs bo med skeppets stam’. This reading does present a more straightforward word-order, but leaves the word *lið*, ‘liquor’ on its own as a designation of the sea, whereas it is more likely that the word was associated with Amlóði in reference to a now lost legend.

*Lið-* has also been read with a short vowel; whilst this reading could suggest further allusions to mills, it would necessitate taking *hlíð-* at the end of the line as being also short, where a trochee would be expected in *dróttkvætt*. *Lið-* would then

The earliest interpretation of this myth is the one offered by Snorri (*SnE* 14):<sup>25</sup>

Synir Bors drápu Ymi jötun; en er hann fell, þá hljóp svá mikit blóð ór sárum hans, at með því drekkdu þeir allri ætt hrímpursa, nema einn komsk undan með sínu hýski; þann kalla jötnar Bergelmi; hann fór upp á lúðr sinn ok kona hans ok helzk þar, ok eru af þeim komnar hrímpursa ættir.

The sons of Borr slew the giant Ymir; but when he fell, there flowed so much blood from his wounds that they drowned the whole race of frost giants with it, except that one escaped with his household; him the giants call Bergelmir; he went up onto his mill-frame along with his wife, and was saved there, and from them are descended the races of frost giants.

From Snorri's statements that the frost giants were drowned in Ymir's blood, and that Bergelmir and his family were the only ones to escape to re-establish the frost giants, it is evident that he is identifying Bergelmir's situation with that of Noah (Genesis 6–8), and probably relying on apocryphal accounts of the survival of the giants after the Flood (Og took refuge on the roof of Noah's ark in Rabbinic tradition). Such tales were known in Anglo-Saxon England and early medieval Ireland (James 1920, 40–41; Carney 1955, 102–14). In accordance with his interpretation of Bergelmir's situation, Snorri refers to the *lúðr* ('mill frame') as if it was already a possession of the giant (it is *sinn*, 'his'), into which he and his family could step, as if into a sea vessel which could surmount the waves of blood.<sup>26</sup> In following this tradition, Snorri has ignored the text of *Vm* 35,

have four meanings. 'Levy of men' and 'ship' would hark back to Grotti as a grinder up of sea-borne armies. *Liðr* means a 'joint', and hence could also refer to 'limbs'; whilst this could again be a reiteration of the whirlpool's role of grinding up the bodies of crewmen, there could also be an allusion to the myth of Bergelmir (see below). The primary meaning however would surely be that suggested by Johnston (1908–09, 298), 'notch in the upper quern stone', a sense recorded in Norn which developed out of the common meaning in Old Norse of 'joint'. By synecdoche *liðr* would stand for the whole quern: the 'meal of Amlóði's quern' would be 'sand'. This reading is in accord with Snorri's note (*SnE* 118) to Snæbjörn's verse that *hér er kallat hafit Amlóða kvern*, 'here the sea is called Amlóði's quern'. *Hliðar* would mean 'of the side (i. e. hull)'; 'the habitation of the hull of ships' would be an acceptable designation of the sea, but is less satisfactory poetically than 'the habitation of the hillside of ships'.

<sup>25</sup> For a synopsis of the various interpretations of the myth of Bergelmir, see Lorenz 1984, 152–57.

<sup>26</sup> The vivid identification of Ymir's blood with the roar of man-drowning waves in *Sonatorrek* 3 may well have influenced Snorri (*Skj B I* 34: *Jötuns háls undir þjóta Náins niðr fyr naustdurum* 'the wounds of the giant's throat [waves] roar down by the dwarf's boat-house doors [cliffs]').

which states that Bergelmir ‘*was laid* on a *lúðr*’. Snorri’s tale of Bergelmir therefore does not go far towards explaining the myth of *Vm*.

The word *lúðr* has, rather unnecessarily, given rise to a good many interpretations bearing at most a tenuous relation to the recorded meaning of the word in Old Norse, namely ‘mill-frame’.<sup>27</sup> If Bergelmir was placed on a mill-frame, he was clearly ground up: Rydberg (1886, I 431–32) long ago suggested that after the world was formed from the body of the first giant Ymir the act of creation continued with the milling up of Bergelmir to produce the soil and sand of the beaches (cf. the sand described as ‘meal’ by the companions of Amlethus in the citation from Saxo above); equally, Bergelmir might represent an alternative mode of creation, syncretised genealogically by making him the grandson of Aurgelmir (who is produced from the primeval waters and then engenders the race of giants according to *Vm* 31).

The name Bergelmir designates the third of a generation of giants with names formed with the element *-gelmir* (cf. *gjalla*, ‘roar’) mentioned in *Vm* 29. Aurgelmir is either ‘mud roarer’ or ‘ear [of corn] roarer’.<sup>28</sup> Þrúðgelmir is ‘power roarer’. Bergelmir appears to be ‘barley roarer’;<sup>29</sup> this would fit naturally with the theme of grinding (cf. Byggvir below).

<sup>27</sup> Christiansen (1952, 101–5) notes that in modern Norwegian *lur* (from ON *lúðr*) may mean ‘cradle’; such a meaning in *Vm* 35 is however inappropriate. Vafþrúðnir is establishing his credentials, as the next in line after the succession of primeval giants Aurgelmir, Þrúðgelmir and Bergelmir, whose babyhood he would thus hardly have remembered; moreover, the description of ‘wise giant’ would be unsuitable for a baby. Christiansen suggests that the meaning of *lúðr* is therefore ‘coffin’—Vafþrúðnir remembers back as far as the end of Bergelmir’s life. Holtsmark (1946, 53) points out that *ork* can mean either ‘coffin’ or ‘ark’, and suggests that if *lúðr* could mean coffin, Snorri could, by association with it of the two meanings of *ork*, have inferred the ark story he gives.

<sup>28</sup> Fulk (1989, 317) suggests that *aur* is cognate with English *ear* (and is also to be found in ON *aurfalar*, ‘iron spike at the butt end of a spear’). Fulk interprets *Vm* 33, where Aurgelmir begets a six-headed son, as presenting an image of an ear of corn. His further suggestion, that *-gelmir* is related to OE *gielm*, ‘handful of corn’, is less likely, in view of the lack of evidence for such a sense in ON.

<sup>29</sup> The ostensible sense is ‘bear/bare/berry-roarer’; but these interpretations offer no meaning in the context. Another possibility, assuming *-g-* is written for *-gg-*, is that Bergelmir, ‘mountain roarer’, is intended (perhaps suggesting a rock-crushing mill; cf. Grotti and the Mälström). Most likely however is that *ber-* is from *barr* ‘barley’; Fulk (1989, 317) shows that alternating forms of Germanic \**bariz-/baraz-* will explain the difference in vowels in *barr* and *ber-*. A less likely possibility is that *bar-* was changed to *ber-* by palatal umlaut before the *g* of *-gelmir* (see Noreen

The element *-gelmir* connects these names with waters. In *Rm* 4 the underworld river *Vaðgelmir*, ‘ford roarer’, is mentioned; and the primeval source of all rivers, existing before the creation of the world, was *Hvergelmir*, ‘cauldron roarer’. *Gelmir* is linked etymologically with *Gjoll*, the river round the underworld (*AR* §577).<sup>30</sup> A primordial oceanic connexion and an underworld river connexion are thus implied for the giants of *Vm* (as noted by de Vries, *AR* §577), which is in line with the chthonic powers later associated with giants; more strikingly the names betray their origin as names of roaring waters.

A connexion with fertility is also apparent. In *Aurgelmir*, *aur-* is either the fertile mud with which the world tree is sprinkled in *Vsp*,<sup>31</sup> or an ear of corn; in *Þrúðgelmir*, *þrúðr*, ‘power’, derives from *þróá*, ‘thrive’; in *Bergelmir*, *ber-* is probably ‘barley’, and the verse calls him specifically *fróðr*, which can mean ‘fertile’ as well as ‘wise’.

If the term *lúðr* is accepted as ‘mill’, then *Bergelmir* may emerge as a being who furthers the fecundity of the earth through being ground up in a mill. Such a mythological motif is not unique; a tenth-century survey of Muslim culture tells us the following about the fertility god *Tammūz*, worshipped among the pagans of Haran (Al-Nadim 1970, 758):

Tammūz (July). In the middle of the month there is the Feast of al-Bū-qāt, that is, of the weeping women. It is the Tā-ūz, a feast celebrated for the god Tā-ūz [i. e. Tammūz]. The women weep for him because his master slew him by grinding his bones under a millstone and winnowing them in the wind.

Presumably related to this is the much more ancient Ugaritic myth of the contest of Baal (a fertility god like *Tammūz*) and Môt, in which Môt is ground up, apparently in an act of bestowing fertility on the land (Gordon 1949, 47: Môt cries out ‘Because of thee, O Baal, I have experienced . . . grinding in the mill-stones’). In Norse too there is found the idea of a divinity, and moreover a divinity of barley, being ground: in *Ls* 44 Loki says to Byggvir (a *nomen agentis* from *bygg*, ‘barley’): *at eyrom Freys mundu æ vera ok und kvernom klaka*, ‘you shall ever be at Freyr’s ears and

1970, §73 on this umlaut; he cites the example (with a different vowel affected) *Pørger* for *Porgeirr*, which parallels *Bergelmir* in being a compound word).

<sup>30</sup> AEW links several other words, see s. vv. *Aurgelmir*, *galmr* (‘sword’), *gjalla* (‘cry’), *gala* (‘sing’), *gjoll* (‘noise’).

<sup>31</sup> He could be a variant of the image of the first giant body (Snorri identifies him with Ymir (*SnE* 12), an identification suggesting a syncretism of traditions about creation from a giant’s body) conceived as a piece of *aurr* in the roaring primordial waters; cf. the ‘earth out of ocean’ creation motif of *Vsp* 3 with its Eurasian analogues (see Schier 1963).

twitter beneath the quern'. Since Byggvir is the god of barley, which is the basic ingredient of ale, the reference here is clearly to the grinding of the grain in the brewing process.

Thus in the reference to Bergelmir being laid on the *lúðr* may possibly lie an allusion to a cosmic mill, associated with water. The Indian churning of the Milk Sea would present a parallel instance of the fertile 'milling' of water.

### Mundilföri

The image of a cosmic mill may lie behind *Vm* 23:<sup>32</sup>

Mundilföri heitir,	He is called Mundilföri,
hann er Mána faðir	the father of Moon
ok svá Sólar it sama;	and also of Sun;
himin hverfa	they are to turn heaven
pau skulo hverian dag	every day
óldom at ártali.	for the reckoning of years for men.

The commonly accepted translation of *hverfaas* 'traverse' is unacceptable, since the use of *hverfa* without a preposition in this sense would be unparalleled;<sup>33</sup> the meaning must be transitive 'turn'. We may note that in *Vsp* 5:1–4 the sun moves her hand purposefully.

The name Mundilföri occurs only here and in *SnE* 17–18 (based on this stanza). The majority reading of the manuscripts is *-færi*. Related to *færa*, 'move, carry', *-færi* could signify 'mover, carrier', or 'device, instrument, equipment designed for a special purpose' (see Fritzner 1886–96, s. v. *færi* 3); or as a weak adjective, 'effective, capable'. *Mundil-* may be related to *mund*, 'hand', or *mund*, 'time'; there may even be a play on both senses, accounting for the uniqueness of the name. Cleasby and Vigfusson (1957, s. v. *Mundil-föri*) suggest that the name is 'akin to *möndull* [mill-handle], referring to the veering round or revolution of the heavens'.

If Cleasby and Vigfusson are right, the name Mundilföri has been designed to signify the mill-like device that turns the heavens by means of a 'handle'. Sun and Moon are, according to this genealogical fiction, his children who operate the device for him or by means of him. This turning of the cosmos, pictured as a mill, is the diurnal and yearly movement of the heavens.

<sup>32</sup> The interpretation of *Vm* 23 given here is based on that of Ursula Dronke, in her note to *Vsp* 5:1–4 in the forthcoming *Poetic Edda* vol. 2 (she points out that *Vsp* 5:5–10 shows every sign of being an interpolation).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *Grm* 25:5 *pær* [the rivers] *hverfa um hodd goða*, 'they turn about the hoard (? temple) of the gods'.

In the Indian myth of the Milk Sea, the sun and moon arise as a result of the churning of the milk ocean, just as in Norse they are the children of the turner of the cosmos.

A very similar image to that suggested for the Mundilföri myth occurs in a Mordvin mythological poem (text and German translation in Ahlqvist 1861, 133–34). Here, the sun, moon and stars are said to be on the handle of a ladle which rests in a honey drink at the foot of the world tree; as the sun wends across the sky, the handle of the ladle turns likewise. The ladle clearly represents the firmament, turning with the sun. No one seems to be responsible for the turning here, a feature shared with the Finnish *sampo*, but differing from the Norse myths of Mundilföri and of Grotti.

### **Comparison**

Although the Norse seem to have been familiar with the image of the pillar sustaining the world,<sup>34</sup> the world support does not appear as the pivot of the cosmic mill, as it does in Finnish. If the myth of Mundilföri is correctly interpreted as the turning of the sky by a handle-like device, then this would represent an adaptation of the cosmic mill, in this case to express a concept of time. The ‘handle’ could be a version of the world support.

The turning of the world like a mill is the subject of the (proposed interpretation of) the myth of Mundilföri, which is therefore comparable with the turning of the heavens about the *sampo*. This feature is not apparent in the other Norse myths.

Grotti is supernaturally productive, but this productivity is not related by the sources to acts of cosmic creation, as in the Indian myth. Grotti produces both beneficent objects (gold) and maleficent (an army), as does the Indian churning (here may be seen the development of a concept of a ‘wheel of fortune’ out of the basic idea of the fertile mill); the Finnish *sampo* does not churn out maleficent produce. The myth of Bergelmir seems to involve creative activity (either as a continuation or as an alternative image of primal creation). The myth of Mundilföri is not concerned with creation, but with the determining of time, the seasons.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> The *ondvegissúlur*, ‘high-seat pillars’, dedicated to Pórr, may have been regarded as symbolising this pillar (Dronke 1992, 678–81); Pórr’s title *himinsjóli* in *Pórsdrápa* is interpreted by Davidson (1983, 605) as ‘heaven pillar’: the god here represents the hypostatised world support. Various aspects of the god Heimdallr also suggest that he is a hypostasis of the world support (see Pipping 1925, 7–49; 1926, 24–64, 107–24).

<sup>35</sup> Ártal; ár implies primarily time, but can also mean ‘abundance’.

The concept of a ‘Golden Age’ is more stressed in the myth of Grotti than in the Finnish and Indian analogues (it does not appear in the other Norse myths). The time of earthly paradise under Fróði also mirrors the early time of the gods recounted in *Vsp*.<sup>36</sup>

Grotti is stolen, like the *sampo* and the *soma*; however, in Norse the mill-stone is not desired—its theft is presented as incidental to a viking attack, whereas in Finnish and Indian the possession of the *sampo* and *soma* respectively is the object of the attack. No theft is involved in the other Norse myths.

Grotti breaks (but, in *SnE*, causes the sea’s saltiness); the *sampo* shatters (but its fragments endow earth and sea with fertility); no breaking of any ‘mill’ is indicated in the other Norse myths.<sup>37</sup>

According to *SnE* Grotti ends up in the sea, like the *sampo*; however, this is connected with the folk-tale motif of ‘why the sea is salt’ (Thompson A1115), not with fertility as in the Finnish and Indian analogues. By his name and family Bergelmir is closely connected with roaring waters and with fertility. The myth of Mundilföri shows no connexion with fertile waters.

It is clear that the cosmic mill was not, in extant Norse sources, a widely developed mythologem. Nonetheless, the myth of Mundilföri connects the turning of the cosmos via a ‘mill-handle’ with the regulation of seasons, and the myth of Bergelmir suggests the concept of a creative milling of a giant’s body, associated in some way with the sea. Grotti was a legendary mill sunk in the depths, regarded as a one-time producer of a golden age: the myths about it allude to the concept of a milling on a supernatural scale, such as the Bergelmir myth may (in a different context) have exemplified.

### **The Sampo and Norse Tales**

It is clear that the *sampo* forms an integral part of traditional Finnish cosmology, whereas the mill in Norse occupies a peripheral place in

<sup>36</sup> In *Vsp* 7 the gods forged gold in plenty, and were happy (cf. Fróði creating gold with Grotti); three mighty giantesses arrive (cf. Fenja and Menja); it seems that the maidens deprive the gods of the game of chequers they have been playing, possibly by overturning it, and the pieces are lost (they turn up again in the new world in *Vsp* 61), signifying the loss of the prosperity that relied on gold (cf. the wrecking of Grotti by Fenja and Menja, and the loss of Grotti in the sea, signalling the end of Fróði’s Golden Age). See van Hamel (1934, 220–21), whose interpretation I follow, on the ‘golden age’ of the gods in *Vsp*.

<sup>37</sup> The text of *Vm* implies at least that the grinding of Bergelmir was a past event rather than a continuing one.

mythology. It is strange then to find that two features of the *sampo* myth are regarded by the authors of *FFPE*, who reflect the generally accepted Finnish scholarly position, as influenced by Norse tales: the concept of the *sampo* as a wealth-producing mill, and the theft of it (*FFPE* 527–28).

### **The Wealth-Producing Mill**

The *sampo* and Grotti have some features in common; on the other hand, many points speak against any influence.

Grotti is a quern mill, and the *sampo* is often pictured as a mill, though its origins seem rather to be in the world pillar. As noted above, it is unnecessary to seek outside influence to explain the mill-like aspects of the *sampo*.

Grotti churns out whatever it is commanded to, in particular gold; the *sampo* grinds out meal, salt or wealth. The ability of Grotti to grind out ill-fortune (both physical, in the form of an army, and abstract, in the form of the fall of Fróði and Mýsingr) finds no parallel in the *sampo*, which never loses its fertile, positive effects even when shattered. The fertility-producing aspects of the *sampo* are integral to its mythological nature and no explanation involving foreign influence is required.

Grotti is turned by two giantesses; the *sampo* is not said to be turned by anyone.

Grotti is stolen by a sea-king; the *sampo* is stolen by mythical heroes arriving by sea. Grotti breaks and sinks into the ocean, together with all the salt it has ground; the *sampo* shatters and most of it ends up in the sea, producing salt and the riches of the ocean (see *FFPE* no. 13). The wealth-producing mill is an international folk-tale motif, often coupled with the motifs of the stealing of the mill and of its ending up in the ocean grinding salt.<sup>38</sup> There is no need to seek specifically Norse influence.

Grotti upon sinking produces a *svelgr*, ‘whirlpool’; the whirlpool (*merennielu, kurimus*) is known to Finnish myth, borrowed, according to Harva (1948, 65), from elsewhere, since the Finns could have known no such phenomenon themselves, but it is not associated with the sunken *sampo*. The *sampo* could not have caused the whirlpool since, in the recorded version of the myth, it is shattered, not merely broken like Grotti.

Grotti, by the time it is represented in Norse tradition, plays a part in certain distinct mythological situations not represented in Finnish myth.

<sup>38</sup> Olrik (1903–10, I 290–96) gives several examples, e. g. a French tale of a sorcerer who had a mill that would grind out whatever was bidden; a Newfoundlander stole it, put it on a ship, and told it to mill salt: the mill would not stop when told to, and sank the ship, causing the sea to be salty.

The giants appear as antagonists of the gods or orderly society of men; the fall of the house of Fróði is presented; and Grotti is not an artefact (as is the *sampo*), but, being composed of rocks, is a part of the archaic chthonic world (with which giants are connected).

### **The Theft of the Sampo**

Branch writes (*FFPE* 527):

The theft [of the *sampo*] shows clear evidence of Scandinavian influence and the main motifs, although not the themes to which they are tied, appear to have been borrowed from medieval mythical-heroic *fornaldarsögur*.

Branch mentions specifically *Bósa saga*, noting some narrative parallels which he considers make influence seem likely. Unfortunately he merely leaves it to the reader to infer from the (not wholly adequate) summary of *Bósa saga* that he gives what is supposed to have been borrowed, so I offer my own analysis:

1. A magic egg, full of gold, must be stolen by the hero Bósi to avoid punishment (*FSNIII* 296); the egg resembles the *sampo* in that it is a source of gold (and the temple where it is kept is sacked of its large amounts of treasure), as the *sampo* is a source of wealth.
2. The setting of the Norse tale is the northern (Finnic) realm of Bjarmaland (*FSN III* 296–97, 307); that of the Finnish tale is Pohjola, ‘North Land’. Little can be made of the fact that two journeys are made in the Norse, as in the Finnish (the original drifting there by Väinämöinen, and the subsequent military campaign to steal the *sampo*).
3. The egg is in the possession of a *gammr*, ‘vulture’, which attacks Bósi when he steals the egg, and uses its claws in the attack (*FSN III* 300–01); the *sampo* is guarded by the Mistress of Pohjola, who turns into a *vaakalintu*, ‘griffon’, and attacks, using her claws to seize parts of the *sampo*.
4. An abducted princess Hleiðr is living at the temple where the egg is kept, and is being trained to become a successor to the priestess there, and when Bósi captures the egg, he is able to free this princess and take her away with him (*FSNIII* 299, 302–03); Ilmarinen is offered the daughter of the Mistress of Pohjola in exchange for providing a *sampo* (i. e. the opposite of the Norse motif, where the acquiring of the maid is associated with the theft of the magic object rather than with the making of it).
5. The hero Smiðr of the Norse (*FSN III* 284, 307 etc.) corresponds to Ilmarinen the smith of the Finnish, in that the name of the one is the profession of the other, and in that both acquire a girl on the expedition (see 6c).

6. *Bósa saga* involves a number of abductions of women:

- a. Hleiðr is rescued (the first time) and taken to Gautland (Bósi's land) (*FSN* III 303–04); the theft of the girl corresponds to that of the *sampo*.
- b. She is rescued (a second time) from Gautland by her brother's friends and taken home to Glasir Plains (*FSN* III 305–06).
- c. She is rescued (a third time) by Smiðr (Bósi's companion) (*FSN* III 313–14); cf. the winning of the daughter of Pohjola by Ilmarinen the smith.
- d. A second princess is abducted, by the hero (*FSN* III 317).

7. Her brothers (one of whom was to wed the first princess) pursue and there is a sea-battle; the Mistress of Pohjola pursues the thieves as they flee by sea.

8. The hero and his friends win the battle with difficulty, since the enemy king (the father of the second princess) changes shape into a dragon and then a boar (and monstrous helpers, a bird and bitch, aid the heroes) (*FSN* III 319–20); cf. the Finnish Mistress of Pohjola becoming a griffon (*vaakalintu*) and fighting the stealers of the *sampo*.

The differences between the sources are great, making the tracing of any influence difficult. It emerges that Branch's 'clear evidence' is based on little more than a superficial reading of the Norse 'analogue'.

The events of *Bósa saga* form a startling narrative full of interlace with no more than arbitrary motivation for many of the exploits, the objects of which lack any significance comparable to that of the *sampo*. The Finnish tale of the *sampo* is coherent and well-constructed, and functions within a recognised mythological framework.

The *sampo* myth focuses on a central feature of the Finnish cosmology, whereas *Bósa saga* can by no means be seen as reflecting any central aspect of Norse religion or mythology. An example is the *vaakalintu*, which the Mistress of Pohjola transforms herself into, which is clearly a form of shamanic helping spirit (Oinas 1985, 151); this corresponds in the *Bósa saga* to grotesque fairy-tale monsters (the *gammr* and the dragon), with no part in Norse religious life.

It is difficult to see when and where the Finns could have borrowed from anything resembling *Bósa saga*, a fourteenth-century work, whereas we know Bjarmaland to have been a major trading centre for the Norse up to the twelfth century; they no doubt picked up more than merely the Finnish word for 'god',<sup>39</sup> and the saga's setting in Bjarmaland may witness to a tradition that it was from there that the story derived. If any influence was involved, it was no doubt from the Finns on the Norse.

<sup>39</sup> A tale recounted in *Heimskringla* II 230–32 records that the name of the Bjarmian's god was Jómali, which, as Ross (1981, 50) shows, derives from Finnish/Karelian *jumala* 'god'.

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- Snorri Sturluson 1941–51. *Heimskringla*, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson. Íslenzk fornrit XXVI–XXVIII.
- Storm, G., ed., 1895. *Historisk-topografiske skrifter om Norge og norske landsdele, forfattede i Norge i det 16de aarhundrede*.
- Thompson, S. 1955–58. *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*, rev. ed.
- Turunen, A. 1979. *Kalevalan Sanat ja niiden Taustat [Words of the Kalevala and their Backgrounds]*.
- Vm* = *Vafþrúðnismál*, in *Edda* 1983, 45–55.
- Vsp* = *Voluspá*, in *Edda* 1983, 1–16.

## EGILL'S *HOFUDLAUSN* IN TIME AND PLACE

BY JOHN HINES

### *Introduction*

THE EARLIEST extant long poem attributed to Egill Skalla-Grímsson, *Hofuðlausn*, remains seriously undervalued by both literary critics and cultural historians. If the account of the circumstances of the composition of the poem in *Egils saga* chs 59–61 contains any residual element of truth, Egill was lucky to have had a king either so exceptionally blessed with literary taste or so singularly devoid of it as Eiríkr Bloodaxe as the intended recipient of his panegyrical peace offering. The poem has pleased no modern critics as much as the saga claims it satisfied Eiríkr. Sigurður Nordal epitomises a tradition of critical disquiet by summing *Hofuðlausn* up as ‘efnislítið og minna listaverk en bezti skáldskapur Egils annar’ (‘insubstantial, and a lesser work of art than the best of Egill’s other work’, Nordal 1933, xxi). For Stefán Einarsson (1957, 59) this is ‘a conventional praise poem’, only the ‘splendid form’ of which can lay claim to any lasting approbation, a point echoed by the usual interpretation of ambiguity in the saga narrative of Eiríkr’s reaction to Egill’s recitation—*Pá mælti konungr: ‘Bezta er kvæðit fram flutt’*—as a distinctly backhanded compliment: ““The poem’s *delivery*,” he said, “could not be bettered”” (Jones 1960, 165), rather than something along the lines of ‘This was a perfect poem’ or ‘The poem is best delivered (i. e. rather than left unheard)’. Even the form of the poem is not always acclaimed unreservedly. Gabriel Turville-Petre, for example, writing about our modern appreciation of the sound of skaldic poetry, remarked that we can hear, *even if we do not like them*, the insistent end-rhymes (Turville-Petre 1976, lxxvii; my italics).

On reflection, much of this antipathy to Egill’s *Hofuðlausn* seems to derive from considerations external to the poem itself. This poem has been passed down to us with an extraordinary range of contextual associations that all too readily distract attention from what it itself essentially is. From Snorri Sturluson (principally) we derive a strong sense that skaldic poetry subsists in a complex, finely-graded and above all definite set of metres and devices (for an exemplary discussion, see Anthony Faulkes’s edition of *Háttatal*, Faulkes 1991, xiv–xxi and 74–88). Egill’s *Hofuðlausn*, quite simply, is perceived to be very different from what a skaldic poem ought to be. While corresponding in strictly metrical terms to *fornyrðislag*, which

is generally characteristic of Eddic poetry rather than skaldic, it also presents us with an unusual—perhaps an unusually early—general use of end-rhyme (*runhenda*). It is probably significant that there are more references to *Hofuðlausn* in the index to Faulkes's edition of *Háttatal* than to any other poem except *Háttalykill*, principally because it can be used to illustrate several relatively rare or special devices, such as the *nykrat* development of imagery and the varying of the refrain in a poem; the concatenation of such features, of course, renders the poem yet more strange. If the content of the poem truly is predictable and slight, it is understandable that its startling form should be adjudged to be no more than the flashy gilding of a banal and valueless base.

The second great distraction in the study of this poem is its fictional context, the head-ransoming episode written around it in *Egils saga*. This is self-evidently a fanciful and implausible story; what is more, it occurs in a saga that contains some gross historical errors, not the least of which is having Eiríkr ruling in York at the same time as Æthelstan ruled south of the Humber. The narrative of *Egils saga* is practically useless as an historical document; but it may still preserve some genuine facts, and some genuine poems of a tenth-century, first-generation Icelandic *skáld*. There is actually nothing intrinsically implausible about such a poem having been used as a medium of reconciliation between the poet and King Eiríkr, although no reference to that is included in the poem itself. The earliest extant literary version of that story is probably that contained in verses 3–11 of Egill's elegy *Arinbjarnarkviða*, where the role attributed to the poem is clear:

Við Yggjar miði  
hattar staup  
af hilmi þák.

In exchange for Yggr's mead I received the hat's knob from the prince (*Arinbjarnarkviða* 7).

What, more significantly, Egill's *Hofuðlausn* explicitly does, is locate itself convincingly in time and place, and identify the ruler that it praises. These 'facts' are more important for this study than any truth lurking in the head-ransoming story. If this information is authentic, then the poem is historically unique, and invaluable, as the only complete, substantial poetic work from 'Viking' England of the tenth century and indeed as a panegyric from an area in which panegyrics are rare.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Apart from narrative poems like the celebratory *Battle of Brunanburh* and a few pieces of clerical doggerel, there are no extant Old English panegyrics, nor any

What this essay seeks to offer is a new exploration of possible readings of the poem. It will propose that the interpretation and appreciation of the poem can be substantially enhanced by new insights into the actual historical context in which it is set and to which it can plausibly be regarded as belonging, mid-tenth-century Northumbria. Irrespective of the authenticity of this historical provenance, which is admittedly beyond total proof, the case can be made that the poetical richness of this text has never been properly brought out. If, however, the poem is accepted as a genuine piece from tenth-century York, then not only does the context imply yet more meaning within the poem, and in fact render it far less odd than many critics have thought it, but conversely the collocation of the poem and its original context can enrich our understanding of the cultural history of Viking-period England considerably.

### *The text*

Such substantial claims as those just enunciated can be made for Egill's *Hofuðlausn* despite the fact that it is impossible to make a perfect reconstruction of an original text. Russell Poole, indeed, has recently (1993) undertaken a radical review of the principles that can be applied in editing this poem, arguing that we have to reckon with an 'inherent variability' in skaldic textuality and a 'flexible' rather than a 'complete' fixity for this text.

The earliest copies of *Hofuðlausn*, partial or whole, that we have date from 350–400 years after its purported date of composition, in manuscripts of Snorri's *Skáldskaparmál* and the Wolfenbüttel manuscript of *Egils saga*, none of them earlier than the fourteenth century, though Snorri's text at least testifies to the existence of certain readings in the first half of the thirteenth century. The textual tradition is divided into two branches as far back as one can see. The first branch is represented in the Wolfenbüttel manuscript (c.1350) and a group of seventeenth-century copies such as Árni Magnússon's in AM 761 b 4to (the W-group), the second in the version printed by Ole Worm in 1636, apparently based on a manuscript now lost, and in fragment ε of AM 162 a fol., which seems also to have been

evidence that any ever existed. See Shippey 1972, 185–89. In Old Norse, and concerned with England, we also have fragments of an *Aðalsteinsdrápa*, again attributed to Egill Skalla-Grímsson, discussed further below, the memorial poem *Eiríksmál*, and somewhat later Þórlleifr jarlsskáld's *drápa* on Sveinn Forkbeard, Gunnlaugr's *Aðalráðsdrápa* fragment, the anonymous *Liðsmannaflokkr* and others. For some slight Latin panegyrics on Æthelstan of Wessex, see Lapidge 1981.

similar to the version used by Snorri for *Skáldskaparmál* and which again appears in a number of important seventeenth-century copies (the ε-group) (Finnur Jónsson 1912–15, A I 35–39; Nordland 1956, 142–52). The most obvious difference between these two branches falls in verses 13–18, where the W-group has a few lines that the ε-group does not and the order of verses is different. There are also differences in diction, some of which are discussed in more detail below.

All modern editions of the poem agree on its length and the order of the verses, following the Wolfenbüttel version in this. The differences between these editions are principally matters of individual words, very occasionally of phrases. It is, however, possible to vary the character of the poem quite significantly by the editorial choices that are made. Sigurður Nordal's edition in the *Íslenzk fornrit Egils saga* (1933) is the clearest modern example of this. Characteristic is his acceptance of the relatively prosaic pronouns found in some sources where other modern editors accept richer (more figurative or pictorial) readings from other sources. In v.1,7–8, for instance, Nordal gives:

Hlóðk mærðar hlut  
míns knarrar skut,

I loaded the stern of my ship with a portion of praise,

where Ole Worm's text and Árni Magnússon had offered *min(n)is knarrar* (i. e. *minnis knarrar*, ‘ship of memory’, which, of course, is hypermetrical) and Finnur Jónsson (*inter alios*) emends to *munknarrar* (‘mind-ship’) in *Skjaldedigtning B* (Finnur Jónsson 1912–15, B I 31). In v.17,5–6, Nordal follows what is the clear reading of the Wolfenbüttel manuscript in giving:

Mjök's hónum fql  
haukstrandar mol,

The gravel of the hawk's shore is copiously available from him,

where most other modern editors prefer a reading of the ε-group and give *mjok's hilmi fol* (‘is copiously available from the prince’). Nordal does not transgress sound editorial principles (in fact in v.1,8 he adopts the only reading supported by manuscript evidence that is metrically possible), though he does not accept the authority of the oldest manuscripts in every case, as, for instance, in his rejection of the phrase *brimils móði* in v.5,6.

There is no need for a new edition of the poem here, or for a re-evaluation of all the variant readings or of the emendations that have been proposed. Any significant cases will be discussed as they arise in the following analysis. There are several places where texts of the ε-group provide particular readings that could be preferred on purely evaluative grounds.

In a select anthology, *Carmina scaldica*, published for university students' use (first in 1913), Finnur Jónsson published a critical edition of *Hofuðlausn* that is considerably closer to the ε-version than that published in *Skjaldedigtning B* or in any other scholarly edition. Unless otherwise indicated, then, I quote from the second edition of this work (Finnur Jónsson 1929, 18–20); it can, of course, be assessed in the light of the variant readings published in *Skjaldedigtning A* and Finnur Jónsson's other critical edition in *Skjaldedigtning B*.

### *The original date and provenance of the poem*

*Egils saga* records a tradition telling when, where and for whom *Hofuðlausn* was first performed. It was presented to King Eiríkr Bloodaxe, the exiled son of Haraldr Finehair, ruling in York in the mid-tenth century; he is imagined, mistakenly, to be ruling as a sub-king of Æthelstan of Wessex. Some details of this story are attested, as noted above, in a second and much more personal long skaldic poem attributed to Egill Skalla-Grímsson, *Arinbjarnarkviða*. This testifies to a poem being offered as a head-ransom—a minor but recurrent literary scene for which, according to the saga prose, there were precedents before Egill, and of which a number of further, eleventh-century examples are extant (Nordland 1956, 60–87). *Arinbjarnarkviða* also locates the event in York and identifies the recipient as a descendant of Hálfdan, Haraldr's father. Over the years, more than sufficient effort has been put into attempts to retrieve some real historical facts from the more sensational aspects of the story as told in *Egils saga*. Here I wish to concentrate on the story as implied by the poetry, and the factuality of its most basic contextual details: the date, the place and the identities of the recipient and the author.

*Hofuðlausn* has so far survived considerable efforts to identify serious anachronisms in the text, and consequently remains a plausible example of a mid-tenth-century poem. One would presumably have to identify some very persistent or deep-seated anachronisms to mount a decisive case that the original poem was not composed in the tenth century, it being already acknowledged that the course of textual transmission has rendered it impossible for us to reconstruct precisely what Egill supposedly composed. Jón Helgason thought he had identified a telling anachronism in the rhyming of *hjor* (sword) and *gjor*, which he took to be an historical variant of Modern Icelandic *ger* (a flock of birds), deriving from an earlier \**gør* and incapable of rhyming with *hjor* before the twelfth century (Jón Helgason 1969). His argument was answered by Dietrich Hofmann (1973), who pointed out a series of distinctly early-looking linguistic features in

the poem and proposed an alternative etymology and interpretation of *gjor* as a noun derived from an adjective \**gerr*, with breaking of *e* > *jø*, which would be capable of rhyming with *hjor* in the tenth century and would mean ‘desire’.

The location of the poem in England is clearly specified, if not emphasised, in the opening verses of the poem:

Vestr fórk of ver

West I came over sea (1,1)

and

Berk Óðins mjoð  
á Engla bjóð.

I bear Óðinn’s mead to the lands of the English (2,3–4).

We shall return to the artistic use that is made of this detail in due course.

Even if a tenth-century date and an English provenance of the poem are accurate, one should not accept without question the traditional Icelandic identification of the *hilmir* in the text, an Eiríkr, as Eiríkr Bloodaxe. There unquestionably was an *Yric* who reigned in York, possibly for two periods of two to three years each, and one version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle identifies him as *Yric Haroldes sunu* (MS E, s. a. 952). Some coins of this king are known. Charles Plummer, however, once thought that the true identity of this king was given in the story Adam of Bremen told of a Danish *Hiringus*, a son of Haraldr Bluetooth, who conquered England but was deposed and killed by the people of Northumbria (Adam of Bremen 1959, II.xxv; Earle and Plummer 1892–99, II 148; cf. Jón Jónsson 1895, 193). Another Scandinavian Eiríkr ruling in England is often identified in the *Eo/hJric*, king of the Danes, perhaps specifically in East Anglia, whose death is recorded in the Chronicle, MSS A and D, s. a. 905. A strong historical argument in favour of the reliability of the Norse–Icelandic tradition, however, is the importance of Eiríkr Bloodaxe’s sons in Norwegian history, deposing Hákon Aðalsteinsfóstri around 960 and holding power for about a decade until deposed by Earl Hákon of Lade and his allies at the beginning of the 970s. The Eiríkr Bloodaxe of West Norse tradition is an intriguing character: a recurrent failure as a king yet indelibly eulogised in *Hofuðlausn* and *Eiríksmál*. At the very least the personal history of this temporary king of Northumbria did not provide an obviously well-suited character for historically false adoption as the father of kings of Norway; the tradition is therefore the more credible.

There is a literary argument too which concurrently supports the traditional identifications of date and provenance, author and subject. This calls

on the evidence of certain features common to the three extant long poems attributed to Egill to corroborate the more precise identification of the place (Jórvík) and the recipient in *Arinbjarnarkviða*. *Arinbjarnarkviða* and *Sonatorrek* are both composed in the *kviðuháttir* metre, which, as Faulkes notes, can be regarded as a variant of *fornyrðislag* (essentially the metre of *Hofuðlausn*, as noted above), but having three syllables in alternate lines. This metre too is rare in the tenth century (Faulkes 1991, 84). Special to *Hofuðlausn* and *Sonatorrek* is the conceit of *mærð* (praise) as a concrete building material for the poet to store, carry and shape:

Hlóðk mærðar hlut  
hugknarrar<sup>2</sup> skut.

I loaded the stern of the ship of thought with a portion of praise (*Hofuðlausn* 1,7–8).

Pat ber ek út  
úr orðhofi  
mærðar timbr  
máli laufgat

I bear this timber of praise, adorned with the foliage of speech, from the temple of words (*Sonatorrek* 5,5–8, after Turville-Petre 1976, 31).

Such parallels could indeed be written into poetry composed later for attribution to Egill Skalla-Grímsson. But that possibility is not demonstrably a probability so strong that it renders invalid a discussion based on a cautious acceptance of the truth of the traditional date, location, author and recipient of *Hofuðlausn*.

A separate literary tradition adding support to the authenticity of Egill's authorship of the poetry attributed to him is that which specifies a chain of transmission through Einarr skálaglamm, the young poet with whom, according to the saga, Egill had a virtually bardic tutelary relationship. Even this tradition, however, itself implies an important duality in the status of Egill as a literary figure from an early date: not only as the major poet and author he presumably really was, but also as a character within narrative, a legendary figure. He was able to represent the first-generation Icelander, the Viking, with still intimate but highly problematic connexions with Norway. If his poetry was genuinely preserved for such reasons, it provides a valuable insight into the evolution of the stock figure of the independent Icelander: an heroic exile—notably, just like Eiríkr, Haraldr Fairhair's son.

<sup>2</sup>Thus Finnur Jónsson 1929. The variants recorded in *Skjaldedigtning A* are *míns knarrar*, *minis knarrar* and *minnis knarrar*; *hugknarrar* is Finnur Jónsson's emendation.

*A reading of the poem*

The essential quality of Egill's *Hofuðlausn* lies not in spectacular but superficial displays of ingenuity in respect of form but rather in the steady maintenance and powerful development of a series of conceits, often paradoxical, that embody the real intellectual content of the poem much more than do the predictable elements in the praise of Eiríkr. This is especially the case if we allow for some rich exploration of the potential polysemy of language in this poem (cf. de Looze 1989). One of the most central of these paradoxes is that of the Norse poet performing, in Norse and for an appropriate audience, in England. This is underlined by images representing Norse poetry as an integral part of Norse pagan culture and its mythology, and their juxtaposition with the careful specification of location (noted above):

Vestr fórk of ver,  
en ek Viðris ber  
munstrandar mar,

West I came over sea, and I bear the sea of Viðrir's mind-shore (1,1–3),

and:

Berk Óðins mjøð  
á Engla bjøð.

I bear Óðinn's mead to the lands of the English (2,3–4).

An important semantic field that is introduced to the poem in the first two stanzas is that of liquids: a variety of kinetic liquids, travelled over, like the sea, or vital and vivifying, like Óðinn's mead. Through a powerful trope, this symbolic liquid, the mead of poetry, becomes a microcosm of the large, external situation: it is the sea of the mind-shore (*munstrandar marr*) that is both carried by the poet and simultaneously carrying him, transformed in line 8 into a boat:

Hlóðk mærðar hlut  
hugknarrar skut.

I loaded the stern of the ship of thought with a portion of praise (1,7–8).

Battle and blood are subsequently merged with this cluster of imagery, with:

Paut mækis ó

A river of sword surged (4,6)

and:

Þar's í blóði  
í brimils móði  
völlr of þrumði

There where in blood the seal's plain [= the sea] resounded in fury (5,5–7),  
or alternatively, adopting the reading of Worm's text in line 6:

Þar's í blóði  
enn brimlá-móði  
völlr of þrumði.

There where the sea-worn shoreline resounded bloodily.

This image in verse 5, however it is read, is the first indication in the poem that Eiríkr is being glorified for his achievement in a sea or coastal battle. The opportunities this situation offers are further explored. The couplet just before the first refrain (*stef*) of the poem,

Hné folk á fit  
við fleina hnit,

An army fell at the shoreline as the arrows struck (6,1–2),

contains an enriching range of possible concurrent images, including what could be a fine example of figurative amplification achieved by a metaphorical meaning—‘men sank to the margin (of life)’—beyond the more mundane ‘men fell at the shoreline’ or ‘... on to the shore’. *Fit* has a diverse range of attested meanings that could only encourage this sort of polysemous interpretation: the land margin of an area of water; the edge or hem of a piece of textile; the web or skin of animals’ or birds’ feet. Poetically, however, the normal use of *fit* = ‘land’ is absolutely clear (*Lexicon poeticum*; de Vries 1961; Ásgeir B. Magnússon 1989, all s.v. *fit*).

An allegorisation of the passage through life and time as a passage through space, which essentially is what is suggested here as the richer potential of the image, is very rare in early Norse poetry. It seems, in fact, to be in the poetry of, or attributed to, Egill Skalla-Grímsson that this conceit, or related ones, are most widely developed. Imagery of the *land* recurs insistently in his *lausavísur*. In *Sonatorrek*, the end of his family line seems to be represented by the edge of a forest; his family was a *frændgarðr* (a kin-enclosure), broken by the sea (vv. 4–7, cf. also v. 21; de Looze 1989, 137–38).

These devices are being used in a eulogy of a prince. Genuinely or feignedly, the relationship between poet and prince that supposedly precedes this poem is one of division, antagonism and menace. This

situation does not appear within the poem beyond the poet's conventional worries about not being granted the silence he needs to present his work:

Ef þogn of get.

If I obtain silence (3,4).

The essence of paradox is the reconciliation of the supposedly incompatible, and this purely contextual hostility between poet and prince adds a paradoxical aspect to the intimate apposition of these two characters that *Hofuðlausn* presents. Poet and prince are made very similar in this poem. Just as the poet has carried his gift of poetry over the sea, Eiríkr has come from a battle across the sea, where he had provided the wolves with carrion,

Bauð ulfum hræ  
Eirekr of sæ,

Across the sea, Eiríkr provided wolves with carrion (12,3–4; 15,3–4),

and sated *benmós granar* (the lips of the wound-gull, 11,4). The parallelism between poet and war-leader is emphasised particularly towards the end of the poem. In v.1, the mead of poetry is brought *Vestr . . . of ver*; in v.18 we hear, conversely:

Frétt's austr of mar  
Eireks of far.

Eiríkr's progress is heard of east across the sea (18,7–8).

To confirm the cyclical restatement of the opening themes, the poet reiterates the mythological image at the end of the poem:

Hrœrðak munni  
af munar grunni  
Óðins ægi.

I stirred Óðinn's sea with my mouth, from the bottom of my mind (19,5–7).

This particular half-verse (*helmingr*) is concluded with an image that finally makes explicit the central and most important conceit deployed by the poet in this composition:

Of jöru fægi.

Concerning the polisher of battle (19,8).

Battle is a work of art, and Eiríkr an artist, just as the poem is a work of art and Egill an artist. The first hint of such linkage between warfare and verbal art comes in the mystifying evocation of imminent and incipient battle as an oppressive prophecy:

Malmhríðar spó  
sú's mest of lá.

Prophecy of metal-storm, which lay most oppressively over (4,7–8).

Possibly less bewildering is the image of the *vefr darraðar* (the weaving of the *darraðr*) in the next stanza (5,2). Important here is the question of whether one accepts the usual interpretation of *darraðr* as ‘dart’, or Anne Holtsmark’s fully-argued case for *darraðr* as ‘banner’ (Holtsmark 1939; Poole 1991, 125–31). Snorri Sturluson clearly understood *darraðr* as a name for a spear, but no source before him is unambiguous (cf. *Lexicon poeticum* s. v. *darraðr*). With *darraðr* as ‘dart’, the image *vefr darraðar* becomes interestingly polysemous and kinetic, able to represent both the ordered forest of spears protruding above the shields and poised for battle (*fyr grams gloðum/geirvangs røðum*: before the leader’s bright spear-plain [= shield] ranks (5,3–4)) and the interlacing shafts and points once the mêlée has begun. With *darraðr* as ‘banner’, the image seems instead to embody a vision of the final momentary state of pomp and poise—the banner standing still—before battle is joined and:

brimils . . .  
völlr of þrumði,  
und véum glumði.

The seal’s plain [sea] resounded and boomed beneath the standards (5,7–8).

With this reading, at this point, art and battle, though very closely associated, would still appear essentially to be contrasted.

The richest development of this now tantalising conceit of the art of battle may appear in verse 8, where the poet focuses upon the play of the sword:

Hlam heinsqðul  
við hjalmrøðul,  
beit bengrefill  
þat vas blóðrefill.

The saddle-of-the-whetstone [= sword] rang against the radiance of the helmet [= shield]; the wound-engraver bit: that was a *blóðrefill* (8,1–4).

The literal sense of the compound *hjalmrøðull* is ‘helmet-sun’. The interpretation ‘shield’ is suggested by a number of other kennings in which *røðull* is clearly used as a base-word in a kenning for ‘shield’ together with the protective connotations of *hjalmr* as determinant. *Hjalmrøðull* could also be taken to mean ‘sword’; cf. *hjalmeldr* (*Húsdrápa* 11) and *hjalmsvell* (*Háttatal* 60) which both mean ‘sword’, and there are a few instances of

*røðull* as a base-word in kennings for ‘sword’ (see *Lexicon poeticum* s. v.). An alternative reading to *hjalmrøðul* in *Hofuðlausn* 8,2—found, in fact, in ε—is *hjaldrøðul*, ‘battle-sun’, which Nordal (1933, 188) accepts and interprets as another kenning for ‘sword’. Whatever we find it more fitting to substitute for these terms in an English translation, a clear contrast is presented between the mundanity of the sword as first depicted, *heinsøðull*, metaphorically identified with a saddle and embracing the humble whet-stone, and the image evoked of the artificial splendour of a helmet or sword represented as flaming like the sun. The shocking, and resonant, blow of the sword against this dazzlingly unfocused object is powerfully emphasised in the line by prosody (including rhyme). In turn, in the next line, the sword itself begins to transform, explicitly becoming a craftsman’s tool, a ‘wound-engraver’.

The last half-line—*þat vas blóðrefill*—is usually translated as an example of *tilsagt*, a gloss to a kenning which produces a rather limp conclusion to the *helmingr*: ‘that was a sword’. If so, it could be the fourth kenning for ‘sword’ in two lines. *Blóðrefill*, literally perhaps ‘blood-tearer’, is twice recorded elsewhere as a simple kenning for ‘sword’, in *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks konungs* (Ch.3),

hneit mér við hjarta  
hjorr Angantýs,  
hvass blóðrefill  
herðr í eitri,

Angantýr’s sword struck me to the heart, a keen *blóðrefill* hardened in venom, and in a *pula* in manuscripts of Snorri’s *Edda* (see *Lexicon poeticum* s. v. *blóðrefill*). The lexeme *refill*, however, had two meanings: besides ‘point’ or ‘piercer’ it could refer to a piece of textile, often a braid or piece of edging of some form. Neither of these elements is particularly frequent in Old Norse literature, and it is impossible to be sure of the precise conceptual or associative semantic value of the lexeme in the mid-tenth century. In the sense of ‘cutter’, *refill* appears only in compounds, such as, for instance, *tannrefill* (‘chisel’?), and probably the recurrent *refilstíigr* (‘harsh path’) too, used by Þórleifr jarlsskáld in the late tenth century. The simplex *refill* is recorded only in the sense of a piece of textile, on several occasions in prose from the late twelfth century onwards, in medieval times mostly in non-literary documents (cf. Cleasby/Vigfússon or Fritzner, s. v. *refill*). Only in thirteenth-century poetry does the element appear in this sense in kennings, e. g. *refils grund* (a dressed field [= a woman]).

The etymology of this lexeme (or these lexemes) and thus the relationship between the two senses have always puzzled lexicographers. A

relationship with Indo-European \**rep*, which gives Norse *rafr* ('amber'; 'strip of dried fish [halibut]'; whence, perhaps, 'strip of cloth', 'thread'), is usually accepted. It is practically impossible, however, to dissociate *refill* ('piercer') from the verbs *rifa*, *rjúfa* ('tear') (Alexander Jóhannesson 1956, 721; Pokorny 1959–69, I 865; de Vries 1961, s. v. *ráf* and *refill*; Ásgeir B. Magnússon 1989, s. v. *refill*). Whatever the case may actually have been, there is no known or perceptible reason, linguistic or historical, why the sense *refill* = 'piece of textile' should not have been current at the time Egill's *Hofuðlausn* was composed. The normal use of a word in one, possibly archaic, sense in poetic diction, and the concomitant exclusion from poetry of what had in effect become a homonym with a very different sense, are perfectly familiar phenomena and mean that the lack of evidence for *refill*, 'a piece of textile', before the late twelfth century is of little significance. We now have evidence for the advanced development of the textile industry in Scandinavia, especially in Norway, before the Viking Age. While it is the diamond twill cloth known—apparently rather misleadingly—as the *Birka type* that forms the heart of the evidence for a well-established textile industry by the Viking Age, at a much earlier date it is specifically tablet-woven bands used as hems and cuffs that are most characteristic of a distinctive and influential western Scandinavian tradition (Jørgensen 1985, *passim*; 1992, esp. 122–52; cf. also Ingstad 1992). Returning to the *blóðrefill* in *Hofuðlausn*, a rather dull, primary sense of v.8,4, 'that was a sword', is indisputable. In the context of the conceit of battle as art, however, a concurrent metaphor 'that was a blood-braid', or 'that was a blood-tapestry', can quite justifiably be read here. This reading is not validated by any other poet or poem more clearly having used *refill* in this way. Such, however, is the nature of true poetic invention.

Eiríkr, the only auditor of the poem explicitly addressed in the text (3,1), may be the artist of battle, but he needs an artist to crystallise his glory, to perceive and express his martial splendour and so to raise a literary monument, *aere perennius*, not simply *about* his military prowess but rather growing out of it and thus actually embodying it. (All this when previously, according to the saga, Egill had raised a *níðstong*, a pole inscribed with a verse attacking Eiríkr, that was equally indelible from memory.) The poet, the maker, acts with the king, the breaker of gold (v.17), in transforming destructive battle into the creative process of art:

Orðstír of gat  
Eirekr at þat.

Eiríkr won (or begat) the glory of fame after this (6,3–4; 9,3–4).

In the words of the poet, we see precisely the *orðstírr* (literally ‘word-glory’), emphasised in the first refrain of the poem, that Eiríkr has won *and* begotten. The poet’s words breach and fill the silence that they themselves invoke at the start of the poem (vv.2–3), just as the battle, first heard of through verbal report and then announced by its noise, grows around the king:

Flestr maðr of frá,  
hvat fylkir vá,  
en Viðrir sá,  
hvar valr of lá.  
Óx hjorva glam  
við hlifar þróm,  
guðr óx of gram,  
gramr sótti fram.

Most men heard what the king won by fighting, and Viðrir saw where the dead bodies lay. The noise of swords against the shield-edge grew; battle grew around the king; the king advanced (3,5–4,4).

The intimate and creative union between poet and prince is a sort of mating between two wise, *horskir*, men, without any scandalous overtones. Where a king fights, wounds grow naturally, like plants:

Óxu<sup>3</sup> undir  
við joſurs fundi

Wounds grew in the king’s presence (7,5–6)

—plants that are kissed by insects that kill rather than pollinate, directed, again, by the king, now more like a god of nature:

Joſurr sveigði ý,  
flugu unda bý.

The king bent the yew; the wound-bees flew (15,1–2).

In these ways, various aspects of a mutual dependency between poet and king are made visible. The king needs the poet to immortalise his reputation; the poet is provided by the king with material with which to establish his own reputation, and so—as perhaps is symbolised by the dramatic context of the head-ransoming episode—depends on the king for his life. In more than one way, the king would deliver a mortal wound to his own glory by destroying the poet.

<sup>3</sup> *Sic ε.* W has *æstusk* (‘flowed’) here.

*The text as script and stage: 'enunciation'*

*Hofuðlausn* is a poem that meticulously sets the stage on which it is to be performed. We have seen, above, how the English setting is conspicuously evoked in the first two stanzas. There are two principal characters in this 'play': a first person *ek* who narrates the poem (1,1 etc.) and a second person listener implied most directly by the imperative *hygg* (3,1). These individuals, as we have just seen, enter into a reciprocal exchange relationship within which the two are mutually dependent (cf. de Looze 1989, 127–33). This play, then, subsumes a nexus of social relations (the relations of patronage and dependency) and certain ideological assumptions: criteria of what is valuable or praiseworthy, and why. In other words, the poem embodies substantial parts of a cultural system, and in this respect the contents of the poem are indeed highly conventional. Basic definitions of human culture usually represent it as a system composed of three primary subsystems: economic, social and ideological. The cultural system implied by this poem is an idealised and unambiguous one, in which in fact the economic subsystem appears only in a highly restricted form: gold, which is not won by the prince in any specified way, is broken and cast freely in many directions by him. Thus the same disdain that the king ought to have towards the possession of exchangeable treasure is shown by the poem towards basic economic processes. A single, telling exception is the firm grip the king places on his lands:

En jofurr lñndum  
heldr hornklofi.

And the king holds the lands in horn-cleft grip (16,6–7).

Yet the poem also postulates the very antithesis of an intimate exchange between an artist and a king restricted to one unique and specific occasion. Poet and prince are not isolated, inhabiting a world entirely of their own. The text itself evokes an anonymous, surrounding group of men, in the *manna sjot* ('dwellings of men', 20,4), a potential audience for the poem but also its potential destroyers if the poet does not succeed in obtaining the silence he needs. This group, of course, is not just the imagined company assembled in Eiríkr's hall but any potential audience, who could suffocate the poem, whatever its merits, by their indifference or their purposeless and valueless babble. A poem of praise is not meant to be a momentary thing. It is meant to be a monument that lasts. There is a profound tension in the concept of *orðstírr* ('word-glory', 'glorious reputation'). The spoken word, *orð*, which itself becomes a term for fame, is notoriously fugitive.

But real glory is lasting glory. When the poet speaks of Eiríkr's fame spreading through all lands (18,5–8), we can recognise a trope for Eiríkr's fame spreading through all future generations of men too. The poem is a monument available to all future generations to interpret and appreciate, and this must be done in the way that the poet and narrator intended; otherwise its monumentality must be threatened. The poem therefore needs to transcend the particular time and place in which it is rooted in order to fulfil its purpose. It can be claimed that, as a final paradox, the poem achieves this by successfully embodying the past time of Eiríkr's (and Egill's) glory for a future audience to recapture and admire. In this way, its 'conventionality' is truly vitalised.

The rich and sophisticated implications of this paradox can be appreciated particularly well by assessing it in the light of a linguistic conceptualisation of *enunciation* (Vance 1986, 86–110, esp. 88–89). This is a concept which highlights the features of a text that can function only in the context of the act of discourse in which they are located: for instance *I* and *you* may pronominally refer to persons existing independently of and outside the text that refers to them, but the occurrence of these terms requires a specific discursive context in which 'I' speaks to 'you'. This phenomenon is a structural characteristic of language that can be artistically exploited. It allows a text to appropriate external referents and at least to attempt to reposition them within itself. We have been exploring the ways in which, for a variety of purposes of his own, the poet uses the text to merge himself, Eiríkr and the text into a knot of interdependency. The process of relocation is nicely exemplified by the contrast between the *Vestr fórk* of v.1 and the *frétt's austr* of v.18. With the first-person form, the location, *vestr*, is the direction in which the poet, like the prince, has travelled; by v.18 this is the position they are both locked into, looking out now to observe what is happening—in the third person—in the other place, *austr*. With all the interpenetration of art and battle in this poem, the specific battle the poem refers to can even be felt to be superseded by the poem. It is finished; it can only exist in memory; and now that memory is irretrievably invaded by the poetical account.

### *Poem and place*

As has been pointed out, Egill's *Hofuðlausn* represents, in a truncated but still sharply focused and idealised form, a coherent cultural system. This contains the traditional Germanic *princeps* (alias *dux*, *rex*)—*comitatus* relationship, articulated through the mutual exchanging of gifts and obligations. It is an ideal that lives on in the tenth century with real literary

vigour and coherence only in Scandinavian verse (cf. Hedeager 1993). Scandinavia is clearly identified as the home of this cultural system within the text, both Eiríkr and Egill having brought their ideals over the sea to Britain. Emphasised with this are the late pagan associations of this system within Viking culture: it is linked to an Odinic cult, the essence of which is captured by Óðinn/Viðrir's approving gaze at the product of war:

En Viðrir sá,  
hvar valr of lá.

And Viðrir saw where the dead bodies lay (3,7–8).

If we look at what otherwise was going on in England in the mid-tenth century, especially in the Scandinavian-settled areas and indeed quite specifically in Northumbria and York, these aspects of *Hofuðlausn* are very surprising. Both politically and culturally, assimilation between invader and native had been going on for several generations; in the middle of the tenth century this was a strong and continuing process, against which the uncompromisingly Viking character of Egill's poem stands in sharp contrast. The territorial reconquest of Scandinavian England by the English kings of Wessex of the first half of the tenth century reached a symbolic and celebrated climax with Æthelstan's victory at Brunanburh in 937 which variously established or confirmed his supremacy over several Welsh and Scottish kings and princes as well as over Northumbria (Dumville 1992). Northumbrian independence, however, proved to be resilient, and the political ties between Northumbria and the rest of England were to remain markedly fluid for 150 years yet. An important development in the concept of kingship embedded in the policy of the Wessex/English kings is a more ready and direct association of the king with a *territory* (i. e. as King of England) rather than, as was conventional earlier, with a people (King of the English). Æthelstan indeed had coins issued bearing the legend *rex totius Britanniae* (Dumville 1992, 170; cf. John 1966). It was precisely such a shift in Scandinavia that was perceived by Icelanders and 'mythologised' in historiographical accounts of Haraldr Finehair's role in the settlement of Iceland. That Icelandic attitude poses a set of problems for a conservative Icelandic poet eulogising a Scandinavian king ruling in England.

In fact this Eiríkr is hardly praised for anything he is or has been doing in England; rather for a previous victory over the Scots. Nor, indeed, is he especially eulogised as a *king*. In verses 16–18 he is described in the present tense, but in a stylised and statuesque pose, holding the land like a boar (*jofurr* is etymologically identical with Old English *eofor*, and this asso-

ciation could have attached to the word in Norse) and scattering treasure. It is striking that unambiguous social titles are very rarely used for Eiríkr. He is referred to as *gramr* and *jofurr* (four times each), *hilmir* (three times), *vísi* and (-)*skati* (twice each), *fylkir*, *folkhagi*, *hringbrjótr* and *pengill* (once each). These words are widely used in skaldic poetry as words standing for ‘king’ or ‘prince’. They are almost all of them, in some sense and to varying degrees, figurative terms. Arguably, even the grip the king realistically places on the land is modified by connotations of the resolute stand of the boar—perhaps at bay (e. g. 16,6–7; see above)? How different, in *Aðalsteinsdrápa*, is the perception by a Norse poet—perhaps Egill himself—of the steady and determined strategy behind Æthelstan’s glory after his victory at Brunanburh:

Nú hefr foldgnárr fellda  
—fellr jorð und nið Ellu—  
hjaldrsnerrandi, harra  
hofuðbaðmr, þría jofra.

Now, towering over the land, the enhancer of battle, the king’s [or kings’] foremost scion, has felled three kings. Land falls under the kinsman of Ælla (from *Aðalsteinsdrápa*, Nordal 1933, 146).<sup>4</sup>

There are two, possibly concurrent, ways of interpreting this approach to the titles. As a style, it could represent the carefully measured and fitting handling of a *de facto* ruler whose legal and real position was far from definite. It could also be an ‘alternative’ representation of a hero: one currently in the position of a contemporary king but whose glory lay in his emulation of more ancient models.

Of all the aspects of the assimilation of Scandinavian colonist to native English that can be seen, the one that is most conspicuously represented in material culture and was therefore symbolically one of the most important aspects of the whole process was the conversion of Scandinavian England to Christianity. East Anglia, still firmly within the Danelaw, had produced coins commemorating its last English king, Eadmund, as a Christian martyr before the end of the ninth century, and by about 900 the coinage of York, under Scandinavian kings, was demonstrating assimilation in the use of Christian mottoes on the reverses of the coins and perhaps more subtle details too (cf. Hines 1991, 417–18). To this area of evidence we can

<sup>4</sup> For a defence of the authenticity of this fragment against the doubts expressed by Sigurður Nordal (1933, xv) see Nordland 1956, 101–03. Nordland’s case can indeed be strengthened, for instance by further exploration of the implications of an identification of Æthelstan as a kinsman of Ælla and of other artistic reflections of his annexation of Northumbria, but this is not the place to go into these in detail.

now add the very similar evidence of continuity in funerary inscriptions and stonecarving between late Anglian and 'Anglo-Scandinavian' York, which in itself is just part of a varied but persistent pattern of artistic hybridisation on the sculpture of eastern Yorkshire fully explored by James Lang (1991; cf. Hines 1993). There is no room here to go into any significant expansion of the arguments for and details of this process of assimilation that have been introduced and discussed, admittedly briefly, elsewhere (Hines 1989, 1991), and it would be otiose simply to repeat the surveys already published.

It is, however, worth going further into the state of affairs in York itself in the tenth century, as revealed by archaeological excavations; the substantial discoveries on the Coppergate site are well known, by name if not in detail. A very obvious question that the new insights into York pose for the cultural historian is to what extent late ninth- and tenth-century York can be regarded as a 'Scandinavian', or even a 'Viking', town. The informed and sensible answer is given by the term preferred by the York Archaeological Trust to designate this period: York grew into an 'Anglo-Scandinavian' town (cf. Hall 1984). At York, and indeed at Lincoln, archaeology reveals a clear coincidence between the Scandinavian settlement of post-867 recorded by history and the substantial redevelopment of urban areas including Coppergate and Flaxengate respectively. The connexion between the two events seems too close to be plausibly treated as mere coincidence, although it is true that urban development was gathering pace generally in England and Europe in the late ninth and early tenth centuries—for instance at Gloucester, certainly free from any direct Scandinavian involvement even if military responses to the Danish settlement were some factor in its redevelopment (Heighway 1984). Whether Scandinavian settlers really created urban growth in York in the late ninth and tenth centuries or just catalysed it, the process had very little in the way of distinctively Scandinavian models of township to follow, and in fact the particular character of York that was to emerge was a local one. The building styles found at Coppergate and Flaxengate are varied, and scarcely diagnostic of any specific group or culture. The high level of artistic fusion noted in the sculpture recurs both on individual items and in the whole range of metalwork that can be seen to have been in use and in production at Coppergate. The trading links evidenced by material found in York seem to be symptomatic. Trading links with the Continent were at least as important as those with Scandinavia, from where a limited range of commodities was imported: soapstone, stone for hones and whetstones, and amber. In the light of the range of imagery in *Hófuðlausn*, discussed

above, it is interesting to note that Lise Bender Jørgensen observes—apparently with some surprise—the virtual non-appearance of high-quality Scandinavian, and particularly Norwegian, textiles in York and Scandinavian England (Jørgensen 1992, 38–41).

If, then, Egill's *Hofuðlausn* was performed at Eiríkr's court in York in the middle of the tenth century, as we can reasonably believe it was, it would have evoked within the precincts of that court a familiar and only partly imaginary world constructed out of a material and ideological culture that was starkly different—perhaps painfully obviously so—from the very streets outside. How are we to interpret this sort of contradiction between what we have identified as opposed, normative cultural tendencies: the Viking, and the Anglo-Scandinavian? It does not simply mean that we have gone wrong in our characterisation of either tendency, as long as particular cultures can be constituted of *norms*, which enjoin conformity to a system of goals and values but also allow variation and opposition, not *rules*. The alternative stance of Egill's *Hofuðlausn* to generations of development in Scandinavian England grows, in this perspective, into an act of dissent. Fascinatingly, the confrontational aspect of this dissent is not focused on the anglicising Anglo-Scandinavians of the Danelaw or Northumbria—or at least is only very indirectly focused upon them—but rather upon the troubled figure of Eiríkr, the Viking war leader and born prince, a king unable to call any kingdom truly his own.

The text, as we have seen, functions by laying hold upon two historical figures and reshaping them as ‘characters’ to obey and fulfil the rules of its own fictional world. Paradoxically, this merger of two historical individuals and a literary text is still an embodiment of the individualist ethos that had such an important part to play in Viking cult and culture. It is only with the mating of the unique, creative capacities of the prince and poet that the poem and all that it involves can be born. A useful anthropological analogue is found in a cultural individualist finely evoked by Edward Sapir: the figure of Two Crows, an Omaha Indian who denies any and every generalisation about his and his tribe’s culture in the teeth of the attestations of his fellow Indians (Sapir 1938). In Sapir’s humane portrayal, Two Crows emerges as a figure of heroic pathos, not a comic maverick. The pose struck by the poet, and imposed upon Eiríkr here, is more active, and thus more defiant, heroic, impractical and tragic. In an astonishing way, this poem thus transposes a typically Viking praise of action into a meditative mode. The violence of Viking behaviour is too often and too easily explained away as a reversion to natural human savagery. Egill’s *Hofuðlausn* could reassure the Viking, and can still warn the non-Viking reader,

that the Vikings, however barbaric their behaviour, were not *mindless* barbarians.

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## SKALDS, TROUBADOURS AND SAGAS

By ALISON FINLAY

### *I Love and sagas*

THE SPIRIT of the Sagas of Icelanders is notoriously inimical to the gentler emotions. Not only does saga prose, often described as terse or objective, avoid the direct expression of emotion, but love affairs and marriages, where they do enter into the narrative, are treated far from romantically. Theodore Andersson remarks that ‘though we think of the sagas as being the least romantic literature imaginable, it remains a fact that love is the most frequent cause for conflict’ (1967, 12–13). Where romantic or lyrical expression does occur in the sagas, often in verse contrasted in tone with the surrounding prose, it has seemed to critics to require explanation. From time to time the rather vague suggestion has been made that influences from southern Europe inspired the Icelanders’ treatment of this unfamiliar narrative material (Andersson 1969, 7–8). Most recent and influential is the study by Bjarni Einarsson of the four poets’ sagas sharing the theme of a poet’s unhappy love for the wife of another man, in which he argues for the derivation of this story and its treatment from the romance of Tristan, and for the influence of Provençal troubadour lyrics on the accompanying verses (1961; 1971; 1976).

Renewed sympathy for Bjarni Einarsson’s approach has been expressed in the context of the recent critical tendency to seek foreign influences, learned as well as secular, on saga literature. This arose, according to Carol Clover, as part of ‘the dramatic reaction, in the mid-1960s, against the methodological and ideological conservatism of saga scholarship’ (Clover 1985, 251). Herself the author of an attempt to derive the narrative structures of the *Íslendingasögur* from French romance (Clover 1982), Clover takes up a position similar to that of Bjarni Einarsson in asserting contacts with French culture not necessarily traceable through known surviving texts:

The methodology of the Icelandic school, despite its ostensible neutrality, has conditioned decisively the form and direction of scholarly research. The insistence on sources in the form of manuscripts known to have circulated in medieval Iceland has meant, in practice, the avoidance of those areas of the literature for which such ‘material links’ are scanty or absent . . . The reader of skaldic and troubadour poetry and biography cannot help being struck by both the formal and phenomenal parallels . . . and the same goes for the reader of saga

and prose romance . . . It comes down to the value of circumstantial evidence, which for many readers and scholars is at least strongly suggestive if not persuasive but which for the Icelandic school is no evidence at all (Clover 1985, 250).

The theory has implications for the composition of saga narrative; for if the verses of the skalds were influenced by troubadour verse, dating from the mid-twelfth century at the earliest, they cannot be the authentic creations of the tenth- and eleventh-century poets said by the sagas to have recited them. Bjarni Einarsson, in fact, argues that the verses were composed together with the accompanying saga prose by the saga authors themselves.

While the argument for troubadour influence is thinly argued and generally unconvincing, it is this compositional aspect, the relationship between saga prose and the verses it includes, which prompts me to reconsider the subject. The verses supposedly composed by Jarl Rognvaldr Kali and his companions on a visit to the Holy Land in 1151, some of which seem likely to be following troubadour fashions, and the prose account in which they are embedded in *Orkneyinga saga*, probably written no more than fifty years later, give interesting insights into how such influence transmits itself into the body of a saga.

## II *Rognvaldr Kali in Narbonne*

For the question of the possible influence of troubadour verse on skaldic verse, and the sagas incorporating it, the *locus classicus* is the episode in *Orkneyinga saga* in which the Orkney Jarl Rognvaldr Kali and his Icelandic companions compose verses in honour of Viscountess Ermengarda of Narbonne. Rognvaldr is said to have visited Ermengarda's court in the course of his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, dated to 1151 (*Orkneyinga saga* 1965, 209–12). The saga names three poets accompanying the Jarl, two of whom, Ármóðr and Oddi inn litli Glúmsson, are said in some, but not all, manuscripts to be Icelandic (pp. 200–01; for an account of Rognvaldr and his poets, see Bibire 1988). Ermengarda was the patroness of several troubadours.<sup>1</sup> According to the saga, Rognvaldr follows prevailing local fashion by offering a verse in the lady's praise (verse 55). After leaving the

<sup>1</sup> Ermengarda, daughter of Aimeric IV of Narbonne (1143–97), held court in Narbonne after her father's death. The thirteenth-century *vida* of the poet Peire Rogier claims that

E venc s'en a Narbona, en la cort de ma domna Ermengarda, qu'era adoncs de gran valor e de gran pretz. Et ella l'acuilli fort e.ill fetz grans bens. Et s'enamoret d'ella e fetz sos vers e sas cansos d'ella. Et ella los pres en grat . . .

court, Rognvaldr speaks a further verse, capped by one each from his companions Ármóðr and Oddi, all in different modes professing love for Ermengarda (vv. 56–58). Subsequent chapters include verses of a more familiar skaldic kind, recounting details of Rognvaldr's adventures but formally addressed to a woman, sometimes specifically called *Ermingerðr* or *volska vif*, 'French woman' (pp. 215–31; verses 59, 61, 63, 64, 66, 69, 75).

Critics have followed the invitation of the prose narrative to find that these verses 'bear a clear troubadour imprint' (Andersson 1969, 13).<sup>2</sup> If this is so, the saga, written in Iceland c.1200, is an uncontroversial example of Provençal troubadour verse influencing Icelandic saga writing before the earliest *Íslendingasögur* were written. Since the *Orkneyinga saga* episode takes place in 1151, this does not raise the same chronological problems as suggesting troubadour influence on verses attributed to the tenth- and eleventh-century poets of the poets' sagas, which demands acceptance of Bjarni Einarsson's wholesale view that the verses were composed by thirteenth-century saga authors. Even the more moderate proposition, now accepted by many scholars, that at least some verses, and other narrative materials, were contributed at intermediate stages throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries,<sup>3</sup> allows little time for troubadour fashions to reach Icelandic material used as sources by saga authors in the early thirteenth century.

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Long temps estet ab ela en cort e si fo crezut qu'el agues joi d'amor d'ella.  
(*Biographies des Troubadours* 1964, 267)

He went to Narbonne, to the court of Lady Ermengarda, who was then of great worth and of great merit. And she greeted him well and gave him great favors. And he fell in love with her and composed his poems and his songs about her. And she welcomed them . . . He was at her court for a long time, and it was believed that he received the pleasures of love from her. (Egan 1984, 78)

For an account of Ermengarda's relationships with troubadours, and reference to arguments against identifying the Ermingerðr visited by Rognvaldr with Ermengarda, see Nicholson 1976, 160–64.

<sup>2</sup> *Orkneyinga saga* names Rognvaldr as joint author (with the Icelander, Hallr Þórarinsson) of *Háttalykill inn forni* (p. 185). Rognvaldr's authorship (or equally, the saga author's belief in it) of this *clavis metrica*, a catalogue of skaldic metres itself following a Continental tradition of Latin verse catalogues, makes plausible the saga's suggestion of his interest in and willingness to experiment with unfamiliar poetic forms.

<sup>3</sup> For example, Jónas Kristjánsson: 'The suggestion would be that the suspect stanzas were composed neither by Kormákr nor by the author of the saga, but by a man of some learning who wanted to add spice to oral tales that were current about the tenth-century poet' (1988, 228).

The troubadour influence apparently discernible in the verses of Rognvaldr and his companions is partly suggested by their prose context. The early-thirteenth-century saga author presumably knew of the Provençal custom of composing verse homage to a patroness, and may have consciously constructed his episode to suggest this. This is particularly clear in the sequence placed after Rognvaldr and his companions leave Narbonne, in which, by way of entertainment (*sátu þeir þá ok drukku ok váru allkátir* (p. 211), ‘then they sat drinking and were very cheerful’), they exchange verse tributes to Ermengarda (verses 56–58). As Andersson comments, ‘the fact that three men, with an air of perfect sociability, celebrate the same lady shows that they are merely playing at the courtly game. This game is never played in the North; no lady in Iceland or Norway is the object of half-serious homage from several skalds’ (1969, 15).

But the singularity largely depends on the context. As Meissner noted (1925, 146–47), the situation of two or more skalds exchanging verses on the same subject as a *jeu d'esprit* is found elsewhere in sagas; in chapter 85 of *Orkneyinga saga*, for instance, Rognvaldr composes a verse about a man depicted on a wall-hanging, and challenges Oddi to produce another verse on the same subject without repeating any of his words (pp. 202–03). The saga author adapts this convention to the subject of praise of a lady, thus ensuring that these verses are read in the ‘half-serious’ spirit suggested by Andersson, and that they lose any narrative function they may once have had. Placed together in this way, they read as a sampler of different styles of love.

It is argued that the content of these three verses is unusual for skaldic verse, showing parallels with troubadour themes. Rognvaldr’s own contribution to the triad (verse 56) declares that Ermengarda has commanded his crusade:

Orð skal Ermingerðar  
ítr drengr muna lengi;  
brúðr vill røkk, at riðim  
Ránheim til Jórðánar.  
En er aprt fara runnar  
unnviggs of haf sunnan,  
rístum, heim at hausti,  
hvalfrón til Nerbónar. (*Orkneyinga saga* 1965, 211)

Let the excellent man long remember Ermengarda’s words; the fine lady wishes us to sail to Jordan. But when seafarers come back across the sea from the south in autumn, we will come over the water to Narbonne.

Andersson considers the conception to be ‘of pure troubadour provenance’, and adds, ‘As far as I can see, the idea of an enterprise undertaken in the service of a lady is unparalleled in Norse poetry’ (1969, 19). In fact, comparable deference to a woman’s will, admittedly instructing the warrior how to fight, rather than directing his movements, is expressed in a verse spoken, according to *Heimskringla* and other Kings’ Sagas, by Haraldr harðráði before the battle of Stamford Bridge:

Krzúpum vér fyr vápna,  
valteigs, brókun eigi,  
svá bauð Hildr, at hjaldri,  
haldorð, í bug skjaldar.  
Hótt bað mik, þars móettusk,  
menskorð bera forðum,  
hlakkar íss ok hausar,  
hjalmstofn í gný malma.

*(Heimskringla 1941–51, III 188)<sup>4</sup>*

We will not creep in the presence of the din of weapons into battle in the shelter of the shield; so the faithful Hildr of the hawk’s land (woman) commanded; the necklace-bearer formerly bade me carry my helmet-support (head) high in the din of swords, where the ice of battle (weapons) and skulls met.

While the placing of verse 56 alongside those of Ármóðr and Oddi highlights its courtly deference, the reference to the pilgrimage associates it rather with the subsequent verses (59–75) describing Rognvaldr’s warlike exploits, which also refer to Ermengarda, in whose name, some verses imply, these deeds are done. The graceful suggestion that the enterprise is inspired by Ermengarda, and in particular the expectation aroused (though in the event unfulfilled) of a return to Narbonne, sets up a potential narrative frame for what follows, which is reinforced by the allusions to her in subsequent verses.

Rognvaldr’s first adulatory verse (55; see pp. 114–15) can also be linked with this sequence. Its incongruous periphrasis *átgjornum rauðk erni / ilka* ‘I reddened the hungry eagle’s claws’, often criticised as ridiculously inept, suggests that it, too, despite its apparently erotic focus, originated in a context dealing with warfare. Andersson calls it ‘a battle metaphor which is either comically inappropriate or, more likely, indicates that the stanza was composed à propos of a later battle, not at Ermengarde’s court, and was simply misplaced by the author of the saga’ (1969, 18).

Some have considered the assertiveness of Ármóðr’s verse 57, announcing his wish to sleep with Ermengarda, too crude to be acceptable in a

<sup>4</sup> For the context of the verse, see Finlay 1986, 27–28.

troubadour milieu, taking this as a mark of the skald's ineptitude in handling unfamiliar material:<sup>5</sup>

Ek mun Ermingerði,  
nema qnnur skop verði,  
margr elr sorg of svinna,  
síðan aldri finna.  
Værak sæll, ef ek svæfa,  
sýn væri þat gæfa,  
brúðr hefr allfagrt enni,  
eina nóttr hjá henni. (*Orkneyinga saga* 1965, 212)

I will never see Ermengarda again unless another fate is to be; many suffer sorrow because of the wise lady. I would be happy if I could sleep—that would be clear good fortune; the lady has a really beautiful brow—one night at her side.

But the directness can be paralleled in troubadour verse, especially since it is balanced within the stanza by the more familiar declaration of unsatisfied love. A stanza by Raimbaut d'Aurenga (works dated c.1162–73) includes explicit sexual reference alongside grandiose evaluation comparable with that of the following verse attributed to Oddi, demonstrating that the two postures are not irreconcilable:

Ben aurai, dompna, grand honor  
Si ja de vos m'es jutgada  
Honranssa que sotz cobertor  
Vos tengas nud'embrassada;  
Car vos valetz las meillors cen,  
Qu'ieu non sui sobregabaire.  
Sol del pretz ai mon cor gauzen  
Plus que s'era emperaire!

I shall indeed, lady, have great honour if ever the privilege is adjudged me by you of holding you under the cover, naked in my arms, for you are worth the hundred best together, and in this praise I'm not exaggerating; in that merit alone does my heart rejoice more than if I were emperor. (Press 1971, 112–13)

Andersson gives further troubadour analogues (1969, 13 (n. 16) and 21); see pp. 123–27 below.

The unusual end-rhymed verse form of Oddi's verse may be a further indication of foreign influence. This type of end-rhyme (lines rhyming in

<sup>5</sup> Gerd Wolfgang Weber presumably has this verse in mind in commenting: 'The coarse and outspoken sexuality of the skaldic stanzas produced on the occasion has little to do with *amor cortois* (though it is "inspired" by the subject)' (1986, 436, n. 56).

pairs) is described by Snorri as *in minzta runhenda* (Snorri Sturluson 1991, 34–36, and Appendix, 86–88). But *runhenda* of the same type is also found in *Orkneyinga saga* in a verse attributed to Hallr Þórarinsson (p. 183, v. 42) and in one attributed to Rognvaldr (p. 235, v. 80), neither verse associated with the visit to southern France.

It has been suggested that the submissive tone of verse 58, in which Oddi declares himself unworthy of Ermengarda, is an answer, and implied reproof, to Ármóðr. The poet's humble stance is unlike the usual skaldic self-assertion, and could be an imitation of a troubadour's submission to his lady:

Trautt erum vér, sem ek vætti,  
verðir Ermingerðar,  
veitk, at horsk má heita  
hlaðgrund konungr sprunda. (*Orkneyinga saga* 1965, 212)

I am hardly, as I think, worthy of Ermengarda; I know that the wise lady may be called king among women.

Andersson drily remarks, 'This is of course true, but it would not have occurred to him to make the point at a Scandinavian court' (1969, 20). The reference to the lady as *konungr* enhances the parallel, since it could translate the masculine term *midons* 'lord', applied by troubadours to their ladies in token that their service in love was analogous to submissission to a feudal lord. For example, from Bernart de Ventadorn (*fl. c.1145–75*), who may have been one of the troubadours under the patronage of Ermengarda:<sup>6</sup>

Lo vers mi porta, Corona,  
Lai a midons a Narbona;  
Que tuih sei faih son enter,  
C'om no.n pot dire folatge.

Take for me the poem, Corona, there to my lady in Narbonne; for all her deeds are perfect, and one cannot speak folly of her. (Press 1971, 72–73)

But it should also be noted that the theme of 'worthiness' is echoed, and Oddi's humility seemingly contradicted, by a verse attributed to Rognvaldr in the next chapter of the saga (verse 63). In self-congratulatory mode, the poet anticipates an early reunion with a woman, celebrates the trouncing of a Spanish horde, and concludes that *therefore* they are (he is?), after all, worthy of Ermengarda:

<sup>6</sup> William D. Paden argues against the generally accepted view of *midons* as a masculine term implying feudal submission (1975, 33–36). Sarah Kay distinguishes between the troubadours' largely misogynist representation of the feminine, and the 'mixed', androgynous gender attributed to the *domna* (1990, 86–101).

Vón ák, út á Spáni  
 var skjótt rekinn flótti,  
 flyði margr af mœði  
 menlundr, konu fundar.  
 Því erum vér, at vóru  
 væn hljóð kveðin þjóðum,  
 valr tók vøll at hylja,  
 verðir Ermingerðar. (*Orkneyinga saga* 1965, 219)

I expect to see the woman; those fleeing were speedily pursued in Spain; many a man fled in weariness. We are worthy of Ermengarda, because splendid noises (of battle) were made to people; corpses began to hide the battlefield.

The parallelism of this with verse 58 suggests that they both belong to the narrative sequence initiated by verse 56, said to be spoken earlier by Rognvaldr, in which he asserts Ermengarda to be the instigator of his journey south (considered above, pp. 108–09). Seen in this light, Oddi's tribute to Ermengarda loses much of its air of moral evaluation and extravagant devotion: having been set a task by the lady, the travellers are unworthy of her approval; once it is being achieved, Rognvaldr's verse asserts, they are worthy of her (and, he implies, expect a prompt reward). Once again, the relationship between these two verses forms a narrative link, attaching the anecdotal material about the travellers' adventures to the overarching theme of Ermengarda's patronage.

Andersson sees continuing, though reduced, troubadour influence in the subsequent verses:

These stanzas represent a contamination of *lausavísa* and troubadour traditions inasmuch as they are inspired by particular situations (usually battles), like the *lausavísa*, but at the same time extend the courtly fiction of the crusade stanza at Narbonne by suggesting that Rognvaldr is performing his exploits in the name of his lady (1969, 21).

But if the notion of Ermengarda as patroness of the pilgrimage is a ‘courtly fiction’, it is one built on an existing *dróttkvætt* type, in which a verse about battle is addressed to or refers in passing to a woman. Many stanzas describing masculine activity are addressed to or imply a female audience (Frank 1988). The use by Saxo Grammaticus of the theme of masculine activity undertaken to win female approval in what may be a paraphrase of a skaldic poem suggests that the idea was early and universal in Norse poetry:

Ergo leves totoque manus conamine nisi  
 rimemur mare, castra prius classemque petentes,  
 quam roseum liquidis Titan caput exserat undis,  
 ut, cum rem rumor vulgaverit atque Frogertha

noverit egregio partam conamine prædam,  
blandior in nostrum moveat præcordia votum.

(*Saxonis Gesta Danorum* 1931, 148–49)

Let us speed then and churn the sea with all  
the strength of our hands, seeking our ships and the camp  
before the sun has pushed his rosy head  
from the clear waves, so that when the story is known  
and Frogerth hears of the plunder won through our gallant  
attempt, she may turn her heart more sweetly to our prayers.

(Fisher 1979, 168)

In his discussion of Norse love poetry, Bjarni Einarsson himself quotes several examples of this motif, which he describes as

sá siður norskra og íslenzkra skálða að fornu að nefna konu í vísu þar sem skáldið lýsir þekraunum sínum, oftast í vondu veðri á sjó eða þá í bardaga (Bjarni Einarsson 1961, 36).

the practice of ancient Norse and Icelandic poets of naming a woman in a verse in which the poet describes his ordeals, most often in bad weather at sea or in battle.

But he allows no connexion between verses in this tradition, which he acknowledges to be old, and those he considers to be influenced by the new Provençal fashion for the expression of emotion:

Í vísum af þessu tagi verður ekki vart tilfinningasemi, ástarþráar eða harms, og á þessi kveðskapartízka því ekkert skylt við ástaskáldskapartízkuna frá Provence og er sennilega miklu eldri í norrænum skáldskap, en ekkert er því til fyrirstöðu að hvorritveggja hafi verið fylgt jöfnum höndum af sömu skáldum (1961, 37).

In verses of this kind there is no evidence of emotion, love-longing or grief, and thus this poetic fashion has no connexion with that of Provençal love poetry and is probably much older in northern poetry, but there is no reason why both fashions should not have been followed in equal measure by the same poets.

The arbitrariness of this distinction is well illustrated by the verses associated with Rognvaldr's crusade. While some, in traditional fashion, refer only perfunctorily to the woman, others seem to incorporate troubadour themes in their references to her, while retaining the conventional interweaving of these with 'masculine' themes. This demonstrates that any emotional expression borrowed from foreign sources was superimposed upon, rather than being completely separate from, the older tradition. But it remains, in any case, a matter of assertion that all expressions of emotion reveal foreign influence.

In verses 59 and 66 of *Orkneyinga saga*, mention of the woman is contrastive, according to a conventional opposition of seafaring or battle

to aspects of pleasure and comfort represented by the woman. In verses 69 and 75, deeds are done in the expectation that the lady will hear of them. Only verse 61, where the poet specifically claims to ‘feed the eagle’ because of his love for the lady, verse 63 (quoted above, pp. 111–12), and the vaguer reference of verse 64 suggest explicit deference to the lady’s will.

It is likely that these verses originated as a sequence, whether composed by Rognvaldr or not, in which the existing skaldic convention of address or reference to a woman in poems about exclusively masculine activity was combined with and exaggerated by the troubadour conceit of deeds undertaken in a lady’s service. The theme is used to inaugurate and link a narrative sequence describing three self-contained incidents: the siege of a castle said (in the prose) to be in Galicia; a stormy passage through the straits of Gibraltar; and an assault on an Arab ship. After this incident, references to Ermengarda and to Narbonne cease abruptly, signifying, presumably, not the notorious fickleness of sailors in love, but the abandonment or loss of the original series of source verses. From this point the verses assembled by the saga author are more diverse and miscellaneous in character.

In the case of the three verses uttered in Ermengarda’s praise by Rognvaldr, Oddi and Ármóðr, it seems that the saga author, with the aim of creating an episode in which three skalds gracefully exchange verse tributes to a lady in troubadour fashion, has broken up and reassembled the sequence, cutting three of the verses loose from what was originally a narrative context, so that they appear to be primarily concerned with love.

That the theme of deference is literary convention and no more is suggested by the discrepancy between the actual content of Rognvaldr’s verse 56 and the prose narrative. The assertion that Ermengarda instigated the pilgrimage is contradicted by the account of Rognvaldr’s deciding to undertake it when in Norway long before (*Orkneyinga saga* 1965, 194), and the intention expressed in the verse of returning to Narbonne, though it is also recorded in the prose (p. 211), is never adhered to or attempted.

Troubadour influence in the first ‘erotic’ verse attributed to Rognvaldr (verse 55) is also less obvious than has been claimed. Andersson finds it uncharacteristic of skaldic verse, according to his ‘very tentative and sketchy suggestions toward a morphology of Norse love poetry’ (Andersson 1969, 25), largely because the stanza progresses from generalised praise (in itself not characteristically skaldic) to the more concrete, recognisably Norse, detail of the second helming:

Víst ’r at frá berr flestu  
Fróða meldrs at góðu

vel skúfaðra vífa  
vqxtr þinn, konan svinna.  
Skorð lætr hár á herðar  
haukvallar sé falla,  
átgjörnum rauðk erni  
ilka, gult sem silki. (*Orkneyinga saga* 1965, 210)

It is certain, wise lady, that your hair (or stature) surpasses that of almost all women with locks of Fróði's meal (gold); the prop of the hawk's land (lady) lets her golden hair fall on her shoulders like silk; I reddened the ravenous eagle's claws.

This reverses what Andersson calls a 'consistent feature of Norse love poetry . . . the tendency to work from the immediate situation to an emotional expression' (1969, 22). But Roberta Frank's suggestion that the verse's unusual construction results from the combination of two helmings from originally diverse sources (Frank 1978, 167) casts doubt on Andersson's argument from 'morphology'. It strengthens, though, the probability that the saga author remodelled a sequence of verses primarily about battle, including the second helming of this verse, by superimposing on it a helming more appropriate to troubadour praise (though there is no distinct parallel). It is not out of the question that the saga author composed the helming himself to create this impression.

On the other hand, the saga takes over-seriously the troubadour pose of devotion to a lady by portraying Ermengarda as a young woman with whom Rognvaldr flirts, and whose advisers suggest a marriage with him, rather than, as in historical fact, a mature married (or perhaps widowed) lady (Meissner 1925, 163, n.). The troubadours usually (in Bjarni Einarsson's view, invariably) addressed their tributes to married women (see pp. 127–31 below).

Thus the episode, while including some verses apparently composed under troubadour influence, shows much stronger evidence of a saga author well versed in such poems and the contexts in which they were composed, shaping his material to reflect this interest. This process seems to have included giving prominence and a narrative context to the theme of praise for a woman, which may have been inspired by Provençal models. But it also involved the minimising and disruption of a characteristically Scandinavian convention: the interweaving of address or reference to a woman with martial or active narrative.

Rognvaldr's visit to Narbonne is a well-attested but isolated instance of cultural contact between Scandinavia (and, indirectly, Iceland) and southern France. Klaus von See points to the possible contribution to the shaping

of *Orkneyinga saga* made by men known to have had contact with southern France and/or its literature:

Selbst bei der endgültigen Redaktion der *Orkneyinga saga* haben vielleicht noch Impulse aus dieser Richtung mitgewirkt: Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson, der einzige Nordmann, von dem wir wissen, daß er später—um 1200—noch einmal ins Land der Troubadours gelangt ist, hatte enge Beziehungen zu den Orkneyjar und ihrem Bischof Bjarni Kolbeinsson. Dieser Bjarni wiederum ist der Dichter der berühmten *Jómsvíkingadrápa*, die in ihrem Rahmenmotiv Spuren des Troubadourstils trägt. Und von beiden—Bjarni und Hrafn—is in der Forschung gelegentlich vermutet worden, daß sie an der Abfassung der *Orkneyinga saga* beteiligt gewesen seien (Anne Holtsmark, *Edda* 37, 1937, S.1 ff.). (von See 1978–79, 89)

Impulses in this direction were perhaps still at work even in the final redaction of *Orkneyinga saga*: Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson, the only Norseman whom we know to have later—about 1200—revisited the land of the troubadours, had close connections with the Orkneys and their bishop Bjarni Kolbeinsson. This same Bjarni, moreover, is the poet of the famous *Jómsvíkingadrápa*, which shows traces of troubadour style in its structural frame. And it has occasionally been conjectured by scholars of both—Bjarni and Hrafn—that they were involved in the compilation of *Orkneyinga saga*.

But the Icelander Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson, who visited the shrine of St. Gilles near Arles before 1200, during a pilgrimage to Compostella and Rome, is the only other Norseman known to have been there in the relevant period (*Hrafn's saga Sveinbjarnarsonar* 1987, 4; Foote 1959, 32, n. 85).

Even if the region had been more commonly visited, it is unlikely that even a French-speaking viking would have had enough understanding of the Occitan language to appreciate complex troubadour verse forms. Ian McDougall has investigated the extent to which Norse pilgrims understood the vernacular languages of the countries they passed through and, for want of any substantial evidence, surmises that their linguistic competence was limited and functional (1987–88, 211–17). The fact that Rognvaldr took with him Bishop Vilhjálmr of Orkney, who had studied in Paris, to act as interpreter, does not inspire confidence (*Orkneyinga saga* 1965, 204); on the other hand, the saga narrative has the Galician lord Guðifreyr, infiltrating Rognvaldr's camp disguised as a beggar, address the Norsemen in French: *ok mælti á volsku; þat skilðu þeir helzt*, ‘and spoke in French; they understood that best’ (*Orkneyinga saga* 1965, 214).

Evidence of the contact of Icelanders with France as a whole, or rather the interpretation of this evidence, is controversial. In their debate in *Mediaeval Scandinavia*, Theodore Andersson and Bjarni Einarsson exchange anecdotes of medieval Icelanders visiting or studying in France. To

Andersson, the list is ‘quickly ticked off’ and ‘does not give the impression of a lively Franco-Icelandic intercourse during the period in question’ (1969, 14). But Bjarni rightly challenges this (1971, 31–33). In a cultural community as small and isolated as medieval Iceland, an educated and influential individual could have made more impact than the small number of instances might suggest. But the fact that most recorded contacts took place, not unexpectedly, in northern rather than southern France suggests that it would be more realistic to investigate the possible contacts of saga literature not with the troubadours themselves, but with their northern French followers and counterparts, the *trouvères*.

The implication of Bjarni Einarsson’s citing instances of northern French contact, and dealing with ‘troubadour’ themes in a very general way, is that he is using the term ‘troubadour’ loosely to cover northern as well as southern poets. While this is a convenient shorthand, it obscures the somewhat damaging point that *trouvère* poetry is generally dated from c.1150, some fifty years later than the earliest surviving troubadour poems, the fashion having taken some time to spread from the south. This narrows the chronological limits within which French love verse could have influenced the sagas of the early thirteenth century in Iceland. Bjarni insists, however, that he does envisage direct influence from Provence at a much earlier date:

Vi kan ikke med sikkerhed vide hvornår den franske—egentlig den provençalske—kærlighedsdigtning begyndte at blive kendt og få indflydelse i Norden. Det kan næppe afvises at det kan være sket så tidligt som ca. 1100 (1976, 18).

We cannot know for certain when the French—especially the Provençal—love poetry began to be known and to have influence in the North. It can hardly be ruled out that it could have been as early as c.1100.

### III *The troubadours and Norse love poetry*

Bjarni Einarsson’s argument for the derivation of love themes in skaldic verse from troubadour lyrics has been criticised for failing to locate compelling and detailed parallels in form and content (Andersson 1969, 16–17; Frank 1978, 168). The failure is not surprising, since in his exposition of love verse (excluding, for the moment, the verse in the poets’ sagas, to which he returns in later chapters), not a line of troubadour verse is cited or referred to specifically (1961, 7–10, 18–39; 1976, 13–16, 18–24).

Bjarni argues so generally because he believes that *any* verse expressing male emotion or love-longing is alien to Icelandic traditions and must,

therefore, have a foreign derivation, from ‘the strange new French literary fashion which generally made the man passionately in love, even languishing to the degree of becoming depressed and almost sick. What an amazing idea that must have seemed to most Icelanders about the year 1200!’ (1971, 41). The claim that such sentiments were unknown in earlier Icelandic verse is circular, dependent on his having rounded up as many such examples as possible and declared them, like the poets’ sagas, to be the inauthentic fruits of foreign influence.

In *Skáldasögur*, Bjarni cites some forty complete or fragmentary stanzas including love as a theme, attributed in the Kings’ Sagas, *Snorra Edda* or the *Third Grammatical Treatise* to eighteen named or anonymous poets. Bjarni is justified in his scepticism about the dating of these verses to the ninth, tenth or eleventh centuries, and in arguing that their placing in the mouths of such historical figures as Haraldr harðráði or Óláfr Haraldsson hardly guarantees their authenticity. He is on less firm ground in doubting the attribution of a verse *because* of its use of a theme supposedly characteristic of the troubadours, as in this example:

Illugi Bryndælaskáld er . . . með vissu elleftu aldar maður og verður því ekki trúð að hann hafi kveðið ástarvísabrotið sem honum er eignað . . . því að það má telja með sigildum dæmum ástarharmatízkunnar (1961, 38).

Illugi Bryndælaskáld was . . . undoubtedly a man of the eleventh century, and therefore it cannot be believed that he spoke the fragment of a love verse attributed to him . . . because it may be considered to be among the classic examples of the fashion of love-longing.

But the foreignness of love-longing as a theme, and indeed the assumption that it is characteristic of Provençal verse, is not closely examined either by Bjarni or by others seeking to establish a southern connection, such as Meissner, who ascribed the presence of the motif of unrequited longing in verses attributed to Haraldr harðráði to influence received during Haraldr’s early southern travels:

Es kann natürlich keinem zweifel unterliegen, dass diese strophen schon unter dem einflusse fremder dichtung stehn, wie besonders das motiv des unbelohnten schmachts zeigt. Da Harald in seiner jugend ein abenteuerleben geführt hat und weit in der welt umhergezogen ist, kann eine solche nachahmung grade bei ihm nicht auffallen (Meissner 1923, 240).

There can, of course, be no doubt that these strophes have already come under the influence of foreign poetry, as is shown especially by the motif of unfulfilled desire. Since Harald in his youth led an adventurous life and travelled widely in the world, such imitation is scarcely surprising in his case particularly.

Many of the verses quoted by Bjarni do reveal one or both of the themes which, he claims, derive from troubadour verse: the suffering caused by love, and love of a married woman. It is worth examining here the extent to which each of these themes is, in fact, characteristic of the troubadours, and comparing their treatment of each with that of the Norse verses cited.

#### A. Love-longing

One of Bjarni's propositions is that the fashion for importing the theme of unrequited love into the incongruous context of the generally historical Kings' Sagas was inspired by the Icelanders' knowledge of *Jómsvíkingadrápa*, believed to be written in the late twelfth century by Bjarni Kolbeinsson, Bishop of Orkney, which incorporates into its account of the deeds of the Jómsvikings a refrain lamenting the grief caused to the poet by his love for a nobleman's wife. As in the verses attributed to Rognvaldr and his poets, this erotic theme is interwoven with the martial narrative, to the point, in *Jómsvíkingadrápa*, of baroque syntactical disruption, since the *stef* occupies lines 1, 4, 5 and 8 of the stanzas it appears in (vv. 15, 19, 23, 27, 31 and 35):

*Ein drepr fyr mér allri,  
ótrauðr á lög skeiðum  
orr þengill bað ýta,  
ítrmanns kona teiti;  
góð aett of kømr grimmu,  
gekk herr á skip, darra  
hinn 'r kunni gný gerva,  
gæðings at mér striði.* (Skj. B II 4, v. 15)

One destroys all happiness for me—the bold prince willingly ordered the ship to be pushed out to sea—a nobleman's wife; the fair daughter of a lord brings cruel—the army, well-versed in battle, embarked—suffering to me.

The syntactical arrangement is that characterised by Snorri as *stælt*, 'inlaid', and exemplified in *Háttatal* 12 (Snorri Sturluson 1991, 10); Snorri's verse, however, does not juxtapose contrasting themes in the dramatic manner of *Jómsvíkingadrápa*.

Whatever the inspiration for the erotic element in *Jómsvíkingadrápa*, the interweaving of it, without narrative explanation, into the account of warlike deeds, as in Rognvaldr's verses, suggests at least a highly individualistic use of any troubadour influence. The lack of overt explanation for the erotic theme suggests that the inclusion of such contrasting material was either an established convention, or self-explanatory in the light of one. That is, it was developed from the more straightforward model already

described, in which a woman is invoked or referred to in verses describing male activity (see p. 112 above).

If, as Bjarni Einarsson claims, any expression of love-longing or other emotion in skaldic verse were evidence of a new romantic interest inspired by troubadour verse in the late twelfth century, we might expect a degree of variety and exploration in the emotions expressed. Instead, the examples he quotes reveal a remarkable uniformity in conception and phrasing, whether in anonymous fragments devoid of narrative context:

Aura stendr fyr órum  
eik fagrbúin leiki

*(Skáldskaparmál 1952, 178; Skj. B I 175)*

The finely dressed oak of gold (woman) prevents my happiness;  
or in verses embedded in circumstantial accounts of the amorous affairs of kings, like the one attributed to Magnús berfœttr (1093–1103) in *Morkinskinna* and elsewhere:

Sú's ein es mér meinar  
Maktildr ok vekr hildi  
(mór drekkr suðr ór sórum  
sveita) leik ok teiti;  
sá kennir mér svanni,  
sín lñnd es verr røndu  
(sverð bitu Hognna hurðir)  
hvítjarpr sofa lítit. (*Skj. B I 402*)

She, Maktildr, is the only one who hinders my pleasure and happiness and awakens strife; the gull of blood drinks from wounds in the south; the lady with light-brown hair(?), who defends her lands with a shield, teaches me to sleep little; swords cut Hogni's doors (shields).

In this verse and others, emotional suffering is baldly stated and interwoven with contrasted material; its use is plainly formulaic. Most common are variations on the formula ‘the woman causes me grief / prevents my happiness’; we may also mention the type *alin erumk björk at bqlvi / bands*, ‘the birch tree of the ribbon was born to cause me grief’ which occurs in a verse attributed to Óláfr Haraldsson (*Skj. B I 210–11*), and, arguably, in a verse attributed to King Magnús góði:

Margr kveðr sér at sorgum  
sverðrjóðr alin verða  
—uggik allít seggja  
ótta—búkarls dóttur.  
Enn ef einhver bannar  
eld-Gefn fyr mér svefna,

vist veldr siklings systir  
svinn andvøku minni. (Kock 1946, I 155; 1923–44, §808)

Many a warrior declares a farmer's daughter to be born to cause him sorrows—I have no fear of men taking fright; but if any fire-Gefn prevents me from sleeping, it is the king's wise sister who causes my wakefulness.

The text here is that of E. A. Kock, with the emendation of MS *alin*, which Finnur Jónsson normalises as *alinn*, translating 'Mangen en kriger erklærer, at døtre af bønder volder dem (elskovs)bekymringer—jeg tvivler meget lidt om den af mændene nærede frygt' (*Skj.* B I 304). Kock's emendation is presumably based on the plausible assumption that the verse belongs to a familiar type in which *alin* referred to a woman. This recalls the verse attributed to Gunnlaugr ormstunga in *Gunnlaugs saga* and in *Skáldskaparmál*:

Alin vas rýgr at rógi,  
runnr olli því Gunnar,  
lög vask auðs at eiga  
óðgjarn, fira börnum. (*Borgfirðinga sögur* 1938, 96, v. 19)

The lady was born to bring strife—the bush of Gunnr (warrior) caused that; I was madly eager to possess the log of wealth (woman)—to the sons of men.

Given that invocation of or reference to women seems to have been a deeply ingrained tradition in skaldic poetry, we cannot say when the theme of unhappy love was added to it. Bjarni Einarsson implies that the uniformity of these verses makes it likely that they are the products of one time and one literary fashion:

Ekki má taka það sem sagnfræðilegan sannleika þegar höfundar fornsagna leggja þessar vísur eða aðrar sem sama marki eru brenndar, í munn níundu, tíundu eða elleftu aldar manna, jafnvel þótt í hlut eigi menn sem með vissu hafa verið hin merkstu skáld (1961, 38).

It cannot be taken as historical truth when the authors of sagas place these verses, or others which are branded with the same mark, in the mouths of men of the ninth, tenth or eleventh centuries, even if men who were undoubtedly the most celebrated poets are involved.

But the formulaic nature of these allusions argues against, rather than for, their novelty in the late twelfth century. Their standardisation suggests that they belong to a long-standing poetic tradition. In a context where references to women provided a contrastive backdrop to the celebration of traditionally male activity, it would not be surprising if the negative aspects of men's relationships with women (love as a cause of grief, women born to create trouble for men) arose as a theme independently of foreign influence.

In any case, how characteristic of troubadour verse is the theme of love-longing? Bjarni singles it out as the distinguishing characteristic:

Skýrasta auðkenni hinnar suðrænu ástaskáldskapartízu sem á rætur sínar að rekja til Provence, er það að skálđið kveður um ástarharm sinn, söknuð og þrá út af konu (1961, 11).

The most distinctive feature of the southern style of love poetry whose roots are to be traced to Provence is that the poet speaks of his unhappy love, his sense of loss and his desire because of a woman.

As already noted, Bjarni fails to support this characterisation with references to particular poems (see p. 117 above), relying rather on generalisations such as that of C. S. Lewis: 'The lover is always abject. Obedience to his lady's lightest wish, however whimsical, and silent acquiescence in her rebukes, however unjust, are the only virtues he dares to claim' (Lewis 1936, 2). But a survey of troubadour verse reveals, as one might expect of a refined and subtle verse tradition which took love as its principal subject, a wide spectrum of attitudes. Among these, frustrated desire is indeed important but not universal, and is itself expressed in a variety of modes.

Over the nearly two hundred and fifty years in which the flourishing of troubadour love poetry is documented (though the earliest surviving poems presuppose an already well-established tradition), changes in style and treatment took place, as L. T. Topsfield outlines:

In the first half of the twelfth century we find a primarily experimental and seeking type of poetry . . . This early poetry . . . is often more abstract than worldly in intention and is concerned more with the personal quest for joy and the absolute ideal of an ultimate happiness than with conformity to social convention. In the second 'stage' from about 1150 to 1180 . . . there appears to be . . . a clash for some of the greatest and more individually minded troubadours between the demand from their noble audiences for poetry of 'courtly love' in the light, easy style and their own inclination towards the composition of more reflective poetry. This conflict appears to be resolved in the period from about 1180 to 1209, by the victory of the 'light', courtly type of poetry . . . and in the changed world of the late thirteenth century love for the courtly lady or *domna* is transformed into love for the Virgin (Topsfield 1975, 2–3).

Only the earlier stages of this evolution are relevant to the question of influence on saga literature. But the work of even a single poet may reveal a variety of attitudes to love, depending on the seriousness of the treatment in particular poems and, evidently, the specific audience addressed. Peter Dronke distinguishes two styles of address in the poems of the earliest known troubadour, Guilhem IX of Aquitaine:

While some of Guillaume's songs are intended for a mixed audience of lords and ladies, who laid claim to *cortezia*, others are explicitly addressed to his *companhos*—knights and soldiers, a company of men only, whose literary taste can hardly have been over-delicate (Dronke 1978, 110).

For this less fastidious audience, Guilhem produces bold and assertive parodies of the refined hyperbole apparently already characterising the love verse of his time, as in his light-hearted exaggeration of the conceit of *amor de lonh*, love for a distant, or even unseen, beloved:

Amigu'ai ieu, no sai qui s'es,  
Qu'anc non la vi, si m'ajut fes! . . .  
  
Anc non la vi et am la fort,  
Anc no n'aic dreyt ni no.m fes tort;  
Quan non la vey, be m'en deport,  
    No.m pretz un jau,  
Qu'ie.n sai gensor et bellazor,  
    E que mais vau. (Press 1971, 16)

Who is my love? I can't conceive—  
I've never seen her, I believe . . .  
  
Never have seen, yet love her well:  
She's never done me good or ill;  
I haven't met her, so I feel  
    Quite free of care—  
For I know a better lady still,  
    Surpassing fair! (Translated in Dronke 1978, 112)

Guilhem elsewhere more seriously celebrates a mutual, and consummated, physical love:

La nostr' amor vai enaussi  
Com la branca de l'albespi  
Qu'esta sobre l'arbre tremblan,  
La nuoit, a la ploja ez al gel,  
Tro l'endeman, que.l sols s'espans  
Per las fueillas verz e.l ramel.  
  
Enquer me membra d'un mati  
Que nos fezem de guerra fi,  
E que.m donet un don tan gran,  
Sa drudari' e son anel:  
Enquer me lais Dieus viure tan  
C'aja mas manz soz so mantel! (Hill and Bergin 1973, I 8)

Our love together goes the way  
of the branch on the hawthorn-tree,  
trembling in the night, a prey  
to the hoar-frost and the showers,  
till next morning, when the sun  
enfolds the green leaves and the boughs.

One morning I remember still  
we put an end to skirmishing,  
and she gave me so great a gift:  
her loving body, and her ring.  
May God keep me alive until  
my hands again move in her mantle!

(Translated in Dronke 1978, 116)

The idea of unattainable love is most famously, yet mysteriously, expressed by Jaufre Rudel, whose repeated address to an *amor de lonh* ‘distant love’ has frequently been interpreted literally, as it was by his thirteenth-century biographer:

Jaufres Rudels de Blaia si fo molt gentils hom . . . et enamoret.se de la comtessa de Tripol ses vezer, per lo ben q’el n’auzi dir als pelegrins que vengron d’Antiochia; e fetz de lieis mains vers ab bons sons, ab paubres motz.

E, per voluntat de liei vezer, el se crozet e mes.se en mar; e pres.lo malautia en la nau, e fo condug a Tripol, en un alberc, per mort. E fo faich asaber a la comtessa, et ella venc ad el, al sieu lieich, e pres.lo entre sos bratz; et el saup q’ella era la comtessa, e recobret lo vezer e.l flazar, e lauzet Dieu e.l grazí qe.ill avia la vida sostenguda tro q’el l’ages vista; et enaissi el moric entre sos bratz. (Hill and Bergin 1973, I 31)

Jaufre Rudel de Blaia was a very noble man . . . and he fell in love with the Countess of Tripoli without seeing her, because of the good which he had heard tell of her by the pilgrims who returned from Antioch. And he composed many poems about her with good melodies but with poor words. And resolved to see her, he took the cross and sailed; and he was taken ill on board ship and was taken to Tripoli, to an inn, as if he were dead.

And it was made known to the countess, and she came to him, to his bedside, and took him in her arms. And he knew that she was the countess, and he immediately recovered his sight and his sense of smell and praised God who had sustained his life until he had seen her. And thus he died in her arms. (Egan 1984, 62)

The romantic idea of a love so exalted as not to depend on even the sight, let alone physical enjoyment, of its object seems the ultimate in idealised refinement. But in a less literal reading, this love can be seen as one side of a more complex polarisation: ‘a low, furtive, adulterous and humiliating type of love’ (Press 1971, 28) is rejected for the more spiritual ‘distant

love'. The precise value of this concept is, however, deliberately left obscure. In any case, the poet does not suffer straightforwardly from frustrated physical desire, but voluntarily turns away towards a higher good:

Amors, alegre.m part de vos  
Per so qu'ar vau mo mielhs queren;  
E fuy en tant aventuros  
Qu'enqueras n'ay mon cor jauzen.

Love, gaily I leave you because now I go seeking my highest good; yet by this much was I fortunate that my heart still rejoices for it. (Press 1971, 38–39)

The beloved woman, rather than imperiously rejecting the poet's desire, shares his lack of fulfilment:

Ben sai c'anc de lei no.m jauzi,  
Ni ja de mi no.s jauzira.

I know well that I never had joy of her, nor will she ever have joy of me. (Press 1971, 36–37)

The stance of exaggerated humility commonly considered characteristic of the troubadours is found in the verse of Bernart de Ventadorn; but as Peter Dronke has argued, he artfully employs the pose to woo the beloved towards the goal of sexual fulfilment (Dronke 1978, 121). The poet's apparent timidity is expressed so as to give full weight to her sexuality:

Can eu vei midons ni l'esgar,  
Li seu bel olh tan be l'estan  
Per pauc me tenh car eu vas leis no cor.  
Si feira eu, si no fos per päor,  
C'anc no vi cors melhs talhatz ni depens  
Ad ops d'amar sña tan greus ni lens.

When I see my lady and behold her, her lovely eyes so well become her that I can scarce hold back from running towards her. So would I, were it not for fear, for I never saw person more well-shaped and fashioned for love to be yet so slow and reluctant. (Press 1971, 80–81)

Bernart articulates the code of courtly behaviour which was probably evolved at the court of Eleanor of Poitou, and which elevated the *domna* or beloved lady to a plane above her suitor, whose service of her demanded courtly virtues of humility and patience (Topsfield 1975, 122). Yet even his expression of this distance from the lady has a sensual emphasis suggesting a more direct attitude to love than that of his predecessors:

Be la volgra sola trobar,  
Que dormis, o.n fezes semblan,

Per qu'e.lh embles un doutz baizar,  
 Pus no valh tan qu'eu lo.lh deman.  
 Per Deu, domna, pauc esplecham d'amor!  
 Vai s'en lo tems e perdem lo melhor.  
 Parlar degram ab cubertz entresens  
 E, pus no.ns val arditz, valgues nos gens!

Well would I like to find her alone while she slept or pretended to, that I might steal from her a sweet kiss, since I'm not so worthy as to ask it of her. By God, lady, little of love do we achieve! Time goes by and we lose the best of it; we should speak with secret signs and, since boldness avails us not, may guile avail us! (Press 1971, 80–83)

Bernart's pose of unfulfilled desire is rooted in a sense of love's mutuality, set out manifesto-like in a lyric insisting on truthfulness in love:

En agradar et en voler  
 Es l'amors de dos fis amans.  
 Nula res no.i pot pro tener  
 Si.lh voluntatz non es egaus.

In accord and in assent is the love of two noble lovers. Nothing can be of profit in it if the will thereto is not mutual. (Press 1971, 66–67)

These examples from the lyrics of some early and well-known troubadours could be multiplied to illustrate further the diversity of the treatment of love in troubadour verse. The work of even the earliest known troubadour shows that the established convention of love from afar could be treated on more than one level; by parodying it, poets not only question the value of unattainable love, but undercut it with the hint of a more approachable love closer at hand ('For I know a better lady still, surpassing fair!'). Jaufre Rudel's more serious development of the theme gives *amors* a mystical value, such that, while of its nature it remains unfulfilled, experiencing it furnishes the poet with *joi*:

La dolors que per joi sana,  
 Don ja non vuelh qu'om m'en planha.

The pain which by joy is healed and for which I want no one ever to pity me. (Press 1971, 30–31)

Poets frequently echo this perception that unfulfilled love may be a positive and refining, rather than frustrating experience, an affirmation unparalleled in skaldic verse.

But as well as unfulfilled love, troubadours also, at times, celebrate a love which is reciprocated and physically experienced, even if only in fantasy. There are analogues to the formulaic lament of the Norse verses, 'the woman causes me grief', but this is one mood among many, often treated

ironically. Troubadour verse most evidently lacks the consistently negative tone of the skaldic references to the grief caused by women; the lyricism of the troubadours, and the emotional value given to even the unsuccessful pursuit of love, has no parallel in the skaldic verses cited by Bjarni Einarsson.

### B. Love of a married woman

Bjarni also emphasises the prevalence of the theme of love for another man's wife in troubadour poetry:

Hið einkennilegasta við ástakvæði trobadora var þó að venjulega voru þau kveðin um og til *eiginkvenna annarra manna*; hrein undantekning var ef kveðið var lofkvæði um ógefna mey (Bjarni Einarsson 1961, 9).

The strangest feature of troubadour love poems was that they were usually composed about, and for, *the wives of other men*; it was quite exceptional for a poem to be composed in praise of an unmarried girl.

He argues that this has inspired the *stef* of *Jómsvíkingadrápa* (*Ein drepr fyr mér allri . . . ítrmanns kona teiti*; see p. 119 above), and other skaldic verses, which he cites. But the theme is less prevalent in these verses than that of 'love-longing', and in some cases fugitive. The poet of the so-called *Stríðkeravísur*, only one stanza of which is preserved, in the 1609 version of *Snorra Edda* made by Magnús Ólafsson of Laufás, represents himself sitting miserably, wishing to hear the name *Stríðkeri* used of the woman he addresses. Only the accompanying seventeenth-century prose, however, explains that the name means 'widow': *pess kuadzt hann a van (j von) sitia, ad menn mundu kalla hana konuna eda eckiu, þad kallade hann . . . kiera jardarinnar* (Faulkes 1979, 375).

A verse attributed to 'Óláfr' (Pórðarson hvítaskáld?) in the mid-thirteenth-century *Third Grammatical Treatise* exemplifies punning, playing on *eigi* (negative / part of the verb 'to possess'), with reference to a husband's relationship with his wife; he will either possess her for a long time or not enjoy her for long:

Koenn njóti vel vænnar  
vinr minn konu sinnar,  
víst erat dapr of drósir  
drengr, ok eigi lengi. (*Skj. B II 110*)

May my wise friend have pleasure with his beautiful wife, and possess her for a long time (or, and not for long). Indeed, the man (the poet?) is not downcast about women.

Neither of these verses is definitely old enough to be relevant, or is unambiguously about a love story. But if they do refer to a man's love for

a married woman, their focus is the husband's desired absence or death, as if only the woman's reverting to single status could validate the poet's love. This compares with the concentration in the poets' sagas on the dispossessed lover's aggression towards the woman's husband.

Like the *Stríðkeravísur*, two verses attributed to Óláfr Haraldsson in *Flateyjarbók* are interpreted as referring to a married woman in the accompanying prose explication (*Flateyjarbók* 1860–68, III 237). The beloved woman must stay behind to wither *við galla grjótqlnis* (*Skj. B I* 210–11), apparently a kenning for winter, 'the flaw of the stone-bender (snake)'. But the prose explains *Galli* as the nickname of the woman's husband Þorvarðr (Kock 1923–44, §2773).

Bjarni's final example is a couplet attributed to Einarr (Skúlason?) in the *Third Grammatical Treatise* where it exemplifies *barbarismus* or *ofljóst*, 'excessively clear':

Víst erumk hermð á hesti  
hefr fljóð, ef vill, góðan.

(*Skj. B I* 456; *Third Grammatical Treatise* 174)

Indeed, I am angry with the horse; the woman has a good . . . if she wishes.

Once again, it is the prose commentary which interprets: *Víst hefi ek á Jóreiði pokka góðan, konu Mána*, 'I have taken a liking to Jóreið, Máni's wife'. It is striking that in all these cases, as in *Orkneyinga saga*, apparent similarity with a troubadour theme seems likely to have been superimposed on the verse by a prose author or commentator. I have argued elsewhere for a similar phenomenon in *Kormaks saga*, where the author of the prose at times seems to project a theme from the Tristan romance on a verse in which the theme cannot be detected (Finlay 1994, 333).

This evidence for the theme of love for a married woman in skaldic verse is so sparse that a detailed examination of its use by troubadour poets hardly seems necessary. However, it should be noted that this question of extra-marital love has been central in the critical debate on 'courtly love' since the first attempts, in the late nineteenth century, to relate the phenomenon to social and economic conditions of twelfth-century Europe. Gaston Paris, the first modern critic to use the term *amour courtois*, described it as 'l'amour tel que l'avaient présenté les troubadours, l'amour qui faisait le charme et le danger des réunions mondaines, l'amour illégitime et caché', stressing that it was a love essentially illicit, furtive and extra-conjugal (1883, 522). Violet Paget attributed the exaggerated veneration of women in 'medieval love' to the sex ratio in the medieval castle, envisaging

an enormous numerical preponderance of men over women; for only the chiefs in command, the overlord, and perhaps one or two of his principal kinsmen or adjutants, are permitted the luxury of a wife . . . a whole pack of men without wives, without homes, and usually without fortune. High above all this deferential male crowd, moves the lady of the castle. (Paget 1884, II 136–37)

Born of this elevation of the female was ‘a love all chivalry, fidelity, and adoration, but a love steeped in the poison of adultery’ (Paget 1884, II 216). C. S. Lewis perpetuated this highly-coloured language, arguing that the materialistic basis of medieval marriage inevitably made adultery one of the four mainstays of courtly love (‘Humility, Courtesy, Adultery, and the Religion of Love’): ‘Any idealization of sexual love, in a society where marriage is purely utilitarian, must begin by being an idealization of adultery’ (Lewis 1936, 2, 13).<sup>7</sup>

Love of a married woman, and, indeed, adulterous love, are of course central to the romances of Tristan and Lancelot; on the other hand, Chrétien’s *Erec et Énide* and Chaucer’s *Franklin’s Tale* at least attempt a reconciliation of married love with courtly ideals. But troubadour lyrics have little narrative or circumstantial content. Even where the lady addressed or celebrated is identifiable (from either the poetic context or known circumstances of the poet’s life) the poet rarely, if ever, mentions her married state or her husband. The intimacy shared by lovers may be threatened by jealousy or hostility, not from the husband, but from rival lovers or the soulless and spying *lozengiers*, ‘liars’, and love sometimes gains intimacy through a need for secrecy, presumably, but rarely explicitly, dictated by the lady’s married state.

Raimon de Miraval (composing 1185–1213), a troubadour knight rebuked in verse by Uc de Mataplana for abandoning his wife, composed a defence elevating a man’s devotion to his *domna* above that due to his wife:

Que cavalliers q’en pretz se fi  
 Deu laissar, so.ns mostra Jovens,  
 Moiller que pren per enfanssa;  
 Mas si sa dompna l’enanssa  
 Tant qe.l prenda, estre deu estacatz  
 D’un certan homenatge,  
 Qe ja nuill temps non seg’ autre viatge.

<sup>7</sup> Roger Boase points out the inappropriateness of the term adultery: ‘This argument is obviously fallacious. If love was not normally connected with marriage, we must conclude that love was extra-conjugal, which is not to say that it was necessarily adulterous’ (1977, 92).

For a knight whose trust is in courtly renown must leave, as ‘Youth’ (the courtly code) tells us, a wife whom he marries lightly. But if his lady does him such honour that she accepts him, he must be bound by such constant homage that he will never at any time take another path. (Topsfield 1975, 222)

But this literally cavalier view of marriage is expressed not in a love lyric but in a polemic; the emphasis throughout the poets’ exchange is on the enhancing of public honour through service of the lady, not personal or sexual fulfilment.

The reputation of the troubadours as celebrators of adulterous love was partly constructed by the authors of their thirteenth-century *vidas*, who supplied a narrative context for their subjects’ lyrics, sometimes over-literally interpreting the poems themselves, sometimes deploying frequently-occurring and presumably fictional motifs (see p. 143 below). For instance, Bernart de Ventadorn, about whom almost nothing can be historically verified, figures in his *vida* as protagonist of a story of secret love for his patron’s wife:

E lo vescons, lo seus seingner, de Ventadorn, s’abelli mout de lui e de son trobar e de son cantar e fez li gran honor. E lo vescons de Ventadorn si avia moiller, joven e gentil e gaia. E si s’abelli d’En Bernart e de soas chansos e s’enamora de lui et el de la dompna, si qu’el fetz sas chansos e sos vers d’ella, de l’amor qu’el avia ad ella e de la valor de leis. Long temps duret lor amors anz que lo vescons ni l’autra gens s’em aperceubes. E quant lo vescons s’en aperceup, si s’estranyet de lui, e la moillier fetz serar e gardar. (*Biographies des Troubadours* 1964, 20)

And the Viscount of Ventadour, his lord, grew very fond of him and of his inventing and his singing, and greatly honored him. And the Viscount of Ventadour had a wife who was young, noble, and lively. And she also grew fond of Bernart and of his songs, and fell in love with him. And he fell in love with the lady, and composed his songs and his poems about her, about the love which he had for her, and about her merit. Their love lasted a long time before the viscount or other people became aware of it. And when the viscount perceived it, he banished Bernart from him and had his wife locked up and guarded. (Egan 1984, 11–12)

As in the case of the Norse poetry cited above, the theme of adulterous love attributed to these poets is to some extent superimposed on the verse by a later prose narrative.

It might be considered appropriate to question, not the degree of similarity in content and style between troubadour verse and its supposed Norse derivatives, but what the Norse poets, working from possibly garbled, partially understood models, believed troubadour poetry to be

about. According to this argument, a Norse poet might be inspired simply by the externalities of the troubadours' situation: that they composed lyrics celebrating love, often unfulfilled, for ladies forever unattainable because married to other men. The result might be verse stressing themes such as 'the wife of a nobleman causes me grief', though it is questionable whether this would constitute significant influence. But in any case, the *Orkneyinga saga* account of Rognvaldr's encounter with Ermengarda of Narbonne gives a clue to Norse ignorance of the troubadour's courtly role. Apparently desiring to cast Rognvaldr's visit in the mould of courtly homage, the saga writer nevertheless portrays the ruling lady as a young girl, whom Rognvaldr brazenly takes on his knee, and whose advisers start promising negotiations for a betrothal with him. Though they used frustration as a narrative theme, Norse writers seemed automatically to assume that the ideal outcome of relations between men and women, in terms both of the honour it conferred on the hero, and (often subsidiarily) of emotional fulfilment, was marriage.

#### IV The troubadours and the poets' sagas

The only poet's saga in which Bjarni Einarsson claims influence from troubadour verses is *Kormaks saga*. This is readily accounted for by the unusually high proportion of verse to prose in *Kormaks saga*, and the unusually high proportion of that verse that can be called lyrical; Andersson estimates that 'Kormakr's twenty-four stanzas [of love poetry] comprise about half the corpus' (1969, 22). But the claimed influence extends to all four poets' sagas by way of Bjarni's conviction that *Kormaks saga* is the earliest and the channel through which European influence reached the group (1961, 52):

Kormáks saga er elzt þeirra ástarsagna sem kveðskapur fylgir, og um leið að ýmsu leyti fyrirmund þeirra sem á eftir koma.

*Kormaks saga* is the oldest of the sagas of love accompanied by poetry, and thereby in various ways the model for those which followed.

I have argued elsewhere that the thematic relationships among the poets' sagas are too complex to be explained by the derivation of their material from *Kormaks saga* (Finlay 1994). The unusual concentration of verse, especially love verse, in *Kormaks saga* raises the question whether this particular emphasis owes something to foreign influence, possibly from the troubadour tradition. But even if this could be demonstrated, it is clearly not an influence that extended beyond this saga.

Theodore Andersson (1969) has assessed Bjarni Einarsson's claims of troubadour influence in the verses attributed to Kormakr. His arguments are considered and some further points added here.

**1. Verses 2–4: Love penetrates the eyes (Bjarni Einarsson 1961, 67–69; 1976, 42–45)**

The sequence of verses expressing Kormakr's 'love at first sight' for Steingerðr repeatedly stresses the effect of her eyes. In verse 2,

Brunnu beggja kinna  
björt ljós á mik drósar (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939, 209)

The lady's bright lights of both cheeks burned on me;

in verse 3 (also in *Gunnlaugs saga*, where it is attributed to Gunnlaugr),

Brámáni skein brúna  
brims und ljósum himni  
Hristar hörvi glæstrar  
haukfránn á mik lauka (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939, 209)

The hawk-keen eyelash-moon of the linen-clad Hrist of ale (woman) shone on me under the bright sky of the brows;

and in verse 4,

Hófat lind, né ek leynda,  
líðs, hyrjar því striði,  
bands mank beiða Rindi,  
baugscœm af mér augu. (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939, 210)

The ring-seemly ale-tree did not take her eyes off me; nor did I conceal my fiery anguish on that account; I remember the (entreating?-)Rind of the ribbon.

Of these verses Bjarni Einarsson remarks,

Pessi ríka áherzla sem söguhöfundur leggur á að lýsa því hve hugfangið skáldið verður er hann kemur auga á meyna í fyrsta skipti, er engin tilviljun eða uppáfinning hans sjálfs, heldur er hún skírgetið afkvæmi hinnar próvensku ástaskáldskapartízku. Nefna mætti fjölda dæma um svipaðan kveðskap frakkneskra skálda og þeirra sem eftir þeim hermuðu um þennan hlut (Bjarni Einarsson 1961, 68–69).

This powerful emphasis placed by the saga author on describing how enraptured the poet becomes when he lays eyes on the girl for the first time is no accident or invention of his own; rather it is a genuine product of the Provençal style of love poetry. Many examples could be named of similar poetry by French poets and those who imitated them in this respect.

There are many instances of the literary phenomenon of love at first sight in medieval French poetry, but few in troubadour verse specifically,

because of its avoidance of narrative detail. Instead of offering examples, however, Bjarni particularises the comparison by quoting Joseph Anglade:

Les ‘yeux’ jouent un grand rôle dans la poésie provençale: c’est par eux que commence le phénomène un peu mystique de l’*enamorament*. La vue de l’objet aimé frappe les yeux et produit souvent l’extase; une sorte de fluide mystérieux va de là au cœur et y éveille l’amour (Anglade 1908, 84; Bjarni Einarsson 1961, 69).

The ‘eyes’ play an important part in Provençal poetry; it is by means of them that the slightly mystical phenomenon of falling in love begins. The sight of the beloved object strikes the eyes and often produces ecstasy; a sort of mysterious fluid passes from there to the heart and awakens love there.

Anglade is referring to something rather different from the powerful effect on the poet of Steingerðr’s intent and brilliant gaze. He is describing the figure common in courtly literature, of the observer who, on sight of the beloved, is struck through the eye by the wounding dart of love, and subjected to what Andreas Capellanus defined as ‘an inborn suffering which results from the sight of, and uncontrolled thinking about, the beauty of the other sex’ (Walsh 1982, 32 and 33). The theme, apparently derived from classical antiquity, exploits ‘the paradox that the one who looks is wounded by what the eye receives, whether or not that is itself a look returned by its object’ (Spearing 1993, 10).

While the suffering gazer is most often male, a woman might also be smitten in the same way, like Lavine in the anonymous romance *Eneas* (c.1150):

N’avra Amors de moi merci?  
 Il me navra an un esgart,  
 en l’oil me feri de son dart,  
 de celui d’or, qui fet amer;  
 tot lo me fist el cuer coler. (*Eneas* 1925–29, II 68)

Will Love not have mercy on me? He has wounded me with a glance. He has struck me in the eye with his dart, the golden one which causes love. He has struck me to the heart.

But this is not the situation in *Kormaks saga*. Steingerðr’s feelings may be suggested by the fixity of her gaze, but the powerful effects of love and intimations of tragedy belong to the poet’s consciousness. A. C. Spearing quotes a ballade by Charles d’Orléans (?1394–1465), representing the male as passive before a penetrating female glance:

How may he him diffende þe pouer hert  
 Ageyn two eyen when they vpon him light

Which naked is withouten cloth or shert  
Where in plesere the eyen are armyd bright.

(Spearing 1993, 24; Steele 1941, 11)

This relationship between transfixing female gaze and apprehensive male observer corresponds roughly to that in *Kormaks saga*, but the imagery of the saga verses is of light and fire, not the courtly warfare, sickness and the personification of Love (and, in the last example, of eyes and heart).

Referring to eyes in terms of light is a convention in skaldic poetry, as *Skáldskaparmál* indicates: *Augu . . . má svá kenna at kalla sól eða tungl, skjöldu ok gler eða gimsteina eða stein brá eða brúna, hvarma eða ennis*, ‘Eyes . . . may be referred to by calling them sun or moon, shields and glass or jewels or stone of eyelashes or brows, eyelids or forehead’ (*Skáldskaparmál* 1952, 224–25). Other examples (such as *brátungl* ‘eyelash-moon’ in *Pórsdrápa* 14, referring to giantesses killed by Pórr) have no erotic connotation.

## **2. Verses 7 and 8: Evaluation of the beloved (Bjarni Einarsson 1961, 70–71)**

Reference to Steingerðr’s eyes recurs in the pair of verses in which Kormakr puts a financial value on a single eye, her hair, and, in verse 8, her whole person. The extravagance of the praise has led others besides Bjarni Einarsson to detect foreign influence. Einar Ól. Sveinsson likened the verses to Petrarch’s sonnet XVIII, which professes the impossibility of describing the beloved lady (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939, xci). And Theodore Andersson is impressed by the parallel located by Bjarni in a verse of Peire Vidal (fl. 1180–1205):

E plagra.m mais de Castella  
Una pauca jovensella  
Que d’aur cargat un camel  
Ab l’emperi Manuel. (Peire Vidal 1960, II 315)

A little lass of Castille would please me more than a camel laden with gold and the empire of Manuel.

But, as Andersson notes, Kormakr’s formula of evaluation, a series of sentences beginning *metk*, ‘I value’, and assigning a commercial value to each itemised feature, differs from that of Peire Vidal and other Provençal analogues, which declare unwillingness to exchange the lady for possession of land (usually kingdoms) or goods (1969, 28). Heather O’Donoghue’s point that Kormakr’s two verses differ in tone—the first perhaps ironically pedantic, the second expansive—suggests that they may have had diverse origins (O’Donoghue 1991, 31–32). Once again, the similarity in theme is not specific enough to prove derivation from troubadour models.

### 3. Verse 19: Rivers run uphill (Bjarni Einarsson 1961, 79–80)

In verse 19, the poet declares that he will never give up the lady:

því at upp skulu allar,  
olstafns, áðr ek þér hafna,  
lýsigrund, í landi,  
linns, þjóðáar rinna. (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939, 222)

For all the great rivers in the land shall flow backwards, bright ground of the alecup's fire, before I give you up.

Several have noted this use of what appears to be the classical figure of *adynaton*. Specifically, the image of rivers running uphill is widespread in classical and later verse (Schröder 1952, 123–33). There are examples in Ovid:

Cum Paris Oenone poterit spirare relicta,  
ad fontem Xanthi versa recurret aqua. (*Heroides* V, 29–30)

When Paris can breathe after abandoning Oenone, the water of Xanthus will turn and run back to its source.

The famous anecdote in *Jóns saga helga* about Bishop Jón reproving the young Klængr Þorsteinsson for reading the *Ars amatoria* demonstrates Icelandic familiarity with some of the works of Ovid, though it may reflect conditions when the saga was composed (c.1200) rather than in Jón's day. The author's outline of the work's content (*En i þeirri bók talar meistari Ovidius um kvenna ástir . . .*), suggests that it was not universally known (*Biskupa sögur* 1858–78, I 237–38).

The classical parallel was first remarked upon by Alexander Bugge, who speculated that Kormakr himself encountered the idea on his travels:

Med Romerne, Europas største Kulturbærere, er Billedet vandret videre til Vest-Europa, hvor det findes i Middelalderens kristne Litteratur. Dér maa Kormakr eller en af hans Landsmænd ha lært det at kjende, og saa har Skaldedigtningen optaget Billedet. (Bugge 1904–06, I 299)

The image was spread by the Romans, the greatest bearers of culture in Europe, further into Western Europe, where it is found in the Christian literature of the Middle Ages. There Kormakr or one of his compatriots could have learned of it, and skaldic poetry could have adopted the image by this means.

Bjarni Einarsson agrees that the image's origin is classical, but rightly doubts whether a tenth-century skald could have had the access to it that Bugge suggests (1961, 80). However, it is so prevalent in classical and Christian writings that any educated man in the Christian period could have encountered it, more probably through schoolroom reading of classical texts than from a European secular genre. In classical texts, the image is not

confined to erotic subjects, and no specific analogues in troubadour verse have been proposed.

Theodore Andersson hesitates to attribute the verse to a later skald because of its use of two archaic forms, *þjóðáar* and *rinna*, concluding, ‘Perhaps we should compromise on the twelfth century’ (1969, 31). This suggests that it was contributed to the saga’s materials after the lifetime of the poet himself, but composed earlier than the saga; but the argument is inconclusive since, as Bjarni Einarsson argues, the author could have reconstructed the archaic form *þjóðáar*, or copied the metrical irregularity of the younger *þjóðár*, from its similar use in *Pórdrápa* 5. *Þjóðár* is one of several contracted forms in *Háttatal* 7, offered by Snorri to demonstrate licence for a light line of fewer than the regular six syllables (Snorri Sturluson 1991, 7 and 50). This indicates that, by the thirteenth century, the origin of these contracted forms was forgotten; but equally, that their use in positions metrically requiring the longer forms remained conventional.

Two further *adynata* occur in verse 61, where Kormakr declares that *Heitask hellur fljóta*, ‘stones will begin floating’ and *færask fjöll en stóru / fræg í djúpan ægi*, ‘the great glorious mountains will move into the deep sea’ (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939, 274) before another woman as beautiful as Steingerðr is born. Again, the source, if any, is likely to be a classical one. Einar Ól. Sveinsson (1966, 46–51) argues against imitation of Horace’s *Epoche XVI*, 25–29; Theodore Andersson (1969, 31–32) considers the occurrence together of the two motifs in both Horace’s and Kormakr’s verse significant, and speculates that this text may also have been encountered in a schoolbook context, though there is no other evidence that Horace was known in Iceland.

#### **4. Verses 20–21: Question and answer (Bjarni Einarsson 1961, 81–82)**

Bjarni proposes that the exchange of helmings in which Kormakr asks Steingerðr whom she would choose as husband, and she replies, also in verse, choosing the ‘brother of Fróði’ (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939, 222–23), has a French parallel:

Hér skal á það minnt að viðræður ungra elskenda eða ávarp ástfangins karlmanns og svar konu voru algengir og alkunnir hlutir í ástaskálðskap Frakka á tólfu öld og síðan þeirra sem fóru að dæmi hinna frakknesku skálda. (Bjarni Einarsson 1961, 81)

Here it may be pointed out that dialogues between young lovers, or the speech of a young man in love and the woman’s reply, were common and well-known elements in the love poetry of the French in the twelfth century, and afterwards that of those who followed the example of the French poets.

Bjarni again names no particular poems or even genres of French poetry, but appears to have in mind the Provençal genres of *alba* and *pastorela*. These poems frequently take the form of a dialogue about love between a man and a woman. Peter Dronke's definition suggests another potential parallel with saga verse: these are songs that 'have a more objective, narrative or dramatic, frame, songs that grow out of imagined events rather than an imagined state' (Dronke 1978, 167). But the narrative themes of both genres are unusually specific; the *alba* dramatises the ending at dawn of a secret meeting between lovers, the *pastorela*, a knight encountering and trying to seduce a girl, usually a peasant. The situation in *Kormaks saga* is not similar; in particular, the focus on marriage, as the poet asks the girl whom she would choose *pér at ver*, 'as your husband', tells against locating the verse in the context of French love poetry. Bjarni's emphasis on this poetry's preoccupation with adulterous love has been shown to be over-rigid; it is more accurate to see in these two genres an idealised or playful escapism, which is equally inimical to marriage. This is described by Peter Dronke in his account of dance songs as set 'in Arcadia—not in a world of arranged marriages, social barriers and feudal laws, but in that enchanted forest or countryside where the only law is love. In Arcadia love is not complicated by social pressures or by guilt' (Dronke 1978, 199).

Bjarni's proposal that verse 21 has a French source is less than whole-hearted, since he simultaneously finds similar wording in Brynhildr's speech in *Sigurðarkviða in skamma* 58; and more tellingly, a pair of dialogue helmings in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* 29 parallels, as he notes, not only the dialogue structure but also the content: a question and answer in which the woman affirms her love:

Þá grét Sigrún. Hann qvað:

'Huggastu, Sigrún! Hildr hefir þú oss verið;  
vinnat scioldungar scopom.'

'Lifna mynda ec nú kiósa, er liðnir ero,  
oc knætta ec pér þó í faðmi felaz.' (*Edda* 1962, 155)

Then Sigrún wept. He said, 'Take comfort, Sigrún! You have been our shield-maiden; warriors cannot defeat the fates.'

'Now I would choose that those who are dead should live, if I could still hide in your embrace.'

Bjarni adduces further thematic links between this poem and *Kormaks saga*. But it seems unnecessary to press for a specific parallel with this poem when the ubiquity of dialogue throughout the *Poetic Edda*, including the catechism form of mythological poems such as *Vafþrúðnismál*, pro-

vides an obvious model for the verse in *Kormaks saga*. The admittedly less common sharing of a single stanza between two speakers is found in, for instance, *Reginsmál* 10:

Hreiðmarr kallaði á dœtr sínar:

‘Lynghetiðr oc Lofnheiðr, vitið míno lífi farit!  
mart er, þat er þorf þíar.’

Lynghetiðr svaraði:

‘Fá mun systir, þótt fóður missi,  
hefna hlýra harms.’ (*Edda* 1962, 175)

Hreiðmarr called to his daughters: ‘Lynghetiðr and Lofnheiðr, know that my life is gone! There are many things to which need constrains one.’

Lynghetiðr answered: ‘Few sisters, if they lose their father, will avenge their misfortune on a brother.’

*Atlamál* 78 (*Edda* 1962, 259), and 87:

*Atli*: ‘Brend mundu á báli oc barið grióti áðr,  
þá hefir þú árnat, þaztu æ beiðiz.’

*Guðrún*: ‘Seg þér slicer sorgir ár morgin!  
fríðra vil ec dauða fara í liós annat.’ (*Edda* 1962, 260)

*Atli*: ‘You will be burned on a pyre, and pelted with stones before that; then you will have gained what you have always asked for.’

*Guðrún*: ‘Tell yourself such sorrows early in the morning! By a fairer death I will pass into the other light.’

A skaldic example consisting of question and answer, without erotic reference, is verses 5–6 in *Hallfreðar saga*, an exchange between Hallfreðr and Akkerisfrakki (said to be King Óláfr Tryggvason) (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939, 153).

##### 5. Verse 56: Nature prelude (Bjarni Einarsson 1961, 124–27)

In this much-discussed verse, the poet juxtaposes the pounding of waves on cliffs with the sleeplessness and longing induced by separation from his beloved:

Brim gnýr, brattir hamrar  
blálands Haka strandar,  
allt gjalfr eyja þjalfa  
út liðr í stað viðis.  
Mér kveðk heldr of Hildi  
hrannbliks an þér miklu  
svefnfátt; sørva Gefnar  
sakna mank, ef ek vakna. (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939, 269–70)

The surf roars, the steep cliffs of the shore of Haki’s blue land; all the resounding sea of the band of islands flows out into the sea’s abode. I declare

that I am much more sleepless than you because of the Hildr of the billow's gleam (woman); I will miss the Gefn of the necklace if I waken.

The conjunction prompts Bjarni to propose another southern European model, this time one that he concedes could predate the troubadours. He quotes Fredrik Paasche's claim that Kormakr made use of the convention, already found in Latin verse by eleventh-century wandering scholars, of prefacing a love poem with an evocation of nature (Paasche 1957, 506). The theme was popular throughout the twelfth century and later, among German lyric poets as well as the troubadours.

The nature prelude in medieval poetry is typically an invocation of spring, the burgeoning of nature offering a rich range of parallels for the disturbance and restlessness, but also, potentially, joy and fruitfulness, brought to the human sphere by love. This theme, though conventional, is teasingly varied and given metaphoric strength by subtle troubadours:

Ar resplan la flors enversa  
 Pels trencans rancx e pels tertres.  
 Cals flors? Neus, gels e conglapis  
 Que cotz e destrenh e trenc;  
 Don vey morz quils, critz, brays, siscles  
 En fuelhs, en rams e en giscles.  
 Mas mi ten vert e jauzen joys  
 Er quan vey secx los dolens croys. (Raimbaut d'Aurenga)

Now is resplendent the inverted flower along the cutting crags and in the hills.  
 What flower? Snow, ice, and frost which stings and hurts and cuts, and by  
 which I see perished calls, cries, birdsongs and whistles among leaves, among  
 branches and among switches; but joy keeps me green and jovial now, when  
 I see dried up the wretched base ones. (Press 1971, 106–07)

While troubadours, as this example shows, do exploit contrast in treating the theme, a closer parallel to Kormakr's use of the syntactical break between helmings to create a strong juxtaposition is found in shorter, less developed lyric forms such as that of this English lyric of c.1250:

Foweles in þe frith,  
 Pe fisses in þe flod—  
 And I mon waxe wod!  
 Mulch sorw I walke with,  
 For beste of bon and blod.

(Bennett and Smithers 1968, 111)

Peter Dronke comments that the compressed, alliterative form implies rather than states the conjunction of the lover's languishing, dislocated state with the serene contentment of the birds and fish in their natural

elements: ‘the poet intended the opening and close of his stanza to react on each other and to release associations of unhappy love’ (Dronke 1978, 145).

Kormakr’s verse uses a comparable technique of juxtaposition, though the turbulent sea echoes rather than contrasts with the poet’s mental disturbance: ‘The strong tidal currents of the sea reflect the emotional pull which Steingerðr exerts on Kormakr, and the paradoxical kenning for waves as the cliffs of Haki’s land suggests the turmoil of Kormakr’s thoughts’ (O’Donoghue 1991, 122). The theme of the sea’s turbulence as an index of mental disturbance is shared by the Old English poem *The Seafarer* (*The Exeter Book* 1936, 143–47); however, the unlikeness of Kormakr’s maritime landscape to the fields and groves of European poetry more probably reflects the distinctive viking way of life than a Germanic tradition shared with or derived from Anglo-Saxon poets.

The proposed parallel with the nature prelude is not specific enough to be convincing. While natural description is uncommon in skaldic poetry, its use as an image of the poet’s feelings could readily have arisen independently of European models, particularly since the bipartite structure of the skaldic stanza, and the technique fundamental to skaldic diction of describing one thing in terms of another, invite juxtaposition and contrast of apparently unrelated material.

#### **6. Verse 77: The poem as messenger (Bjarni Einarsson 1961, 152)**

Einar Ól. Sveinsson likens verse 77, in which the poet proposes to send the verse itself to his beloved in farewell before going abroad, to verses sent by Dante and other courtly poets to their ladies (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939, xc–xci). He further suspects on metrical grounds that the verse is later than others in the saga. Heather O’Donoghue, too, sees nothing against the view that it could have been composed to fit its saga context: ‘It may well be that, as Bjarni Einarsson would have it, the verse was originally contemporary with the saga prose, and has come under the influence of a later poetic sensibility’ (1991, 154).

The verse messages referred to, however, are not closely parallel to Kormakr’s verse. They are structurally dissimilar, usually operating as *envois*, identifying poet or lady, and sometimes the messenger as well, at the end of a poem. This use of the *envoi*, at an almost prosaic remove from the body of the poem, is well illustrated by Bernart de Ventadorn, who follows a passionate, direct address to the lady in the poem’s last full stanza with an anticlimactic apology for failing to visit her in person:

Bona domna, re no.us deman  
mas que.m prendatz per servidor,

qu'e.us servirai com bo senhor,  
cossi que del gazardo m'an.  
ve.us m'al vostre comandamen,  
francs cors umils, gais e cortes!  
ors ni leos non etz vos ges,  
que.m aucizatz, s'a vos me ren.

A Mo Cortes, lai on ilh es,  
tramet lo vers, e ja no.lh pes  
car n'ai estat tan lonjamen. (Hill and Bergin 1973, I 40)

Good lady, I ask nothing of you but that you take me as your servant, to serve you as I would a good lord, whatever reward I may have. See me at your command, noble and modest, gay and courtly one! You are no bear or lion to kill me if I give myself up to you.

To my Courtly One, there where she is, I send the verse, and may it not distress her that I have not been there for such a long time.

Some troubadours, and Dante, personify the verse itself, romantically suggesting the power of poetry (or love) to transcend physical distance, in the same spirit as the theme of *amor de lonh*:

'Vai t'en, chansos,  
Denan lieis ti prezenta.'  
Que s'ill no fos,  
No.i meir'Arnautz s'ententa. (Arnaut Daniel)

'Be off, my song, and present yourself to her.' Were it not for her, Arnaut would not have put his mind to it. (Press 1971, 182–83)

Kormakr's more literal sending of the verse (presumably by a messenger) does have parallels in troubadour verse. There, poets bring out the tension between public and private, and the artificiality of declaring love through an intermediary:

Mos vers an, qu'aissi l'enverse  
Que no.l tenhon bosc ni tertre,  
Lai on hom non sen conglapi,  
Ni a freitz poder que.y trenque.  
A midons lo chant e.l siscle  
Clar, qu'el cor l'en intro.l giscle,  
Selh que sap gen chantar ab joy,  
Que no tanh a chantador croy. (Raimbaut d'Aurenga)

May my verse go, for I so invert it that neither woods nor hills might hinder it, to there where one feels no frost, where the cold has no power to cut. To my mistress may he sing and whistle it—clearly, that its switches enter her heart—who can sing nobly, with joy, for it befits no base singer. (Press 1971, 108–09)

The example of the Old English poem, *The Husband's Message*, warns against the assumption that the theme must have a literary source. There the poem itself (or rather, the personified rune-stick bearing the message) addresses an affirmation of love to the woman:

þær mec mondryhten min [.] . . . .  
ofer heah hofu; eom nu her cumen  
on ceolþe, and nu cunnan scealt  
hu þu ymb modlufan mines frean  
on hyge hycge. Ic gehatan dear  
þæt þu þær tifæste treowe findest.

Hwæt, þec þonne biddan het se þisne beam agrof  
þæt þu sincroden sylf gemunde . . .

(*The Exeter Book* 1936, 226).

There my lord [.] me over the deep sea; now I have come here by ship, and you are to find out what you feel in your heart about my lord's love. I dare to promise that you will find glorious fidelity in him. Lo, he who carved this wood has commanded that you should be told that you, adorned with treasure, must remember . . .

It is not likely that this poem influenced Kormakr or any other Norse poet, but the parallel is as close as that with troubadour verse.

All in all, the parallels assembled by Bjarni Einarsson are too vague to be convincing. He relies heavily on critical generalisations about troubadour and other European traditions of love poetry which, on close examination, are often overstated or inaccurate, or offer only superficial similarities to the features he singles out in verses attributed to Kormakr. In only one case can he refer to a specific poem. Moreover, even if all the suggested parallels were convincing, they are comparatively few, as Andersson remarks:

This list is disappointing; when Kormakr's verse turns up one case of eyes described as a vehicle of love, one case of hyperbolic metaphors used to exalt a lady's worth, one stanza distributed as a dialogue between lover and lady, one stanza with something akin to a *Natureingang*, and one stanza sent to a lady from afar, the case for troubadour influence does not appear to be substantially strengthened (1969, 16).

In two cases, classical models have probably been used. This suggests that these verses, at least, were composed after Kormakr's lifetime, but does not require a thirteenth-century dating. The kind of parallel offered by the figure of *adynaton* is more specific than most of those proposed with the troubadours, and the fact that this figure, like others from classical rhetoric, would be encountered in the schoolroom divorced from its literary contexts explains its piecemeal adoption into verse essentially alien in kind.

#### V Troubadour *vidas* and poet's *saga narrative*

Klaus von See finds, in the prose *vidas* 'lives' and *razos* 'explanations' which in the thirteenth century began to accompany collections of troubadour poetry, an analogue to the skalds' sagas, which quote and form a narrative frame for their verses (von See 1978–79, 87–91). The idea has recently been echoed by Carol Clover: 'Indeed, the *skáldasögur*, as prose biographies studded with the highly technical poems of their heroes, invite comparison with the *vidas* of the troubadours, but no evidence for direct influence has yet been adduced' (1993, 263). This apparently exciting analogy is not necessarily fruitful, since the genesis and early textual history of the Provençal prose works are as obscure as those of the poets' sagas.

##### A. *Vidas*

The *vidas*, short prose biographies of the troubadours, are used from the thirteenth century in Italian manuscripts (*chansonniers*) as preludes to each poet's works. The evidence suggests that the prose form grew gradually more substantial, until, by the fourteenth century, it became a genre in its own right, rather than merely offering contextual support for the poems. But the beginnings of this evolution are uncertain, though it may have arisen from the poets' own habit of self-promotion within their lifetimes: 'Even before the *vidas*, no doubt, the troubadours were cult figures, a status which it seems they courted, to judge from the repeated self-references in their poetry' (O'Donoghue 1982, 97).

Of the one hundred and ten extant *vidas*, two claim to be by named authors. That of the mid-twelfth-century troubadour Bernart de Ventadorn announces its author as Uc de Saint Circ, himself a poet composing a century later; like some other authors, he claims to have had information from an oral source, in his case the viscount Ebles de Ventadorn, son of the patroness said in the *vida* to be loved by Bernart (Egan 1984, 12–13).

Miquel de la Tor, otherwise known as compiler of a now lost collection of poems, claims authorship of the biography of the mid-thirteenth-century troubadour Peire Cardenal, describing himself as *escrivan* 'writer' rather than poet. As this *vida* exists in thirteenth-century manuscripts, in this case the interval between the subject's lifetime and the writing of the biography virtually disappears, particularly if the *vida* is reliable in claiming that the poet lived to be almost a hundred years old.

The circumstances of composition of all other *vidas* are obscure. However, the existence of biographies of even the earliest troubadours (Egan lists *vidas* of twelve 'earliest troubadours' who lived before the

middle of the twelfth century), and their inclusion of at least some historically verifiable information independent of the poems, suggest that the *vidas* may have had some oral existence before they were written down, although there is no way of knowing how close a resemblance any orally circulating accounts of the troubadours bore to the surviving literary form (Egan 1984, xxii–xxiii). Linguistic evidence in some suggests oral performance, and it has been suggested that the briefest *vidas* represent an early stage of written text which was fleshed out with impromptu details as it was read aloud (Egan 1984, xxvii–xxviii; Schutz 1939).

The subsidiary role of *vidas* as introductions to collections of their subjects' poems is evident in some texts, in formulas like *Et aici son escritas gran ren de las soas chansos* (*Biographies des Troubadours* 1964, 40), 'And here are written a large number of his songs', or, suggesting a blend of oral and written traditions, *E fetz aquestas chansos que vos auziretz aussi de sotz escriptas* (*Biographies des Troubadours* 1964, 21), 'He composed these songs which you will hear, and which are written below'. It seems probable, too, that those *vidas* of only two or three sentences had no existence independent of the poems they introduce. Margarita Egan compares the *vidas* in this respect to the learned Latin tradition of *vitae poetarum*, written to introduce glosses on classical texts used in schools. This tradition of commentary was current throughout the Middle Ages, incorporating works by ancient writers themselves with those of later compilers (Egan 1983–84; Quain 1945). This prefatory function allows her to speculate that 'scholars commissioned to compile anthologies of troubadour songs composed some of the *vidas* at the same time they were transcribing the verses' (Egan 1984, xxv).

But other *vidas* are more elaborate. Their material can often be shown to derive from the subjects' poems (or those of other poets, as in the *vida* of Bernart de Ventadorn, quoted below). A famous example of a *vida* based on the subject's poems is that of Jaufre Rudel (quoted above, p. 124), which transposes into biographical mode the poet's theme of *amor de lonh*.

Two versions of the *vida* of Bernart de Ventadorn show this process in action. One gives an apparently circumstantial account of his origins:

Hom fo de paubra generacion, fils d'un sirven qu'era forniers, qu'esqu audava  
lo forn a coszer lo pan del castel. (*Biographies des Troubadours* 1964, 20)

He came from a humble background, son of a servant who was a baker, and who  
heated the oven to bake the bread of the castle.

The other reveals the source of this information in another poet's mockery of his rivals; he was

de paubra generation, fils d'un sirven e d'una fornegeira, si con dis Peire d'Alvergne de lui en son chantar, qan dis mal de totz los trobadors:

Lo terz Bernartz de Ventador[n],  
Q'es meindre d'un Borneil un dorn;  
En son paire ac bon sirven  
Qe portav'ades arc d'alborn,  
E sa mair' escaudava.l forn,  
E.l pair' dusia l'essermen.

*(Biographies des Troubadours* 1964, 26)

of poor family, son of a servant and of a woman baker, as Peire d'Alvernhe says of him in the song where he speaks ill of all the troubadours:

The third, Bernart de Ventadorn,  
Who is shorter than Bornelh by the width of a palm,  
His father was a good servant  
Who always carried a laburnum bow,  
And his mother tended the oven,  
And the father brought the firewood.

Other *vidas* similarly quote verse as if for authentication, perhaps revealing a stage in the evolution of the form into a self-contained genre. The poems are fragmented to serve the needs of the *vida*, which originally existed only to support the poems.

Margarita Egan's analysis of the largely stereotyped narrative material of the *vidas* demonstrates that their story patterns depend on the interweaving of the two predominant themes of love and patronage, which, of course, are also central preoccupations of troubadour poetry. She also notes that

those *vidas* which develop non-romantic themes center on poets who did not sing of love . . . It is not surprising that [the *vidas* of Bertran de Born and Marcabru] neglect to speak of love and courtliness, patrons or erotic intrigues. The verses of Bertran de Born and Marcabru have little to do with ladies and courtship (Egan 1984, xx–xxi).

Within these common formulaic structures, however, authors might incorporate material unrelated to either troubadour songs or historical fact. The *vida* of Guillem de Cabestaing, a troubadour of the early thirteenth century, embellishes a typical narrative situation, the poet's love for another man's wife, with a highly-coloured account of the jealous husband killing the poet, cooking and peppering his heart, and giving it to his wife to eat. Ezra Pound (1975, 13–14; Canto IV) saw in the story a parallel to the eating of Itys's body in the myth of Tereus, Procne and Philomela (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book 6). Its source could have been either popular narrative or direct influence from the classics.

### B. Razos

In arguing for parallels between the poets' sagas and Provençal 'biographies', von See emphasises

besonders die *razos* (< *rationes*), in denen die 'raison d'être' eines einzelnen Gedichts erzählt wird, also die Umstände, unter denen der Troubadour seine Strophen gedichtet haben soll. (von See 1978–79, 87)

especially the *razos*, in which the *raison d'être* of a particular poem is recounted, that is, the circumstances in which the troubadour is supposed to have composed his verses.

This suggests a working definition of the *razo*, but in fact it is not clearly functionally distinct from the *vida*:

The prose *razos*, composed at the same time as the *vidas*, provide fanciful explanations of the lyrics . . . But 'lives' and 'explanations' are not always distinct genres: sometimes *razos* are biographical, *vidas* exegetic (Egan 1983–84, 37, n. 7).

Manuscript evidence might suggest that the *razo* was a development secondary to the *vida*, for there are fewer of them, only one group of which, a collection of commentaries on the *sirventes* 'satirical poems' of Bertran de Born, is found in early (thirteenth-century) *chansonniers*. But critics generally agree that they evolved alongside the *vidas*, and in particular, that if the *vidas* had a pre-literary existence as accompaniment to the performance of troubadour poems, the same was probably true of the *razos*; indeed, there was likely to be more call for explanation of obscurities in particular poems than for a biographical account of the poet. Examination of the formulae used for concluding the *razo* and introducing the subsequent verses (Schutz 1939), and analysis of the narrative structures of the *razos*, both demonstrate their essential orality and inseparability from the subsequent lyric:

*Razos* invent stories to present the subtle poetic language of troubadours' *cansos* in concrete terms. Though prose and poem often mirror one another in language and theme, they are distinct units of one text (one part was recited, the other perhaps sung). Originally *razo* and lyric were inseparable: explanation anticipated recitation. Since the *razo* directs the reader to another text, it should not surprise us to find in it sketchily traced, one-dimensional protagonists and repeated narrative motifs (Egan 1979, 311).

Von See's assertion that the *razos* are more closely parallel to the poets' sagas than the *vidas* is presumably because of their apparently more specifically narrative function, and the attachment of each prose text to the specific poem it purports to explain. But my present exposition makes it

clear that the narrative techniques of the *razo* and the *vida* do not differ essentially. Both kinds function as prefaces, introducing poems which are usually quoted in full at the end of the prose text, not split up into individual stanzas interspersed with prose explication.

As von See does not analyse the procedures of the Provençal prose texts in deriving their narrative from verse sources, there seems no need to discuss this further here, since there are no close parallels. Von See applies the analogy with the poets' sagas to support his argument

daß die Mischform von Strophe und Prosa erst in der schriftlichen Abfassung der Sagas entstanden ist. (von See 1978–79, 87)

that the mixed verse and prose form first developed in the written composition of the saga.

He implies that the deployment in troubadour biographies of over-literal interpretation of poetic language, and other attempts to find narrative bases for allusions in the verses, comparable to those in saga prose, demonstrate that both forms originate in the writing down of bodies of oral poetry, an activity which, he claims, generated the impulse to set them within a frame of narrative explanation. But the account of the *vidas* and *razos* given here shows that the uncertainty of their origins offers no firm basis of comparison for the genesis of the poets' sagas. If anything, it suggests the opposite of von See's thesis. That is, it may have been the practice of oral recitation of the poetry which prompted the desire for explication of the verse, and some form of prose narrative may have accompanied the verses before they were committed to writing.

Not content with urging the parallel structure and function of *vidas* and sagas, von See actually speculates that knowledge of the troubadour form may have reached Iceland in time to inspire the poets' sagas, and hence the whole genre of *Íslendingasögur*. Once again, Rögnvaldr Kali is invoked as forger of the cultural link:

Bedenkenswert ist aber, daß der Bericht, den die Orkneyinga saga von der Pilgerfahrt des Jarls Rögnvald und seinem Aufenthalt am Trobadorthof von Narbonne gibt, zugleich eines der ältesten Zeugnisse für die künstlerisch gelungene Vereinigung von Sagaprosa und Skaldenstrophnen ist . . . Könnte es sein, daß diese Beziehungen zur Trobadordichtung dazu beigetragen haben, den Skaldenstrophnen ihre bedeutende Rolle in den Sagatexten zu geben? (von See 1978–79, 89–90)

It is worth considering, however, that the account which *Orkneyinga saga* gives of Jarl Rögnvaldr's pilgrimage and his stay at the troubadour court of Narbonne represents at the same time one of the oldest witnesses to the artistically achieved combination of saga prose and skaldic verses . . . Could it

be that these links with troubadour poetry have contributed to the important role of skaldic verses in saga texts?

The suggestion depends on the supposition that the texts of the Provençal biographies, surviving in thirteenth-century and later Italian manuscripts, had forerunners written in Provence (Schutz 1938), and on the belief that oral transmission played little part in Provençal literature (von See 1978–79, 90). If so, von See there argues,

könnte die schriftliche Fixierung der *vidas* und *razos* schon im 12. Jahrhundert begonnen haben.

the fixing of the *vidas* and *razos* in written form could already have begun in the twelfth century.

But as outlined above, recent research suggests that oral performance, at least, was significant in troubadour culture; for oral transmission there is no evidence one way or the other. Von See's suggestion (1978–79, 90) that

schon Jarl Rögnvald—als Mitverfasser des *Háttalykill* ein poetologisch versierter Mann—könnte von der Existenz solcher Kommentare erfahren haben

Jarl Rognvaldr—as joint author of the *Háttalykill*, a man well-versed in poetic commentary—could already have had knowledge of the existence of such commentaries

pushes chronological possibility to its limit, as he acknowledges in proposing Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson, half a century later, as perhaps a likelier candidate.

Such a tenuous argument is difficult to pursue further. The only evidence for Rognvaldr's acquaintance with troubadour literature is the *Orkneyinga saga* account of his visit to Ermengarda and the few traces of apparent troubadour influence in the verses apparently composed there. There is no evidence that Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson learned anything of the secular culture of southern France. The suggestion that the account of Rognvaldr's travels formed a prototype, presumably intended by the Jarl himself, for the mixing of prose and verse in saga narrative, ignores the fact that, although the interval between composition of the verses and their incorporation in prose narrative was no more than fifty years, the author of the prose clearly deployed his verse sources in ways other than those originally intended. Von See (1978–79, 90) concedes that

selbstverständlich wird die Anregung, die der Norden hier empfing, nur von sehr allgemeiner Art gewesen sein.

it goes without saying that the stimulus which the North received in this way would only have been of the most general nature.

Presumably, it would have consisted solely of the impulse to maintain and extend interest in the works of famous past poets by composing biographical and anecdotal accounts of their lives, explaining the context in which their poems were produced. The limitations of this explanation for the origin of the poets' sagas are, firstly, that as I have argued (Finlay 1994, 15–80), the poets' sagas pay surprisingly little attention to the role of the poet as public performer. In some cases the poets whose lives are narrated are not known as performers of public poetry (for example, Björn Hítðœlakappi); in other cases, the poet's public role plays no part in the saga (as in *Kormaks saga*). *Egils saga* is an obvious exception, and shares with the troubadour biographies the fact that important poems are alluded to, but not quoted extensively in early manuscripts. But this is not true of the *lausavísur*. *Gunnlaugs saga*, too, treats the role of the poet as public performer as an important theme, but as I have argued elsewhere (Finlay 1994, 48–49), this gives the impression of being superimposed on an earlier kind of narrative.

Secondly, the theory fails to explain the large proportion of narrative in the poets' sagas which is either unaccompanied by verse, or in which verse plays a subsidiary role. Von See argues that verses cited in saga prose were originally part of longer, self-contained poems, and only need narrative explanation because prose writers have separated them from their original context (von See 1960 and 1977). Russell Poole puts a similar case (Poole 1991), and suggests this origin for a group of verses in *Gunnlaugs saga* (Poole 1981).

There are models for this practice of dismembering longer poems in the Kings' Sagas (though these often identify the source poem, as the *Íslendingasögur* rarely do). This is a persuasive explanation of some, rather unusual, groups of saga verses; a form of it was adopted earlier in this paper for the verses accompanying the account of Jarl Rognvaldr's pilgrimage. But it fails to account for the bulk of the verses quoted in poets' sagas and other *Íslendingasögur*, most of which show no sign of being abstracted from longer poems. We also know too little about what structure we should assume for such poems. While the structure of the *drápa* was evidently elaborate and clearly defined, a poem often includes *vísur* 'verses' as an element in its name, or is referred to as a *flokkr* 'group (of verses)'. Both terms imply a looser body of verse, and may merely define a number of pieces on the same subject, without any particular structural unity or sense that all were to be recited sequentially on the same occasion. They may, indeed, have been interspersed with prose (as are many poems in the *Poetic Edda*).

## VI Conclusions

The poets' sagas resemble the troubadour *vidas* and *razos* only in owing their origins to the conversion into written form of a body of diverse material previously existing orally: part verse expressing the sensibility of individual poets, part history, part popular narrative. While both forms betray, to different degrees, their narrative dependence on their accompanying poetry, the actual preoccupations of this poetry are not closely similar and do not seem to be related.

Only in *Kormaks saga* is the theme of frustrated love significantly supported by verse; this theme, supposedly anomalous in skaldic poetry, is one likely to arise in any culture (Dronke 1968, I 2). In some verses it seems to develop (possibly under courtly influence) the contrastive convention of referring to or addressing a woman in the course of describing male activity. Frustrated and 'adulterous' love are, in any case, not as overwhelmingly characteristic of troubadour poetry as was once claimed.

It is possible to detect a tendency for thirteenth-century saga prose to superimpose what could be traces of courtly influence on apparently older materials. This was found, in this paper, in the presentation of Rognvaldr Kali's verses in *Orkneyinga saga*, and in interpretations of some verses in Kings' Sagas and poetic treatises which suggest that their subject is love for a married woman; it could also explain possible allusions to the Tristan romance in *Kormaks saga* and *Bjarnar saga* (Finlay 1994, 393–94). This suggests that the fixing of saga narrative in written form early in the thirteenth century, though it may have broadened the range of materials from which it drew influence, did not destroy its essential fluidity or, on the other hand, its willingness to preserve earlier kinds of material, even where this involved conflict with the author's immediate purpose.

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## REVIEWS

### NEW RUNOLOGICAL RESEARCH

By MICHAEL P. BARNES

BLANDADE RUNSTUDIER 1 (various authors). *Runrön 6. Institutionen för nordiska språk, Uppsala universitet*. Uppsala, 1992. 201 pp.

RUNOR OCH REGIONALITET: STUDIER AV VARIATION I DE NORDISKA MINNESINSKRIFTERNA.

BY RUNE PALM. *Runrön 7. Institutionen för nordiska språk, Uppsala universitet*. Uppsala, 1992. 290 pp.

The Uppsala series Runrön, although a very recent arrival on the runological scene, now has seven volumes to its credit, and more are in preparation. Of the two volumes to be considered here, one is a collection of essays which deal with a wide variety of topics, the other a doctoral thesis which examines certain types of regional variation in memorial inscriptions. The title of Runrön 6, *Blandade runstudier*, is well chosen. The eight essays are mixed as regards not only topic but also quality.

Lars-Erik Ahlsson's 'Länord i svenska runinskrifter' is a brief piece which reveals little that could not be gleaned from a perusal of *Svenskt runordsregister* (Peterson 1989) and relevant etymological dictionaries. The author's chief contribution is to challenge the notion that any of the fourteen loan-words he discusses are of Frisian origin.

Lennart Elmevik writes on 'Runsvenskt **a**k "och"'. He offers a critical summary of the different ways in which scholars have sought to explain this not infrequent spelling, and finally comes down in favour of Sophus Bugge's belief that it represents '\**o* k', an intermediate form, according to Elmevik, between *auk* and *ok*. Given the clear evidence that **a** could sometimes be used to denote /ɔ/, it may well be that he (and Bugge) are right.

Henry Freij's paper 'Viking ristade och Grimulv' is a brief but valuable study which compares the grooves of the runes with those of the ornament on twenty-five stones from Uppland. On the basis of minutely detailed measurements analysed by 'computorized [sic] statistical methods' (p. 35), it is shown that runes and ornament must, in some cases at least, have been carved by different people. Freij is unable to resolve the question whether Viseti, a named carver whose stones show particularly consistent variation between the two, was responsible for the one or the other, and wonders whether he may in fact simply have sketched a design and left it to local stonemasons to cut the grooves of both runes and ornament.

Freij's investigation exemplifies the increasing interest being shown by runologists in the processes which led to the production of inscriptions. Such an interest is clearly what motivates Jan Meijer, who contributes a lengthy piece to *Blandade runstudier* on 'Planning in Runic Inscriptions'. Interest is not of itself enough, however, and Meijer's article is poor in conception, disposition and execution. The corpus on which he bases his survey is nowhere defined, and could, for all I know, include every extant runic inscription. Superimposed on this cloudy vagueness is

what passes for an analytical structure, with sections headed ‘Crowding’, ‘Runes outside the Text-band’, ‘Short-branched Runes’, ‘Special Cases’, ‘Wide Spacing’, ‘Design Made before the Inscription’, etc. Little thought has gone into the analysis, however, for we find that certain features appear under more than one category, and while ‘Short-branched runes’ are a category on their own, ‘Hälsingerunor’ form a sub-section of ‘Miscellaneous omissions [sic]’ under ‘Special Cases’. The presentation is weak, and both wildly faulty English (‘Jansson gives some speaking numbers’ (p. 41)—presumably *sprekende aantallen* ‘significant figures’) and feebleness of argument are to be found (‘It should be realized that in all the following cases the word “possibly” or “probably” ought to be added, but I left these out since circumstantial evidence is pretty convincing in most instances’ (p. 39)). Much of the paper consists of quotations from volumes of *Sveriges runinskrifter* and similar manuals, with a minimum of comment, and the only conclusions seem to be (a) that carvers often did not plan their inscriptions well, and (b) that we should take more interest in ‘the man behind the stone’. It is interesting to note that whereas Freij in his article thinks the runes were cut more carefully than the ornament because the principal task of a rune stone was to transmit the runic text, Meijer finds that the text was subordinated to the overall design. I think we have to follow Freij here. His conclusions are based on painstaking original research, Meijer’s on superficial speculation.

Bengt Odenstedt’s contribution ‘Om uppkomsten av den yngre futharken’ holds a special interest for me since it offers detailed and sustained criticism of a paper I gave on the same subject to The Second International Symposium on Runes and Runic Inscriptions (Barnes 1987). I tried to offer a total interpretation of the development of the younger *fupark*, based on Liestøl’s view (1981) that the chief impetus lay in the way sound changes of the Syncope period affected the names of the runes. In the course of my paper I argued that only the short-twigs showed signs of a conscious reform, and that if that point were accepted, it followed that this variant of the younger *fupark* could be viewed as the original since the long-branch runes must then be seen as products of a gradual evolution, moulded into their final shape in the light of knowledge of the short-twigs alphabet. Odenstedt thinks otherwise. He believes with Harry Andersen that the younger *fupark* arose from a desire to simplify the shapes of the runes, and he also brings several arguments to bear against the notion that the short-twigs are older than the long-branch.

Academic controversy is a good thing, for often it is only through the demolishing of hypotheses and their replacement by better ones that understanding progresses. For controversy to be fruitful, however, the protagonists must agree what it is they are discussing, otherwise the critic may well end up shooting down figments of his own imagination. Between Odenstedt and me, alas, there is no such agreement. I know what I was trying to say, but Odenstedt does not—whether this be due to a lack of clarity on my part or dullness of wit on his. The central argument about the part played by the rune names in the change from the older to the younger *fupark* ought, I think, to be reasonably clear. The names were in virtually all cases acrophonic, and there is considerable evidence from the history of runic writing in

Scandinavia that when the initial sound in a name altered, the sound value of the rune altered—or might alter—with it. We have the following examples: (1) the original twelfth rune (name: \*/ja:ra/ > /a:r/, value: /j/ > /a/); (2) the fourth rune (name: \*/ansuz/ > /ā:s:/ > /o:s:/, value: /a/ > /ā/ > /o/); (3) the original fifteenth rune which, as well as denoting /z/, may stand not only for /y/ (because its name in many parts of the Scandinavian world came to be /yr:/, but also for /e/ and /æ/ (apparently because in certain areas it was known as \*/ælgz/); (4) the younger seventh rune, /hagal:/, which seems to be used occasionally to denote /a/ in those areas of Sweden where loss of initial /h/ was common (cf., for example, the Sälna stone, U 323). In the light of these data it is not implausible that the sound values of other runes changed as a result of phonetic developments during the Syncopé period, and several of the runes which went out of use around this time appear to be prime candidates. Odenstedt argues that one has to ascribe to rune carvers a considerable degree of naivety to believe they would abolish a rune just because the initial sound in its name had changed and there was therefore a mismatch between that sound and the one which the rune denoted. He dismisses Liestøl's and my insistence on the importance of the rune names as a mnemonic tool as 'aningen löjeväckande' ('slightly ridiculous', p. 73). We are certainly free to speculate about what was going on in the minds of seventh-century rune writers—and our freedom is all the greater for our want of knowledge—but such speculation cannot be a substitute for the discussion of evidence of the kind I have just quoted. In my 1987 paper I tried to draw a sharp distinction between facts and speculation, and I naturally stressed the primacy of the former. The crucial nature of that distinction does not seem to have impinged on Odenstedt at all.

The lack of understanding shown in the above case turns out to be minor, however, compared with the chasm of incomprehension that opens up when our disputatious runologist begins to discuss the relative ages of the two principal variants of the younger *fupark*. He begins by ascribing to me the view that the short-twigs runes were created before the long-branch, and this allows him to criticise as absurd developments I have never suggested took place (e. g., Ȑ > ȝ > ȝ). His attack continues with an involuntary admission that he does not understand basic graphemic theory—a failing which is amply confirmed by his claim that the many minimal contrasts of the short-twigs alphabet (e. g., ȝ with ȝ) ‘återfinns ju i den “danska” futharken i en något annan, dessutom grafiskt tydligare, form: jfr ȝ med ȝ, \* med ȝ, ȝ med ȝ, ȝ med ȝ’ (‘are of course found in the “Danish” *fupark* in a somewhat different, and also graphically clearer, form’ (p. 75)). What I actually say is (1987, 42): ‘The answer to the question which of the younger runic alphabets is primary is therefore probably neither “the long-branch” nor “the short-twigs”, but that “it is a question of definition”.’ This is a view I still hold, and the reason is that the long-branch runes look to me, as I say above, like products of a gradual evolution. What, after all, do we mean when we speak of ‘long-branch’ runes—the Gørlev *fupark* (DR 239), the Helnæs runes (DR 190), the characters on the Sölvesborg stone (DR 356) or those on the Ribe cranium (Moltke 1985, 151, 161–62, 346–49)? Our dating of the artefacts that bear these symbols and our view of whether the symbols are to be classed as ‘long-branch’ or not must clearly affect

the judgement we come to about the relative ages of the two main variants of the younger *fubark*. This crucial and to me fairly obvious point would appear to have eluded Odenstedt completely. His failure to grasp it renders a central part of his article at best valueless and at worst misleading.

Lena Peterson's piece, 'Hogastenen på Orust', casts welcome light on an enigmatic inscription from Bohuslän, an area much neglected by runologists, who have perhaps found its change of political status in the seventeenth century and distance from centres of administration something of a disincentive. Peterson discusses two earlier interpretations of the inscription and deems them both linguistically unsatisfactory. She presents the results she came to on the basis of an independent reading of the runes in 1986, and then shows that these are in need of revision following the cleaning of the stone in 1989 when even the weakest of the runes became clearly visible. Whatever one thinks of her final reading and interpretation (her edited text and English translation is: *Hq ur/HQR/IÄUR/IÖR Ī Äm [s]tæin vann iär ā mūla 'Hq ur/HQR/IÄUR/IÖR* (man's name) in *Äm* (farm name) executed the stone here on the muzzle' ['muzzle' = mull]), Peterson deserves credit for the thorough and careful treatment she gives the inscription and the cautious way in which she expresses her conclusions.

I retain an open mind both about the reading and the interpretation. Clearly, if the Hoga stone is of early Viking-Age date, as is suggested, it is of considerable importance for the history of runic writing since it combines both short-twig and long-branch forms. The same appears to be true of the famous (ninth-century?) Sparlösa stone (Vg 119), which stands little more than 100 kilometres distant from Hoga—although it is not entirely clear how we are to decide whether the non-short-twig runes on Sparlösa are to be taken as long-branch or merely as 'transitional' (cf. the remarks on Odenstedt's contribution above). If, as is further suggested, Hoga contains an example of **P** and a botched **H**, it begins to look typologically even more like Sparlösa, which exhibits older **M** and transitional **\***(**A**—the latter in abundance). The problem is that what some read as **w** may in fact be **p**, and the putative older **h** consists simply of two parallel vertical lines. Take away these 'older runes', and Hoga's age becomes a more difficult factor to determine—and the appearance of short-twig forms among long-branch runes that much less interesting. On the other hand, the layout of the inscription and the opaqueness of its message certainly point towards the earlier part of the Viking Age. For my own part, I find it surprising to see **w** in the company of short-twig forms, though the Rävsal stone (Krause 80), likewise from Bohuslän, exhibits a character which may be either **p** or **w** alongside **r**—and the latter is in my belief in origin a short-twig variant (cf. Barnes 1987, 42). Whatever our view of this complex of problems, it behoves us to recall that scholars have had no qualms about reading three examples of **P** on Sparlösa as **p**. Regarding Peterson's interpretation of Hoga, I wonder a little about *vinna stæin*. To accept it, one would, I think, need to understand *stæin* as 'inscription' or 'monument'—not impossible perhaps, but is it likely at an early Viking-Age date—long before the phrase *ræisa stein* became formulaic?

The longest contribution to *Blandade runstudier* is Per Stille's “‘Gunnarsstenarna’—en kritisk granskning av en mellansvensk runstensgrupp”. Stille shows reasonably convincingly that the term 'Gunnar's stones', coined by Erik Brate, is

not a useful concept since the inscriptions that have gone under that heading are far too diverse in respect of such important factors as ornamentation, carving techniques, rune forms, orthography etc., to be the work of a single carver or school of carvers. Some inscriptions that have been attributed to Gunnar are dismissed from the discussion altogether, but two groups of Uppland rune stones (including some not previously associated with this carver) are distinguished: one group is said to be the work of Gunnar, the other that of an anonymous runographer whom Stille calls the Skederid carver.

I have two major criticisms of this article. First, it is extremely hard to follow in places (this is especially true of some of the 25 tables)—indeed, certain details are incomprehensible unless one has access to a copy of Thompson 1975. Second, it is based not, as one might expect, on a careful examination of stones and inscriptions, but on the account of them given in *Upplands runinskrifter* (Wessén and Jansson 1940–58). I find such reliance on a secondary source hard to understand. More than once the author refers to difficulty in providing a satisfactory analysis because of the lack of requisite information in *Upplands runinskrifter*—but then why not go and visit the stones themselves? They are not widely scattered about, after all. No reason is given for this reluctance to undertake fieldwork; we are simply told that it was not possible for the author to go and examine the stones. Rightly or wrongly, I get the feeling from this article, as from *Runor och regionalitet* to be discussed below, that the principal factor governing the research of a number of my fellow runologists is the availability of computer technology. That which the scholar can deal with by tapping away at his keyboard seems to be a welcome topic—not least when the results can be plotted on diagrams and listed in tables. That which involves the examination of original sources, be they runic inscriptions on wind-blown hillsides or obscure volumes in out-of-the-way libraries, is eschewed.

The final article in *Blandade runstudier*, ‘Drömmen om Runverket’ by Lars Wollin, is a descriptive piece which deals with Johannes Bureus—‘the undisputed founder of runological research’ (p. 200)—and his work in publishing, or in some cases attempting to publish, the Swedish runic inscriptions that were known in his day. Wollin’s article is solid and interesting—though large parts of it, as he himself makes clear, are based on secondary sources. The availability of such material notwithstanding, Wollin emphasises the lack of a proper history of runology and calls for research into the origins and development of the discipline.

As I hope the above survey has made clear, *Blandade runstudier* is a book which contains much of interest not only for the runologist, but for the philologist, the historian and the antiquarian as well. One or two of the articles might have been better omitted, but in general the high standard achieved by the earlier volumes in the Runrön series has been maintained.

Runrön 7, *Runor och regionalitet*, presents a much harder task for the reviewer. It is positively bursting with information—and almost a third longer than *Blandade runstudier*, despite the fact that it is the work of a single scholar. I will start by offering a general impression of the book, and then focus on what I consider the more interesting points of detail.

As its title suggests, Rune Palm's study concerns runes in space rather than time. He does not ignore the diachronic aspect, but concentrates on synchronic variation, which is a matter he feels earlier scholars have tended to disregard. 'Regionalitet', oddly enough, seems nowhere to be defined, but can be understood to mean something like 'local practices', and occasionally 'cultural spheres'. The material investigated is limited to memorial inscriptions. The reason for this is not given, but must presumably be the impracticality of trying to include all types of runic inscription in a single study. The author's aim is to analyse a number of variables in memorial inscriptions and in the monuments themselves with a view to facilitating discussion both of the spread of the rune-stone fashion and of the economic, social and political forces that may have given rise to the fashion in the first place. To begin with, the monuments are divided into three groups: pre-Viking-Age, Viking-Age and medieval. Areas are then identified according to which variation is to be judged: rune-stone areas, rune-stone centres, *härad*, *hundaren* (or comparable geographical units outside Sweden) and parishes. Thereafter what are called the obligatory and facultative formulas of runic memorial inscriptions are analysed and followed by analysis of the wording of 'the sponsor formula' (the main subtype of the obligatory formula, i. e. that part of the inscription which tells who raised or commissioned the stone, made the memorial etc.—up to and including the preposition *eptir*, *ept*, *at*). A final discussion attempts to make sense of the data presented in the course of the many analyses.

It was with a feeling of lively but constantly frustrated curiosity that I worked my way through *Runor och regionalitet*. Many questions of interest are posed by the author, and others arise in the reader's mind, but little or no space is allotted to their discussion. One set of figures succeeds another, and the intervening text often does little more than summarise the numerical message. Given that many of the messages that emerge from the fifty-six Tables are scarcely more exciting than the revelation 'There are more trees in the countryside than in town centres', it is not surprising that one's frustration can sometimes become total. I started to entertain a vision of an author whose delight lay not in trying to make sense of the past, but simply in manipulating figures, and I was led to wonder whether the book's chief value might not be as a cautionary example of what can happen when computer technology is allowed to run riot. And yet Palm surely deserves our thanks for bringing to the fore so many fundamental questions pertaining to runological variation, and the final discussion, though only seventeen pages long, does briefly address many of the issues that arise from the numerical analyses. Not only that, but the book will have considerable value as a work of reference—and as the starting point of further investigations.

There is much, very much with which one could take issue in the myriad of details that make up this study, and it is important to stress that the few matters I now go on to discuss are those which held a particular interest for me. A review should not tax the reader's patience unduly, and I have therefore resisted the temptation to expand more than an absolute minimum of the terse comments that decorate the margins of my copy of *Runor och regionalitet*.

In common with various other contributors to *Runrön*, Palm demonstrates less than complete familiarity with some of the basic concepts of linguistics. On p. 58

the 'ljudvärde' ('sound value') of a rune is given phonemic notation. The phoneme, as I have tried to point out before, is an abstract concept; sounds are realisations of phonemes. The idea (p. 64) that the medieval runes which Palm transliterates **d**, **v**, **ð**, **æ**, **ø** can be considered allographs of the graphemes <t, f, þ, a, o> is incompatible with normal graphemic theory. An allograph can be a combinatory variant (e. g. *T* versus *t*, depending on such factors as sentence initial position, proper noun, etc.) or a free variant (as in different styles of handwriting), but **d**, **v**, **ð**, **æ**, **ø** fit into neither of these categories. From the start, dotted runes marked something different from their undotted counterparts—that, after all, seems to have been the reason for their use—and in the high Middle Ages they and the new vowel runes such as **æ** and **ø** regularly denote different phonemes or sounds from the runes of which it is claimed by the author they are allographs.

The distinction pre-Viking-Age, Viking-Age and medieval has obviously caused Palm considerable unease (cf., for example, p. 66), and that is perhaps not surprising given that the division of the Scandinavian memorial inscriptions into watertight groups is almost certainly an impossibility. Unfortunately, his restless musings seem in the end to have demanded the sacrifice of clarity. Having opted for a distinction on typological grounds, the author would have been well advised to have found or invented terms suitable to his purpose. Instead, he invests familiar chronological labels with novel typological meanings. So entrenched are the traditional meanings, however, that it proves very difficult to keep the two separate, and the way to confusion is thus open. Initially, pre-Viking-Age inscriptions are defined as those which are written in the older runic alphabet (for Palm apparently synonymous with inclusion in Krause 1966—but what does it mean, I wonder, to say that inscriptions such as Rävsal and Tveito (Krause 80 and 94) are written in the older alphabet?), Viking-Age as wayside inscriptions in the younger alphabet carved on raised stones and rocks, and medieval as inscriptions likewise in the younger alphabet, but in contrast to the Viking-Age type to be found on sepulchres and ledgers in churchyards. As a result of what emerges from his analyses, however, Palm redefines the terms: Viking-Age memorial inscriptions are now those with a 'sponsor formula', which gives prominence to the living, while pre-Viking-Age and medieval inscriptions have other obligatory formulas, each of which in its own way focuses attention on the deceased. This second attempt to wrestle with the problems of definition appears initially more promising than the first. The London St Paul's stone (DR 412), for example—for several reasons likely to be from the time of Canute the Great—can now be classed as Viking-Age rather than medieval. However, the idea that a memorial inscription which fails to mention the sponsor in its obligatory formula is either pre-Viking-Age or medieval seems destined to confuse. Where, for example, does the Kilbar cross from the Hebrides belong? Since it is found in the British Isles, it would seem to have the Viking Age as its prerequisite. On the other hand, it almost certainly says *Eftir Þorgerðu Steinars dóttur es kors sjá restr*, and thus shares its obligatory formula with such indubitably early inscriptions as Rök (Ög 136), Oddernes I (NIyR 209), and Flemløse I (DR 192)—all of which are ultimately classed by Palm as pre-Viking-Age. Looking at the matter from a slightly different angle, one wonders, if the presence of the 'sponsor formula' is to be taken as synonymous with Viking-

Age status, what the need is for both terms. We could simply have ‘pre-sponsor formula’, ‘sponsor formula’ and ‘post-sponsor formula’ types, and thus avoid both terminological redundancy and a great deal of muddle (Kilbar would clearly be a ‘pre-sponsor formula’ type). I do not think I am splitting hairs here, or raising objections just for the fun of it. A close reading of the book reveals that Palm himself has difficulty in maintaining a clear and constant distinction between the chronological and typological senses of his terms. Thus on p. 49 we read of the three big chronological groups, the Primitive Norse, the Viking-Age, and the medieval, while on p. 64 we are told that the terms pre-Viking-Age, Viking-Age and medieval are to be applied to groupings that will not primarily be considered as chronologically distinct. By the time we arrive at p. 129 and learn that: ‘Monumenttypen rest sten har således använts från äldsta tid in i medeltid’ (‘the raised stone is thus a type of monument that was in use from the oldest times to the Middle Ages’), we can be forgiven for wondering whether ‘medeltid’ is being used in its chronological, typological, or not primarily chronological sense. Perhaps in the end none of this matters. Acknowledging on p. 247 that whatever criteria you use it can be difficult to draw a dividing line between Viking-Age and medieval monuments and inscriptions, and noting that this (not unsurprisingly, one must say) suggests a continuous development, the author concludes that from a common European point of view both groups might as well be considered medieval.

It is possible that initially Palm had intended to include the runic inscriptions from the British Isles in his study. On p. 48 we are informed that Table 4 lists the material which is to be the subject of the investigation—and there in Table 4 the British material appears, both Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon. However, p. 48 also tells us that the British inscriptions will only be included where the author considers this necessary. Patently the necessity never arose, for following a brief enumeration of the British corpus on p. 50 and a reference on p. 56 to the excerpting of material from Olsen 1954 not a word more is said of runic writing in Britain or Ireland—except for the dubious suggestion in the ‘Final Discussion’ that the Viking-Age rune-stone fashion in Scandinavia owes its origin chiefly to the emulation of similar practices in Anglo-Saxon England (see further below). The omission of the British material is a great pity, for it contains evidence relevant to several of the fundamental questions Palm raises. Above I have drawn attention to the part it should play in discussion of the three-way typological division of the memorial inscriptions, and in connection with this to the existence on the Kilbar cross of the very rare ‘memorial formula’—only three certain examples of which, according to Palm, are to be found (two Swedish and one Danish (p. 143), one Danish, one Swedish and one Norwegian (p. 248)). Apart from this, there are such matters as the prevalence of other ‘monument markers’ than *steinn* in the British Isles, the use of the verb *leggja* in (what are chronologically, at least) Viking-Age inscriptions, and the appearance of the otherwise unknown ‘monument marker’ *yfirlag* on the Thurso cross. Moving from the specific to the more general, I note that Palm considers the density of memorial inscriptions to be a function primarily of the agricultural and commercial potential of particular areas. If this is so, it is odd that Man has some thirty Scandinavian memorial inscriptions and England and Ireland but one or two apiece. The British material clearly indicates (as I suspect the

Scandinavian proper might too, if more carefully analysed) that one has to reckon with other factors than the purely economic, and that locally some of these factors may have been of far greater importance.

The dearth of Scandinavian memorial inscriptions in England makes me doubt Palm's suggestion that the impulse which started the Viking-Age rune-stone fashion in Scandinavia came from across the North Sea. If he were right, one would have expected to see at least some evidence of a thriving rune-stone culture in the Danelaw or the North-West. It is certainly hard to think that the few, mostly very brief Anglo-Saxon memorial inscriptions that survive (not quite the 30 plus implied by Palm) can reflect a practice vital and high-profile enough to have caused Viking eyes to open wide in admiration and Viking lips to utter the Norse equivalent of: 'So ein Ding müssen wir auch haben!' If the suggestion of Anglo-Saxon influence is to be dignified with the title of theory and to be taken seriously, it will need to be accompanied by far wider and deeper consideration of the cultural context in which such influence might have come about. As a start I would recommend careful reading of Hines 1991.

The two volumes I have reviewed here show the current vigour of runological studies—the new paths that are being explored and the fresh insights that are being offered into old problems. But they also show, I think, that the discipline can still be affected by a certain amateurishness, and that one or two practitioners are in danger of letting their enthusiasm for information technology override their scholarly prudence.

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HARDAR SAGA. BÁRÐAR SAGA. PORSKFIRÐINGA SAGA. FLÓAMANNA SAGA. ÞÓRARINS PÁTTR NEFJÓLFSSONAR. PORSTEINS PÁTTR UXAFÓTS. EGILS PÁTTR SÍÐU-HALLSSONAR. ORMS PÁTTR STÓRÓLFSSONAR. PORSTEINS PÁTTR TJALDSTÆÐINGS. PORSTEINS PÁTTR FORVITNA. BERGBÚA PÁTTR. KUMLBÚA PÁTTR. STJÖRNU-ODDA DRAUMR. Edited by ÞÓRHALLUR VILMUNDARSON and BJARNI VILHJÁLMSSON. *Íslenzk fornrit*, XIII. *Hið íslenzka fornritafélag*. Reykjavík, 1991. ccxxviii + 528 pp.

The publication of this book brings to twenty the total number of volumes so far edited in the *Íslenzk fornrit* series, which means that the series now covers *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók* (vol. I); all the Family Sagas (vols II–XIV; for a review in *Saga-Book* of vols II, IV and V, see *Saga-Book* XI: 3 (1936), 287–90; and for reviews of vols VII and XII see respectively *Saga-Book* XII: 1 (1937), 45–46, and XIV: 3 (1955–56), 244–47); *Ágrip af Noregskonunga sögum* (vol. XXIX; reviewed in *Saga-Book* XXII: 2 (1987), 120–21); *Orkneyinga saga* (vol. XXIV); and *Danakonunga sögur* (vol. XXXV; reviewed in *Saga-Book* XXI: 3–4 (1984–85), 293–96). In its published form the book now under review is to all intents and purposes the work of Þórhallur Vilmundarson, although, as he points out on pp. cviii and ccxxvi, much of the work on the text of *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* as edited here had been completed by Bjarni Vilhjálmsdóttir at the time of his death in 1987; and Bjarni's notes to the text of *Bárðar saga*, included among the footnotes to the text as printed on pp. 101–72, are enclosed in each case in quotation marks and followed by Bjarni's initials in brackets. The introduction to *Bárðar saga* in the present edition (pp. lxix–cix) must be regarded as Þórhallur's, except where he indicates otherwise.

This is a mammoth work, longer than any single volume so far published in the series. The four sagas edited here take up 327 pages of text, and the nine *þættir* a further 153, followed by nine pages of genealogies, a 35-page index, and five fold-out maps. Other maps and illustrations also appear in the volume; these are listed on p. 526. 168 pages of the 228-page introduction are devoted to the four sagas, and the remainder to the nine *þættir*, the individual works being introduced in the order in which their texts subsequently appear. Apart from two of the *þættir*, *Berghúa pátr* and *Kumlbúa pátr*, which are treated together, each of the works is introduced separately, and whereas the *pátr* introductions are not sub-divided, each of the introductions to the sagas consists, with occasional exceptions, of seven sections, as follows: (1) preservation; (2) verse(s) (except in the case of *Porskfirðinga saga*, which contains no verses in its preserved form); (3) relationships of content and wording (to other works); (4) oral tradition, place-names, folk customs, antiquities (this last item being included only in the cases of *Harðar saga* and *Porskfirðinga saga*); (5) chronology; (6) age, place of origin, author; and (7) manuscripts and editions. Preparation of this work for publication, which has understandably taken many years, has been in two main stages, begun respectively (as Þórhallur explains, pp. ccxxv–ccxxvi) in 1956 and 1983, the second being delayed partly by the compelling nature of the arguments offered in 1970 (mainly by John McKinnell in *Opuscula* 4 (*Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana* 30), 304–37, but cf. also Stefán Karlsson's remarks in the same number, esp. pp. 286–87) for the existence of the so-called *Pseudo-Vatnshyrna* codex, posing problems relevant in particular to the editing of

*Harðar saga*, *Bárðar saga*, *Flóamanna saga*, *Bergbúa þátr* and *Kumlbúa þátr* (see pp. v–xviii, lxix–lxxiv, cxxxiv–cxlii, and cciii–cciv of Þórhallur's edition); and partly by the development of Þórhallur's view in the course of his work not only on this edition, but also as Director (from its inception in 1969) of the Place-name Institute of the National Museum of Iceland, that the traditional understanding of the origins and meanings of many of the place-names occurring in the works edited here needs to be thoroughly questioned and revised (see pp. ccxxv–ccxxvi).

*Harðar saga* is here edited from AM 556 a, 4to, in which it is preserved in its entirety, and from the leaf in AM 564 a, 4to, that preserves part of a manifestly shorter redaction of the saga, the part corresponding to chs 1–7 and the greater part of ch. 8 in the longer, 556 a redaction. The text of 564 a is printed below that of 556 a on pp. 4–22. Þórhallur argues that 564 a represents a shortened version of a longer one underlying, though not identical with, the one preserved in 556 a, and that this underlying longer version was close or identical to the original one, which was written by Styrmir Kárason (d. 1245) in response to certain events of his lifetime, including Sturla Sighvatsson's bid in 1235 to bring Iceland under the Norwegian king, his defeat at Örlygsstaðir in 1238, and Snorri Sturluson's slaying in 1241 (Þórhallur makes much of the fact that Hörðr, the hero of the saga, lives for a time on the island of Geirshólmr in Hvalfjörður, as did Sturla Sighvatsson in 1238; see further below). Þórhallur says little about the date or circumstances of the saga's shortening as reflected in 564 a, but implies (p. xviii; cf. p. cxiii) that it took place in the fourteenth century as part of a twofold tendency to reduce the *fornaldarsaga* elements in thirteenth-century Family Sagas and to save manuscript space. As for the form in which the longer version is preserved in 556 a, Þórhallur follows Sture Hast in suggesting that Einarr Haflidason á Breiðabólssstað í Vesturhópi (d. 1393) may have been responsible for it.

The text of *Bárðar saga* as edited here is based on four manuscripts which in different ways reflect the three main branches of the saga's manuscript tradition as summarised in the stemma on p. lxxii; cf. p. cviii. Of these four, AM 158, fol., representing one of the three branches, preserves the saga in its entirety; AM 564 a, 4to, representing another, preserves what corresponds in Þórhallur's edition to a section of the text extending from nearly halfway through ch. 5 to near the end of ch. 8; and AM 162 h, fol. and AM 489, 4to, representing the third branch, preserve what correspond respectively to sections of Þórhallur's text extending from two-thirds of the way through ch. 8 to just over halfway through ch. 13, and from one third of the way through ch. 10 to just after the beginning of the final chapter, 22. As explained on p. cviii, Þórhallur's text, which differs slightly from that originally planned for this edition by Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, is based at the beginning of the saga (for the first four and a half chapters) and at the end (for the greater part of the final chapter) on 158. Chs 5–8 are edited from 564 a for as far as its text extends (see above); the end of ch. 8 and subsequent chapters up to 13 are edited from 162 h to the point in ch. 13 where the text of 162 h breaks off (see above); and the remainder of the saga, up to just after the beginning of ch. 22, is edited from 489. Variants are also given from five other manuscripts listed on p. 100 together with those discussed here; their places in the tradition are indicated on p. lxii. Þórhallur

tentatively argues that the saga was written by one or more of the monks of Helgafellsklastr shortly after the middle of the fourteenth century.

*Porskfirðinga saga* is here edited from the one vellum manuscript in which it is preserved, AM 561, 4to, and from which all its paper manuscripts descend. The state of this manuscript is such that parts of chs 10 and 12, all but the title of ch. 11, and parts of the final chapter, 20, are missing from the text. Þórhallur argues that the surviving *Porskfirðinga saga* is one of two versions, the other being the one referred to by Sturla Þórðarson in his redaction of *Landnámabok*, i. e. *Sturlubók*, completed in 1275–80, which presents certain events differently from the way they are presented in the surviving version of the saga. This latter version, Þórhallur maintains, made use of *Sturlubók* as well as of the older version to which *Sturlubók* refers; the older and the younger version must therefore pre-date and post-date *Sturlubók* respectively. The older version, he argues, was written in the third quarter of the thirteenth century, perhaps in the environment of Sturla Þórðarson, and the younger version in the first half of the fourteenth.

*Flóamanna saga* also existed in two versions. The longer one survives only fragmentarily in two manuscripts, AM 445 b, 4to and AM 515, 4to, of which the latter preserves a copy of the former, made (by Einar Eyjólfsson, d. 1695) at a time when 445 b contained rather more of the longer version's text than it does in its present form. The longer version is thought to be the one closer to the original. The shorter, or shortened version, is preserved in its entirety in a large number of paper manuscripts, of which AM 516, 4to, is used as the basis for Þórhallur's edition, with variants given from manuscripts believed to represent the two other main branches of the shortened version's descent, as outlined in the stemma on p. cxxxviii. The text of 515, representing the longer version, is printed below that of 516 for as far as it can confidently be said to have independent value, i. e. from near the end of ch. 18 to halfway through the first sentence of ch. 24; and the text of 445 b is also printed below that of 516 for as far as it extends, i. e. from that point onwards to nearly halfway into ch. 25, and from the beginning of ch. 33 to the end of the saga's final chapter, 35. Ch. 24 in the longer version, it may be noted, contains a verse found only in the longer version which Richard Perkins has argued (in *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 2 (1969), 92–101) is a rowing chant, as Þórhallur notes on pp. cxlii–cxliii. Þórhallur is indeed heavily indebted to Perkins's work on *Flóamanna saga*, as he acknowledges with frequent references to his various writings, published and unpublished, on the subject, not least his Oxford D. Phil. thesis of 1971 and his *Flóamanna saga, Gaulverjabær and Haukr Erlendsson*, *Studia Islandica* 36 (1978). He appears to agree with Perkins that the original version of *Flóamanna saga* was written for Haukr Erlendsson (d. not later than 1334), and the shortened version before 1380. As the original version's place of composition, however, he suggests Viðeyjarklastr as a possible alternative to Gaulverjabær, suggested by Perkins.

What is distinctive about this volume is the great emphasis given, mainly in the introduction, to the editor's theory of the origins of Icelandic place-names, which seems at times to come close to being a theory of the origins of Icelandic sagas as well, though nowhere in this edition, as far as I can discover, does Þórhallur explicitly present his theory as one of saga origins, or discuss it in relation to earlier

saga origin theories. The first stage of the theory's exposition, briefly summarised, is as follows: places in Iceland were originally named by the earliest settlers after physical or natural features of the landscape. For instance, if an islet (ON *hólmr*) or a spit of land (ON *tangi*) looked in shape like a spear (ON *geirr*) it would be likely to be named *Geirshólmr* or *Geirstangi*; if a bay or cove (ON *vík*), or part of it, was covered with bird-droppings (ON *drit*), it might well be called *Dritvík*. The process is not as simple as I am perhaps making it sound, however; if it were objected that an island called *Geirshólmr*, for instance the one in Hvalfjörður referred to in *Harðar saga* (depicted opposite p. 64 of Pórhallur's edition, and also on the dust jacket), looked nothing whatever like a spear or a spearhead, Pórhallur would reply (cf. p. xxxvii) that its naming was influenced partly by the frequency of the element *Geir(s)-* in Icelandic island names generally (which was itself due to some of the islands in question showing the resemblance), and partly by the proximity of this particular island to Geirstangi, which, according to Pórhallur at least, does resemble a spearhead.

As so far described, the theory is purely one of place-name, as opposed to saga, origins. So far, so good, though it may be pointed out even at this stage that in order to uphold this theory it would be necessary to check carefully in each case that the settlers would indeed have perceived the places in question in the way the theory requires; on p. 112 of his edition Pórhallur refers to a discussion by him in *Grímnir* (1980), 138–39, of the place-name *Pistilsfjörðr* (now *Pistilfjörður*), which he derives from the thistle-like shape of a headland (named *Langanes*) in the fjord in question. It is true that the headland looks (something) like a thistle (ON *pistill*) in the aerial photograph accompanying the discussion in *Grímnir*, but the question must arise as to whether it would have done so to the original settlers, who, according to the theory, gave it the name, and who did not have the benefit of aerial photography. Here it is up to the potential critic to visit Pistilfjörður to see for himself.

The theory begins to look like a theory of saga origins when Pórhallur moves on to the next stage of its exposition. Here he argues that place-names themselves often outlived the memory of their derivation from features of the landscape, with the result that they were frequently reinterpreted—indeed misinterpreted, according to the theory—as deriving from personal names, and/or from events assumed to have taken place in the area, which meant that not only persons, but also information about them which might well take narrative form, had to be invented in order to explain the attachment of the name to the place. Thus in *Harðar saga* as edited here, p. 65, Geirshólmr is so named because Hörðr's foster-brother Geirr lived there; and Geirstangi (p. 85) derives its name from Geirr's dead body being washed ashore there. According to *Bárðar saga* (see p. 111), Dritvík derives its name from the fact that it was contaminated by the excrement of Bárðr and his followers on their arrival there from Norway. Thirdly, according to *Landnámabók* (see *Grímnir* (1980), 139), Pistilsfjörðr was settled by Ketill pistill, whose nickname by implication explains the fjord's name. It was details such as these, Pórhallur seems to imply, that provided the stimulus for saga-composition, though he is of course well aware that by no means all saga-characters can have been invented, and that events described in the sagas were often modelled on historical ones. Although in the case

of *Harðar saga* he derives the hero's name, *Hörðr*, from a place-name recorded in the neighbourhood of Geirstangi and containing what Þórhallur sees (pp. xl–xli) as originally the element *harð-* (from the adjective *harðr*, 'hard'; he takes it as descriptive of the landscape), he also argues, as indicated above, that certain events of the saga—notably Hörðr's sojourn with Geirr and others on Geirshólmr—were influenced by events of Styrmir Káráson's lifetime, not least Sturla Sighvatsson's sojourn there in 1238, referred to in ch. 132 of Sturla Pórðarson's *Íslendinga saga* (for a critical discussion of this argument, see Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir's review in *Skírnir* 166 (1992), 451–62).

Þórhallur's theory has been presented here as involving two stages of exposition. If Stage One was all there was to it, one would expect it to appear in this edition mainly in the footnotes to the texts, explaining individual place-names as and when they occur. The fact that it bulks so large in the introduction (where it comes up mainly in the introductions to the sagas, though also in some of the *pátr* introductions, notably those to *Þorsteins pátr tjaldstæðings* and *Bergbúa pátr*), strongly suggests, however, that there is a Stage Two element in Þórhallur's purpose, i. e. that he is tentatively offering the place-name theory as a theory of saga origins as well, even if he does not say so directly. It may then be useful to examine the theory critically with this possible dimension of it in mind.

The two stages in the exposition of Þórhallur's theory correspond, of course, to two stages in the semantic development (as he sees it) of each place-name for which, in his view, the theory works. It seems to me that a place-name thus accounted for is only likely to be helpful in the context of saga origins if the meaning it is supposed to have acquired at the second stage of its semantic development can be thought to have the potential for constituting a *motif*, either on its own or in combination with one or more neighbouring place-names viewed as having undergone, or as capable of undergoing, the same process of semantic development. A motif may be defined, with the help of Alan Bruford's *Gaelic Folktales and Mediaeval Romances* (1969), 6, n. 1, as an item of information 'sufficient to be the basis of a story in itself (given explanations of the circumstances)'. This is perhaps another way of saying, as Laurits Bødker does in his dictionary of *Folk Literature (Germanic)* (1965), 201–02, that in order to qualify as a motif, an item of information 'must have something about it that will make people remember and repeat it; it must be more than a *commonplace*. A mother as such is not a m[otif]. A cruel mother becomes one because she is at least thought to be unusual'. Thus the island name *Geirshólmr*, thought of as indicating that someone called Geirr lived on the island in question, might not qualify as a motif unless it could be shown (as it very likely can in the case of Geirshólmr in *Hvalfjörðr*) that it was an unusual place for anyone to live; but taken together with the neighbouring mainland place-name *Geirstangi*, thought of as indicating where Geirr's body was washed ashore, it would certainly do so, raising the questions of how Geirr died, what he was doing on the island in the first place, and so on. If this is considered insufficient material to form the basis of a story whose main character is called not Geirr, but Hörðr (a reservation that Þórhallur himself seems to have, to judge from his remarks on pp. xxxvi–xxxvii and xl), it may be replied that Geirr is not as much of an

*aukapersóna* in *Harðar saga* as Pórhallur seems to suggest; he is presented as a close friend of Hörðr, and in many ways as a foil to him, and the index references to Geirr in Pórhallur's edition are not in fact that many fewer than those to Hörðr. As for *Dritvík*, as explained at the second of the two stages outlined above, it is easy to see how the contamination of a bay by human excrement might be regarded as a sufficiently memorable incident to constitute a motif, not least as it is described in *Bárðar saga*, which at the relevant point (p. 111 of the edition) uses the phrase *ganga á borð at álfreka* ('to defecate overboard, thus driving away the elves'), indicating that it was thought of as an act of defiance against the supernatural inhabitants of the region, in a context to be explained more fully below. Similarly, Ketill pistill's supposed unique status as the initial settler of Þistilfjörður would no doubt be enough to make his arrival there qualify as a motif, raising questions about where he came from and what happened to him and his descendants after he arrived.

If Pórhallur were to offer his theory as one of saga as well as place-name origins, it seems to me that, of the sagas edited here, *Bárðar saga* would be the one best suited to support his case. Here he offers place-names as an explanation not only of the name and byname of the saga's main character, Bárðr Snæfellsáss, but also of two centrally important events in the saga: Bárðr's arrival in Iceland from Norway in ch. 4, and his disappearance, apparently into Snæfellsjökull (see p. 119 of the edition), in ch. 6. This explanation centres on the bay named *Dritvík*, which, as can be seen from the map on p. lxxxviii (cf. also the photograph on p. xc), is enclosed by two cliffs, now named respectively *Norður-* and *Suðurbarði*. Here the *Norður-* and *Suður-* elements mean of course 'North' and 'South'; the *-barði* element means 'ship with iron prow', and the cliffs were so named presumably because of their resemblance to ships or to ships' prows. In the bay itself, mainly in the sea but partly on the foreshore, is a large rock which itself resembles a ship (and is indeed now called *Bárðarskip*, though this name has probably arisen as a result of the saga's influence). On this rock may be discerned the shape of a face looking towards the glacier-topped mountain Snjófell, some three to four miles inland. According to Pórhallur, the names of the cliffs have combined with the actual features of the landscape just described to give rise to the idea of a man named Bárðr (not *Barði*, since *Bárðr* was commoner as a personal name than *Barði*, which itself was common in the region as a place-name, see p. lxxxvii, n. 37) arriving by ship at *Dritvík* and disappearing into Snjófell. The idea of his disappearing into the mountain, which it might be too much to expect to have been stimulated solely by the shape of the nearby rock, could have been assisted by the notion of Bárðr's driving away the mountain's supernatural inhabitants, the elves, in the manner suggested by the place-name *Dritvík* as the saga explains it (see above). Once established, the idea of his disappearance would have marked Bárðr himself as a supernatural being, an elf or *álf*, and at first, Pórhallur suggests, he was known as *Bárðr Snjófellsálf*; but later, as his reputation for protecting people in the area developed—partly, Pórhallur believes, under the influence of stories of St Michael the Archangel—he was promoted from *álf* to *áss* (i. e. 'god' or '(patron) deity'), and came to be known as *Bárðr Snjófellsáss* or *Snæfellsáss*. The circumstances of his name's origin are reflected, Pórhallur also believes, in the saga's references to

the two-pronged stick (*klafakerling* or *klafastafr*) which Bárðr is more than once represented as holding (see pp. 129, 133, 135 and 139 of the edition), and which may be thought to resemble in shape the two cliffs or *barðar* enclosing Drítvík.

Here one begins to see how an entire saga might develop from a place-name as accounted for by Þórhallur. Once the commonplace, 'man arrives by ship', had combined with the potential motif, 'man disappears into mountain', and the man in question had been identified as Bárðr on the basis of the place-name Barði, people would ask what manner of being this Bárðr was, where did he come from and what were his origins, what happened to him after his disappearance, did he have any descendants, and so on. In this way something like the surviving *Bárðar saga* might develop; the saga indeed describes in its opening chapters Bárðr's partly giant origins, his daughters by his two marriages and his departure for Iceland from Norway with King Haraldr hárfagri's rise to power; and later goes on to tell how, after his disappearance, he was 'seen by rare glimpses', gave protection to people in the area, and in due course became the father, by the daughter of one of his hosts, of a son, Gestr, who on a smaller scale carried on his good work.

This, then, or something like it, is the theory of saga origins that Þórhallur comes near to enunciating in his introduction, even though he never actually does so. He need not have been deterred by the obvious fact that by no means all Icelandic sagas can have originated in the way that *Bárðar saga*, to judge from the information he provides, may have done. After all, as he himself would admit (cf. p. xxxvii), by no means all islands with the element *Geir-* in their names can have been so named because they looked like spears or spearheads; part at least of his argument is that once islands that *did* show the resemblance had been given such names, the way was open for other islands which did not do so to be given them. Similarly, one could presumably argue that once sagas had begun to develop in the manner suggested by the information assembled by Þórhallur in the case of *Bárðar saga*, other sagas could originate in circumstances and for reasons altogether different from those pertaining in that case. I am not saying that, if Þórhallur were to offer such a theory, I would necessarily accept it; but I am indicating that his apparent reluctance to commit himself in this matter makes for a somewhat uneven quality in the edition under review, where the work of the place-name specialist does not always combine easily with that of the saga editor. One wonders at times what all the references to place-names are doing in an introduction to so many works of literature, and feels the need for these references to be placed within a theoretical framework that would clarify their relevance to the study of the sagas as part of literary history. A 'place-name theory' of saga origins would not necessarily supplant the Book Prose theory, with which the *Íslensk fornrit* series has long been deservedly associated; but it would add an interesting dimension to the study of the complex question of how the sagas came into being.

Apart from this, there is in my view very little to which exception can be taken in this edition. One's own particular interests are bound to make one feel from time to time, in reading it, that certain aspects of the works edited here could have been commented on otherwise than they have been, perhaps most especially in the footnotes. I personally would like to have seen references to Gert Kreuzer's

*Kindheit und Jugend in der altnordischen Literatur, Teil I* (1987) in the footnotes dealing with child-exposure as referred to in *Harðar saga*, ch. 8 (p. 20), *Þorsteins þátr uxafóts*, ch. 4 (pp. 348–49), and *Þorsteins þátr tjaldstæðings*, ch. 1 (p. 425) (cf. my review of Kreutzer's book in *Scandinavica* 29 (1990), 102–06). I should also like to have seen, both in these footnotes and in those dealing with the motif of the hero performing his first major deed at the age of twelve (in relation to *Harðar saga*, ch. 11, on p. 32, *Þorsteins þátr uxafóts*, ch. 8, on p. 356, and *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, ch. 3, on p. 463), some indication of the relevance of this motif, as well as of that of child-exposure, to the international heroic biography discussed by Jan de Vries in his *Heroic Song and Heroic Legend* (1959; Eng. trans. 1963), ch. 11. The footnotes on pp. 77 and 350, dealing with references to polar bears in ch. 31 of *Harðar saga* and ch. 5 of *Þorsteins þátr uxafóts* respectively, could usefully have referred to Niels Lukman's article, 'Ragnarr loðbrók, Sigifrid, and the Saints of Flanders', in *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 9 (1976), 7–50, which includes a discussion (on pp. 36–37; cf. also pp. 34–35) of an account in the thirteenth-century *Annales Lundenses* of the metamorphosis into a polar bear of one Ywar, possibly identifiable with Ívarr, son of Ragnarr loðbrók; it may be significant that, in *Þorsteins þátr uxafóts*, ch. 5 (p. 350), the bear is referred to in the context of a discussion of Þorsteinn's parentage, and that Ívarr is the name of Þorsteinn's father. The possibility of a connection between the revenant king Raknarr of chs 18–21 of *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* and Reginheri, the leader of the Viking attack on Paris in 845, treated sceptically by Pórhallur in a footnote on pp. 161–62, might gain support from further delving into the sources for this event than Pórhallur seems to have undertaken; the account in the anonymous ninth-century Frankish Latin *Miracula Sancti Germani*, ch. 30, of the arrival from Paris of Reginheri (here called Ragenarius) at the court of the Danish king Horic bears a striking resemblance to the account in *Bárðar saga*, ch. 18, of the arrival of Raknarr at the court of Óláfr Tryggvason (see Niels Skyum-Nielsen, *Vikingerne i Paris* (2nd ed., 1967), 38–40). Since they appeared in the same year as his book, Pórhallur could not be expected to refer to my discussions of the cow Síbilja described in chs 10 and 12 of *Ragnars saga loðbrókar* (see my *Studies in Ragnars saga loðbrókar and its Major Scandinavian Analogues* (1991), 114–17, and 'Loðbróka og Gunnlöð', *Skírnir* 165 (1991), 343–59, esp. 357–58), which might have given him something to take issue with in his own discussion of that cow in his footnote on the sacred bull of ch. 14 of *Þorsteins þátr uxafóts* on p. 367. But he could have referred, and perhaps should have done in his footnote on the slaying of the giant Brúsi by Ormr in ch. 9 of *Orms þátr Stórlfssonar* (on p. 418), to Roberta Frank's dismissal of the blood-eagle method of killing (the one here used) as wholly unhistorical (see Frank's 'Viking Atrocity and Skaldic Verse: the Rite of the Blood-Eagle', *English Historical Review* 99 (1984), 332–43); Pórhallur certainly does not deny its historicity in the footnote in question (I may add that I have since followed up Frank's argument in a short article, 'Blóðörn eða blóðormur?' in Gísli Sigurðsson, et al., eds, *Sagnabing helgað Jónasi Kristjánssyni sjötugum 10. apríl 1994* (1994), II, 539–41). This method of killing, as is well known and as Pórhallur's note indicates, also occurs in traditions relating to Ragnarr loðbrók. Finally on the last-named topic, it is not

strictly correct to say, as Þórhallur seems to do on p. ccxiii of his introduction, that according to *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, Áslaug Sigurðardóttir Fáfnisbana invaded Sweden with ten ships; what the relevant chapter (11) of *Ragnars saga* (as edited by Magnus Olsen: *Völsunga saga ok Ragnars saga loðbrókar* (1906–08), 146–47) actually says is that Áslaug assembled ten ships in preparation for a hostile visit, with four of her sons by Ragnarr, to Sweden, and then, after a discussion with one of these sons, Ívarr, agreed to lead part of the army there by land.

As D. A. H. Evans, reviewing Hermann Pálsson's edition of *Hávamál*, notes elsewhere in this issue of *Saga-Book*, it is interesting and sometimes surprising for non-Icelanders reading Old Icelandic texts as edited for present-day Icelanders to see what the latter need, and do not need, to have explained to them. I was interested, for example, to see that, in the edition here under review, the adjective *ósýniligr* in the phrase 'hann var mjök ósýniligr' (in ch. 9 of *Porskfirðinga saga*) was glossed in a footnote (on p. 197) as 'óásjálegur' (i. e. 'unsightly'); the modern Icelander would presumably be in danger of taking *ósýniligr* to mean 'invisible' (though the intensive adverb *mjök* might give him pause). On the other hand, I was surprised that no comment was made on the neuter form *eitt* in a sentence in the final chapter (15) of *Þorsteins þátr uxafóts*: 'Um daginn eptir . . . sá þeir brettán menn á skóginum, ok var eitt kona í' (p. 368.) Since the woman in question is described a few lines further on (on p. 369) as 'it mesta flagð', this is presumably an example of the tendency in some Germanic languages, as indicated by Fr. Klauber in his edition of *Beowulf* (*Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg* (3rd ed., 1950), 180, note to line 1260), for the genders of supernatural beings to be indeterminate. As a barbarophone (to use David Evans's term), I would have liked an explanation of this in a footnote, and am impressed to see that Icelandic readers apparently do not need one.

The relatively minor points raised in the last two paragraphs are intended to underline rather than detract from the immense value of this edition, by giving an idea of the connections and comparisons it has stimulated just one reader to make. While this book, as I suggested earlier in this review, is not quite as much of a pioneer work as it seems at times to want (and deserve) to become, it is nevertheless greatly to be welcomed.

RORY McTURK

THE NORSE OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC. Edited by G. F. BIGELOW. *Acta Archaeologica*, 61: 1990. *Munksgaard International Publishers Ltd*. Copenhagen, 1991. 291 pp.  
NORDATLANTISK ARKÆOLOGI—VIKINGETID OG MIDDELALDER: BEBYGGELSE OG ØKONOMI. *hikuin*, 15. *Forlaget Hikuin*. Højbjerg, 1989. 237 pp.

NORSE AND LATER SETTLEMENT AND SUBSISTENCE IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC. Edited by C. D. MORRIS and D. J. RACKHAM. *Occasional Paper Series*, 1. *Department of Archaeology, University of Glasgow*. Glasgow, 1992. x + 230 pp.

If the three volumes under review collectively provide something of a benchmark for Norse Atlantic studies c.1990, the bench is occupied mainly by various biologists, and the principal mark is that left by ancient environmental remains. Yet

the study of palaeoecology does not totally dominate any of the three; each contains a range of approaches, whether encapsulated in site-specific reports or in more generalising summaries. There is a certain amount of academic recycling by authors between the various volumes, which one can charitably ascribe to the hope of reaching different audiences; more questionable is the presentation in some papers of a considerable amount of only partially digested or uncertainly dated evidence. Linguistically challenged readers of *hikuin* on either side of the North Sea will benefit from summaries in Danish or English; both the other works are wholly in English.

Each collection encompasses virtually the whole Norse North Atlantic area, although any satisfaction that some common new approaches are yielding fresh insights must not blind us to the difficulties of precisely defining what the term Norse North Atlantic really signifies. Its implications are touched upon in more or less detail by several authors; Bertelsen (in *Acta Archaeologica*; henceforth AA) suggests that both Southern Scandinavia and the British Isles should be omitted from the classification as both were in relatively close contact with urbanised societies; Amorosi (AA) makes an east-west distinction on the basis of animal bone 'signatures'; Arneborg (in *Norse and Later Settlement and Subsistence in the North Atlantic*; henceforth NLSS) emphasises the independence of the Greenlanders; Bigelow (in NLSS) notes that even Orkney and Shetland settlement histories may not necessarily be identical. Diversity, both national and regional within the broader study area, is a key theme.

Each collection also ranges widely through time, with much emphasis on later medieval and even some post-medieval to early modern evidence; for example, Buckland, Sadler and Guðrún Sveinbjarnardóttir (NLSS) deal with Reykholt, Iceland, not in relation to Snorri Sturluson's farm, but to demonstrate palaeoenvironmental insights into a seventeenth- to eighteenth-century house.

Overall, Iceland receives by far the most coverage. In addition to a clutch of interim excavation reports and palaeoecological studies, Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson deals with fundamentals in discussing Icelandic chronology generally (AA), rightly highlighting weaknesses in the interlinking of tephrachronology, documentary evidence and ice core dating, but affirming faith in Icelandic carbon-14 dates; elsewhere (in *Nordatlantisk arkæologi—vikingetid og middelalder*; henceforth NAA) he offers a redating of the well-known 'Commonwealth farm' site of Stöng; the supposed *skyr* production at that site is also reinterpreted by Buckland and Perry (NAA).

Shieling studies are in the ascendant and geographically widespread. Guðrún Sveinbjarnardóttir's possible Icelandic sites are believed to be medieval or early modern (AA/NAA), while Buckland and Sadler (AA) cannot supply any conclusive environmental distinction between farm and shieling; Mahler offers new evidence for Viking-Age shielings on the Faroes (NAA/AA), and Christensen discusses the Greenland evidence (NLSS).

Settlement (*landnám*) is another ever-present topic. Bigelow (in NLSS) weighs various scenarios for Shetland; Arge (NAA) ponders the reliability of the presently available Faroese evidence, dismissing en route any pre-Norse settlement; Hansen's excavation of a Viking farm at Toftanes (NAA/AA) provides complementary data.

Buckland *et al.* (AA) apply palaeoecological methods to the study of the *landnám* horizon at Holt, Iceland; Bjarni F. Einarsson (NAA) offers a hypothesis of much greater heterogeneity in the settlement of Iceland; Wallace (AA) proffers an important reinterpretation of L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland.

Christensen discusses Greenland *landnám* with a focus on the smaller farms and pasture resources (NAA/NLSS), in synthetic essays which are typical of all the contributions concerning Greenland. Keller's 'Model of Norse Greenlandic Medieval Society' and Arneborg's 'The Roman Church in Norse Greenland' (both in AA) ponder the significance of ecclesiastical links and holdings; Berglund, drawing upon data from the Eastern settlement, suggests that most of the known church sites are relatively late in date. McGovern (NLSS, building on his article in AA) stresses this point in an impressive general survey which emphasises new approaches and interpretations.

Closest to home, Batey (AA) provides a useful summary of evidence from Caithness; articles concerning work there at Freswick (AA, NAA, NLSS) are richer on method than on results, and of them the general reader may most enjoy Jones's palaeoscatology (AA) for an insight into scientific endeavour. Orkney is represented by a study of the environment and resources of Birsay Bay which draws largely on post-medieval to early modern references (NAA), and by Batey's preliminary note on the discovery of what is interpreted as a Norse mill at Earl's Bu, Orphir (NLSS). Shetland studies include Crawford's update on excavation of the settlement at Da Biggins, Papa Stour (AA), Butler on steatite (NAA; see also his wide-ranging survey in AA), and Bigelow's (NAA/NLSS) overviews of research potential, both of them salutary and stimulating.

The varying circumstances and emphases of archaeological study on each of the North Atlantic land masses, coupled with how archaeology relates on each to other fields of investigation, may account for the absence of Faroese and Icelandic syntheses, which are sorely missed. Among the more welcome trends represented, it is good to see that appropriate care is now being accorded to later evidence, and to have an introduction to some of the new insights provided by palaeoecology. If all three of these valuable collections emphasise that the quest for an understanding of the Viking Age and Norse settlement of the North Atlantic still urgently requires a more representative set of data, they jointly and individually are worth the attention of any student of the Viking Age and its consequences, both to light upon particular new discoveries or reinterpretations of famous sites and to gain an overview of recent trends in this academic area.

R. A. HALL

VIKING TREASURE FROM THE NORTH WEST: THE CUERDALE HOARD IN ITS CONTEXT. Edited by JAMES GRAHAM-CAMPBELL. Selected Papers from The Vikings of the Irish Sea Conference, Liverpool, 18–20 May 1990. *National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, Occasional Papers, Liverpool Museum, 5. Liverpool Museum*. Liverpool, 1992. viii + 115 pp.

DE HÆRGER OG DE BRÆNDER: DANMARK OG ENGLAND I VIKINGETIDEN. By NIELS LUND. *Gyldendal*. Copenhagen, 1993. 212 pp.

*Viking Treasure from the North West* is the second book to be published in connection with the exhibition organised by Liverpool Museum to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Cuerdale hoard's find. It is a collection of papers, providing an inter-disciplinary survey of the context of the hoard. The book focuses on the predominantly Norse areas of influence and settlement, not only in the north-west of England, but also, as the title of the conference suggests, the Irish Sea region as a whole. The ordering of the papers is thematic, moving from the specific—the Cuerdale hoard itself—to the broader framework—historical, place-name and archaeological evidence. Three further papers look at the local economy into which the Cuerdale hoard fits, with essays on the monetary economy, coastal trading ports and sources of silver in the Irish Sea region. The final paper returns to Cuerdale, surveying comparable hoards from the British Isles.

As Nick Higham writes, there is very little written evidence for the north-west at this time. Higham's attempt to reconstruct the historical background is, in his own words, 'highly speculative' (p. 29), an apology he makes at both the beginning and end of his paper, arguing that such conjecture must be preferable to complete silence. The article is ambitious, thought-provoking and imaginative, but marred by a number of points. Apart from straightforward errors, such as the refortification of Chester in 907 being attributed to Ethelred rather than Æthelflæd (p. 25), several of the references given do not back up points made in the text. Higham cites the Chronicle entries for 829 and 942 in support of his statement that the southern border of Northumbria ran along the Mersey, Dore, Whitwell Gate and Humber (p. 21), but the relevant entries do not mention the Mersey. On the same page he writes: 'Despite views to the contrary (e. g. Hill 1981, 148), there seems no reason to suppose that southern Lancashire had been lost to the Mercians prior to the Viking Age.' The point is not expanded or justified and, going to Hill's *Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England*, we find only a map of dioceses for the years AD 850–1035. Some guidance on the speculative elements in the text might have been useful, as facts, possible facts and conjecture go largely undistinguished. One could be forgiven for thinking that there is a general consensus on the location of Brunanburh: 'a full scale battle probably fought on the very boundary between English Mercia and south-west Northumbria, at Bromborough—*Brunanburh* (Dodgson 1953–7, passim)' (p. 28). In spite of this, some interesting suggestions emerge, such as the use of the Ribble as a base for Ragnald and the expelled Dublin Norse, and the tentative identification of Preston as a Norse base.

While the title of the book refers to 'Viking treasure', and the conference title to the 'Vikings of the Irish Sea', vikings as such do not feature strongly in this book. This is partly due to the limitations of the source material. Edwards's paper

highlights the difficulty of identifying vikings in the archaeological record, particularly as so many finds were made in the nineteenth century. The vikings are instead traced through hoards of mixed coin and bullion, like the Cuerdale hoard, through continental and other foreign coins, and through the peck marks on this silver. A complex picture of Scandinavian settlement can also be traced through place-names. However, the word ‘context’, rather than ‘viking’, is the key to this book, and most of the papers are surveys of a particular source material, with a more or less elastic geographical and chronological span. Fellows-Jensen and Metcalf set the Irish Sea evidence against the wider background of the British Isles, and both Metcalf and Griffiths also include pre-Viking-Age material in their respective topics of the monetary economy and trading ports of the Irish Sea region. The vikings played an important role in this context but by no means the only role.

While the Cuerdale book is very much aimed at the interested and informed academic reader, Lund styles his book as being written for anyone who is interested in the events of Viking-Age England (and who can understand Danish!). This fact is reflected in the absence of footnotes and detailed bibliography. There are suggestions for further reading, which reveal an apparent lack of similar surveys in Danish. By summarising the historical evidence and previous research on the subject, this book may therefore fill a gap in the Danish market. The title of the book implies a joint focus on Denmark and England, but the précis on the dustcover reveals that it actually concentrates on the events of Viking-Age England, with the Danish situation viewed in the light of these. Lund’s book is a straightforward historical account, centring on southern and eastern England—on Danes and the Danelaw—as one might expect from a book written in Danish and including Denmark in its title. However, this emphasis on events in the south and east also partly results from Lund’s dependence on written sources.

*De hærger og de brænder* is divided into three main sections: the ninth century; the Danelaw in the tenth century; and England’s second Viking Age. This chronological sequence is sometimes disguised by the chapter headings which seem to concentrate on topics, illustrated by quotations such as ‘Hvor er de kristnes gud?’ ('Where is the god of the Christians?') and ‘De lovede dem penge for fred’ ('They promised them money for peace'), or on individuals such as Thorkell the Tall and Sven Forkbeard.

There is little new material in the book, but the Danish perspective does enliven it, and Lund’s discussions of old and new theories breaks up the straightforward narrative account. Among the more unusual items included for discussion are Eric Kroman’s theory that the Danish king Gorm the Old was the grandson of Guthrum, leader of the East Anglian Danes, and Arup’s extrapolation of a predominantly peasant society in Denmark, and hence in the Danelaw, from the problematic runestone at Sønder Vinge (both theories being duly given short shrift). The book is liberally peppered with a selection of excerpts from a refreshingly wide range of primary sources from England, Denmark, Ireland, Frankia and Sweden. There is also a large number of plates and illustrations, although sometimes their relevance is not clear; for example, on page 185 there is a distribution map of rune-stones from central eastern Sweden that mention Ingvar. Ingvar’s expedition to the East is not

mentioned in the text, and the map seems to have no relation to the subject-matter of the book.

In the section on the Danelaw, the absence of documentary evidence forces Lund to look to other disciplines. There is a detailed discussion of place-name evidence in chapter six, which is on the Danish settlement. He takes a minimalist approach to the question of the density of settlement, concluding with the controversial statement that even if Danish linguistic influence on English is massive, it cannot be translated into a large or peasant migration. Dismissing the large numbers of freemen in the Danelaw as products of the Danish settlement, Lund follows Peter Sawyer's argument that Domesday Book's commissioners classified the population on different principles in eastern England. This overlooks the fact that the Domesday administrative area (circuit four) which covered Leicestershire, Warwickshire and Northamptonshire has great anomalies in the number of freemen on either side of Watling Street, in spite of the fact that this circuit was treated as an administrative whole.

When surveying the history of the Five Boroughs, Lund writes: 'Vort bedste kildemateriale til de indre forhold i Danelagen i denne periode [877–910] er efter mørterne. De fleste af dem stammer fra det meget store skattefund fra Cuerdale' ('Our best source material for the internal situation in the Danelaw in this period [877–910] is again the coins. Most of these come from the very large find of treasure at Cuerdale') (p. 100). This, with the photograph of the Cuerdale hoard on the back cover of the book, brings us back to *Viking Treasure from the North West*. These are two very different studies of vikings and the Viking Age in England. The difference in their arrangement and approach is, of course, partly due to the difference in their format and aims, but also follows from the evidence for their subject matter. In the absence of detailed written sources for the north-west, it is necessary to turn to other disciplines to build up a picture of the context of the Cuerdale hoard. Lund only uses these disciplines to fill gaps in the relatively abundant written evidence for events in southern and eastern England.

Vikings from east and west come together in the Cuerdale hoard, which contains Anglo-Scandinavian issues from East Anglia and York, as well as Anglo-Saxon, Kufic, Carolingian, and Scandinavian coins, together with a large amount of Hiberno-Viking hack-silver and bullion. The hoard must testify to both the 'plundering and burning' described in Lund's book and the more peaceful activities covered by some of the papers in *Viking Treasure from the North West*.

KATHERINE HOLMAN

WESSEX AND ENGLAND FROM ALFRED TO EDGAR: SIX ESSAYS ON POLITICAL, CULTURAL, AND ECCLESIASTICAL REVIVAL. By DAVID N. DUMVILLE. *Studies in Anglo-Saxon History*, 3. The Boydell Press. Woodbridge, 1992. xiv + 234 pp.

This book is a collection of six essays which differ in theme and approach but which all concentrate on the consolidation of royal government in Wessex in the late ninth and the tenth centuries, and more especially on the impetus given by the

Wessex dynasty to the revival of education, literacy and Christian culture. The opening essay puts forward a radical reinterpretation of the text of the treaty of Alfred and Guthrum, which argues that the Danes controlled Buckinghamshire and the extreme west of Bedfordshire, in other words land to the west of the boundary line rather than just that to the east, as all previous commentators have assumed. This is not a view which will be accepted by all, though Dumville makes an interesting case for the persistence of Wessex dominance in western Essex. The main problem with his thesis (as he himself admits) is that it gives no explanation of the northern end of the boundary, but in fairness the older consensus had no fully satisfying solution to this either. Following this Dumville proceeds to attack Robin Fleming's theory ('Monastic lands and England's defence in the Viking Age', *English Historical Review*, 100 (1985)), that the Wessex monarchy enriched itself with alienated monastic property. Here Dumville is on surer ground. Fleming had based her case on unreliable, indeed tendentious, twelfth-century sources and had in any case failed to face up to the fact that both monastic endowments *and* royal estates were much more heavily concentrated in Wessex than in the Danelaw. A more discursive approach is taken in the third and longest essay, an intricate palaeographical study of the Parker manuscript of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. The remaining three essays are studies of the activities of three of the kings of the period, Athelstan, Edmund and, slightly out of chronological order, Alfred. These are all wide-ranging and thorough analyses, with many subtle reinterpretations, but they are curiously old-fashioned, as though written by a Whiggish historian who looks out for a king's 'achievements' and for whom Wessex's conquest of the rest of England was a Good Thing and a logical necessity. (The Danes are naturally presented throughout as the villains of the piece.) The author claims that Alfred and his successors had a clear programme of monastic reform in view. Clearly Alfred must have believed strongly in the need for a radical change in ecclesiastical institutions, and must surely have been influenced by Carolingian policies in this as he was in so much else, but Dumville's tone is too deterministic—even a ruler with a highly developed ideology, like Alfred, could bow to events. A minor cavil: the essay on Athelstan would have been greatly enriched if fuller use had been made of Karl Leyser's major study, 'Die Ottonen und Wessex' (*Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 17 (1983), 73–97).

JULIA BARROW

WOMEN IN THE VIKING AGE. By JUDITH JESCH. *Boydell and Brewer Ltd.* Woodbridge, 1991. viii + 239 pp.

FOKUS PÅ KVINNER I MIDDLEALDERKILDER. Edited by BERIT JANSEN SELLEVOLD, ELSE MUNDAL and GRO STEINSLAND. *Viktoria Bokförlag.* Skara, 1992. 111 pp.

Both these books provide discussion of women as they are depicted in the surviving sources; the former presents a new perspective extracted from familiar materials on the Viking Age and the latter is a *rappport* from a conference held at Isegran in 1990 and is a set of discrete papers on subjects mostly from after the Viking period. Jesch's book makes an excellent sister volume to C. M. Fell's

*Women in Anglo-Saxon England* and a complement to P. G. Foote and D. M. Wilson's *The Viking Achievement*. Although a survey work, it resists the pull into Viking-Age history in general and succeeds in giving sufficient orientation to the events and sources and providing the appropriate caveats to warn of the pitfalls of interpretation. There are interesting sections on female Viking-Age poets, women in the Frankish sources and female sponsors of runic inscriptions (a theme also taken up by Birgit Sawyer in the second book under review here); more might have been provided, however, on marriage, rituals, children and violence against women. Our knowledge of Viking-Age history will always be at best a patchwork but Jesch has made a valuable contribution in her attempt to reconstruct unchronicled events. The overall impression she gives is that it is the vicissitudes of everyday life and economic and domestic circumstances that dictated the way women ran their lives and it is to a large extent this that explains the diffuse and diverse range in their roles in the source materials. Even if their traditional role was to run the home and mind the children while their menfolk were engaged in warlike activities, when necessary these roles could be modified (as is aptly illustrated by the retired Viking warrior Hólmqóngu-Bersi whom we see in the role of helpless babyminder during the haymaking season in *Laxdæla saga*, ch. 28).

In the first article of *Fokus på kvinner i middelalderkilder*, on men and women in *Heimskringla* (a subject Jesch does not explore), Sverre Bagge argues that the blurred distinction between the public and private domains enabled women—especially those of high birth—to wield power in marriage alliances, and, in the moral sphere, to demonstrate their authority by reminding their male kinsmen of their revenge responsibilities. The economic position of women as a reflection of their power in society recurs in other essays. H. Gunneng shows how the Swedish charters and legal documents can be used as case-studies of applied law, and G. Bjarne Larsson finds that the laws of inheritance were restricted to the *frälse* and remained silent on the *bönder* and *landbor*. The point that the social status of women was of significance is also made by L. Peterson in her survey of metronomics in Scandinavia. Another view of women is glimpsed through wall paintings which depict familiar devotional figures in popular guise: Eve spinning and surrounded by as many as eight children; Joseph stirring the cooking pot immediately after the Virgin has given birth—a scene which M. Kempff argues is less a token of male equality than a sign of a newly-delivered woman not being allowed to touch food before she had been churched.

The book offers a snapshot of current work in progress and some articles give promise of more exhaustive studies. Many of its contributors imply, as Jesch and Bagge state directly, that women cannot be ignored; but they cannot be isolated either.

BRIDGET MORRIS

A STORE OF COMMON SENSE: GNOMIC THEME AND STYLE IN OLD ICELANDIC AND OLD ENGLISH WISDOM POETRY. By CAROLYNE LARRINGTON. *Clarendon Press*. Oxford, 1993. xi + 243 pp.

This Oxford dissertation contains seven chapters embedded in a brief Introduction and Conclusion. The first three treat of Norse matters, discussing respectively *Hávamál* (this occupies about a quarter of the entire volume), the ‘Poems of Sigurðr’s Youth’ (i. e. *Grípisspá*, *Reginsmál*, *Fáfnismál* and *Sigrdrifumál*) and ‘Christian Wisdom Poetry: *Hugsvinnsmál*’. Then comes a chapter on six Old English wisdom poems in the Exeter Book and elsewhere, followed by a brief chapter on nature imagery in the poems, nearly all Old English and not all of them gnomic (*Beowulf* is quoted several times). Chapter Six, ‘Gnomes in Elegy’, takes us through *Sonatorrek* and *Hákónarmál* on the Norse side and then turns to five much-trampled elegiac pieces, such as *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*, from the Exeter Book. The final chapter, ‘Gnomes in Narrative Verse’, hunts down ‘gnomic material outside the recognized “wisdom poems”’ (see p. 200); Norse proves unrewarding here, and the discussion revolves almost wholly around Old English matter, especially *Beowulf*.

Finding faults, Housman once observed, is the most useful sort of criticism and, since a great deal of what follows will be very useful indeed, let me state at once that there is much in this book that evinces wide reading, a sincere devotion to the subject and exemplary sobriety of judgement. The English is generally crisp and pregnant, though disfigured by sporadic oddities: we are living in an age when a fellow of an Oxford college can write, and the Clarendon Press will print, ‘Let he who has learned, profit!’ (p. 65) and ‘let he who can achieve renown’ (p. 203). On p. 67 ‘post-Christian’ seems to mean ‘post-Conversion’, ‘enthral’ is nowadays only metaphorical (p. 71, n. 78), ‘named for’ is an Americanism (p. 158, n. 39), ‘efficiency’ (p. 110) should rather be ‘effectiveness’, ‘exorably’ (p. 155) is obsolete and gives the wrong sense and, if we believe the *OED*, Dr Larrington is the first person to use the verb ‘to overcome’ in the sense ‘happen to, befall’ (p. 28) since the middle of the eleventh century.

It is impossible to discuss the book’s thesis, since it does not have one, unless indeed the implied claim that these poems are not primitive or rambling but subtle and well constructed counts as such. Like many writers who adopt a ‘literary’ approach, what Dr Larrington mostly does is take us through the poems one by one, with much quotation, translation, paraphrase and summary, interwoven with judicious comments, generally sensible if unexciting. The standpoints taken up are not such as I, at least, have any wish to quarrel with: *Hávamál* is ‘a composite poem, the work of a number of poets and editors over a long period of time’ (p. 15), very likely, in the form we now have it, no younger than ‘the late pagan period’ (p. 19); expediency and utility, wisdom and folly, are the terms of its ethics, so that sts 127–28, where “Good” and “Evil” as moral abstractions’ meet us for the first time, ‘suggest orientation by a different morality from the rest of the poem’ (p. 56). Verses from Scripture are adduced at times, but as analogues only, not as sources; that Dr Larrington takes a definitely ‘nativist’ view of *Hávamál* was already made clear in her lucid and cogent article on some alleged extra-Nordic sources of the

poem in *Saga-Book XXIII*: 3 (1991), 141–57, and this attitude is now reinforced by the well-argued contrast she draws with the heavily Christian *Hugsvinnsmál*, ‘colourless in comparison with the poems which spring from the native Germanic tradition’, with no ‘spirit of “Icelandicness” breathed into’ its verses, which are of course loosely translated from the *Disticha Catonis* (p. 222); von See’s view that *Hávamál* is dependent both on *Hugsvinnsmál* and directly on the *Disticha* is effectively rebutted in detail. Complex though its origins were, *Hávamál* is a coherent work (p. 65); at times, indeed, Dr Larrington speaks of ‘contradictions’ (p. 25) in its train of thought (though I see no contradiction, as she does, between st. 84, which says that women are untrustworthy, and st. 91, which says that men are untrustworthy), at st. 58 there is a ‘sharp break’ (p. 37), while sts 63–65 are ‘relatively unstructured and disconnected’ (p. 38), but this kind of thing (she goes on) is characteristic of wisdom poetry in all cultures; those who have found *Hávamál* incoherent have simply approached it with faulty preconceptions (p. 65). Occasionally the details of her argument do not stand scrutiny: as a glance at the dictionaries will show, it is not true, as stated at p. 70, n. 57, that *niðr* ‘kinsman, descendant’ is a rare word, and on p. 57 she cites three lines identified as st. 31, ll. 1–3 and goes on ‘Stanza 31 continues with a general observation about mankind: that the mocker is not aware that he himself is not perfect—“hann era vamma vanr”’. But the three lines are in fact the second half of st. 31, which therefore does not continue at all, and the four words then quoted are actually from st. 22.

The blurb calls this book ‘the first comparative study in English of Old Icelandic and Old English wisdom poetry’, yet *comparison* is in fact little in evidence: the Norse and the Old English poems are treated in distinct chapters or (in ch. 6) in distinct sections of the same chapter. But why do these appear between the same pair of covers? That the early Germanic literatures show some similarities (not only in wisdom poetry) is long acknowledged, but *why* this should be so is controversial. The old view was that these various surviving literatures were but local manifestations of an ancient Common Germanic culture, pre-Conversion and pre-literate; at one time an orthodoxy, this has so far fallen from favour that my suggestion (in my edition of *Hávamál* (1986), 112) that the alliterating pair OE *feoh-freond*/ON *fé-frændr* went back to early Germanic caused a volcanic eruption in Frankfurt (see *Skandinavistik* 17 (1987), 137). Another explanation (sometimes combined with the preceding) is that ‘early’ literature in its various genres (gnomic, epic, elegiac etc.) was the spontaneous production of societies at a similar, relatively early, stage of social evolution; this is the dominant notion that informs H. M. and N. K. Chadwick, *The Growth of Literature* (1932–40), and C. M. Bowra, *Heroic Poetry* (1952), and also some of the writings of the Chadwicks’ pupil, the Celticist Kenneth Jackson. Today not a few scholars are more inclined to argue for an extensive dependence by the early Germanic-speaking cultures on classical and medieval Latin material and on Scripture; resemblances between Norse and Old English might then be explained as independent borrowings from the same source. Yet another hypothesis postulates Norse borrowings from Old English poems (assumed to be older); thus, von See explained *fé-frændr* in *Hákonarmál* as taken from line 108 of the Old English *Wanderer*. I find it strange that Dr Larrington has so little

to say on this matter; occasional passing references to ‘Germanic wisdom literature’ (p. 67), ‘Germanic wisdom poetry’ (p. 220), ‘the native Germanic tradition’ (p. 222) suggest that she inclines to the first of the four hypotheses listed above and, while I do not criticise her for taking this view, her study could have done with a more explicit treatment of the debate.

I now turn to what I regret must be called the most striking feature of this book: its quite extraordinary inaccuracy. Misprints, false references, misquotations, misspellings and mistranslations from seven languages abound. At the very start, on one page of the list of abbreviations (p. x), the initials of no fewer than four journals or series—*MGH*, *PMLA*, *SP* and *STUAGNL*—are incorrectly expanded, as also are *AM* and *HMS* on the preceding page where, too, *BGDSL* appears once correctly and twice wrongly. True, many of the errors, taken in isolation, are venial enough: it may not matter greatly in itself that the initials of the German Anglist Grein and the Harvard Latinist Thomas are misspelled (pp. ix, 225 and 237), or that Grein is at one point credited with an *Ordbog* instead of a *Sprachschatz* (p. 198, n. 30), or that a Swedish-spelt *lexikon* has intruded itself into the Danish version of *KLNM*’s title and the place of publication is misspelt Mälmo (p. 225), or that the neo-Latin title of the *Festschrift* for B. Karlsgren has *Bernardo* for *Bernhardo* (p. 238), or that the book entitled *A Collection of Papers with Emphasis on Old English Literature* is not edited by E. G. Stanley, since he wrote the whole of it (p. 12, n. 3 and p. 237), or that, according to *Hákonar saga góða* (not *góðar*, as at p. 198, n. 22), Hákon did not die ‘in battle’ (p. 181) but subsequently, of his wounds, or that Ramsundsberg in Sweden, with its famous Sigurd carving, has lost its second *s* (p. 95, n. 43), or that *accommodating* and *paronomasia* should be spelt thus and not as at p. 96, n. 52 and p. 158, n. 33 respectively, or that J. Fleck offered us a ‘new interpretation’ and not a ‘new re-interpretation’ of Óðinn’s self-sacrifice (p. 71, n. 90), or that *Egils saga* is vol. ii and not vol. iii and *Heimskringlavols. xxvi–xxviii* and not vols. *xxxvi–xxxviii* in the *Íslenzk fornrit* series (p. 198, n. 17, and p. 227), or that T. Möbius could hardly have been called Møbius, since he was a German (p. 96, n. 62); it is the cumulative effect of this continual blundering that is so damaging to the book. Far more serious, though, is the treatment of the Norse quotations. First, there are many discrepancies between the texts printed here and the editions cited: for instance, *Hávamál* is said (p. 226) to be quoted from Jón Helgason, ed., *Eddadigte I* (1955), yet at st. 53, l. 4, where Jón has *því *at* allir menn*, Dr Larrington prints *því allir men* (p. 36); at st. 84, l. 5, where Jón has *vóru þeim hiorto skopuð*, we have here *váru þeim hiortu skopu* (p. 43); both occurrences of *leitaði* in st. 141 appear here as *leita* (p. 61), and on p. 211 the end of st. 16 is quoted with four errors in nine words. *Hákonarmál* is said (p. 198, n. 20) to be ‘cited from *Heimskringla*’ (presumably Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson’s edition in *Íslenzk fornrit* (1941–51), the only one in the Bibliography), yet in the last line of the poem, where Bjarni (*ÍF XXVI* 197) prints *morg es þjóð of þéuð*, Dr Larrington (p. 184) gives us the mangled *morg es þjóðum þjeuð*, plainly corrupted from a text which had modernised the particle *of* to *um*. (Not surprisingly, she finds some difficulty in translating her text and renders *morg* ‘greatly’.) Then there are the very numerous misquotations and misspellings, most of them immediately obvious as involving

bad grammar or non-existent words: *augabragði* for *augabragð* (p. 31), *geðs* . . . *blanda* (p. 32, read *geði*), *eldr heitari* (p. 34, read *eldi*), *lítil geðs* (p. 35), *ganga* for *gengr* (p. 42), *hverfandi hvél* (p. 43, read *hverfanda*, as *hvél* is neuter), *orð* . . . *trúa* (p. 44, read *orðum*), *lost* and *flærðr* (p. 47, read *lostr* and *flærð*), *Síða-Hallsson* for *Síðu-Hallsson* (p. 51), *munþú* . . . *vanar* for *munðu* . . . *vanr* (p. 64), *harðræði* for *harðráði* (p. 71, n. 75), acc. pl. *margra hluti* (p. 74), *sagst at ætla* for *sagðist þat ætla* (p. 75), *megintír* for *megintírr* (p. 87), *afli* for *afl* (p. 101, twice), acc. sg. *friðr* (p. 104), *siálfraeða* for *siálfráða* (p. 106), acc. sg. *góðo kono* (p. 106, read *góða*), *brigð er* . . . *orð* (p. 114, read *eru*), *tryggðr* for *tryggr* (p. 115), *ek betra* for *et betra* (p. 177), *kostr ro* (p. 202, read *kostir*), *miklis* for *mikils* (p. 209), *Atrúnaðar* for *Atrúnaður* (p. 235, under Nordal), *nafn* for *nafns* (p. 235, under Óláfur [sic]). The adverb *fagrt* appears as *fægrt* (p. 102) and as *fagr* (p. 117, n. 5). A writer with a feel for the language would not speak of ‘the “ráðsnótra” man’ (p. 39), since the adj. is gen. pl., nor, at p. 71, n. 89, cite the proverb *Hafa skal góð ráð, þó at ór refsbelg komi* with *þat* for *at* and *koma* for *komi*, where both errors are in breach of grammar. A remarkable sentence on p. 89 speaks of the tradition behind *Sigrdrífumál* ‘in which liquid aspects predominate, “leki” and “helgi mioð’’. The latter ungrammatical phrase presumably reflects the accusative *inn helga mioð* in st. 18 of the poem; what *leki* is I cannot say, though st. 13 contains the words *af þeim legi er lekit hafði*. The titles of Norse works cause repeated trouble, especially in the genitive of nicknames: thus we read of *Ragnars saga Lóðbrókar* (p. 69, n. 44, for *loðbrókar*), *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoði* (p. 70, n. 53; at p. 226 this becomes *Freysgóða*), *Haralds saga ins hárfagri* (p. 71, n. 78) and *Eiríks saga inn rauða* (p. 226), while *Brot af Sigurðarkviða* appears thus throughout (e. g. twice on p. 202). There is a great deal of error in accents and other diacritics, usually through omission though occasionally by false addition, as *gúðs* (p. 71, n. 87), *Sígr-* (p. 86 and p. 95, n. 43), *tregrof* (p. 175) and *lifir* (p. 176). Then there are the mistranslations and ambiguities. It is careless to render the sg. nouns *fiall* (pp. 21 and 30), dat. *bana* (pp. 83 and 91) and gen. sg. *unnar* (p. 136) as pl.; among verbs, *vito* (p. 36) is 3 pl., not 3 sg., *hefik* (p. 47), *kann* (p. 65) and *áttat* (p. 79) are present not past, and *namt* (p. 89) is past not present; *ódælla* (p. 23) does not mean ‘very difficult’, *verra* (p. 24, para. 2, l. 5) does not mean ‘worst’, *eino sinni* (p. 80) means ‘at some time or other’, not ‘on one occasion only’, *lærifaðir* (p. 100) is ‘teacher’, not ‘learned father’, *sællífi* (p. 100) is ‘voluptuousness’, not ‘eternal life’, *öld* (p. 101) does not mean ‘man’, *kaldráð kona* (p. 114) is not ‘cold counsels of women’, *dyggr* (p. 115) is ‘faithful’, not ‘effective’, and *tregt* (p. 176) is ‘laborious’, not ‘grievous’. *Fornjósnar* is not well rendered ‘to spy out the way ahead, look ahead’ (p. 96, n. 57), since it is gen. sg. of a noun; *veita* ‘he knows’ (p. 40) misses the negative suffix; the famous *Hávamál* line *deyr siálfri it sama*, acceptably rendered ‘the self dies likewise’ on p. 41, becomes ‘the self itself must die’ on p. 106 and ‘the very self must die’ on p. 183, which are wrong; and ‘brushwood and tall grasses grow’ (p. 53) is a strange rendering of *hrísi vex ok hávo grasi* at *Hávamál* st. 119, ll. 8–9, since the subject of *vex* is *vegr* in line 10. Some of the errors suggest a writer totally at sea in Icelandic: there is no phrase *siálfum* meaning ‘by oneself, by one’s own efforts’ (p. 23; *Hávamál* st. 9, l. 2 has been misconstrued here); Dr Larrington

thinks that *sigr* is a verb meaning ‘conquers’ (p. 84) and, common though it is, she evidently does not know that *alls* (*allz*) can be a conjunction ‘as, since’, as in *Fáfnismál* st. 12, l. 2 (rendered ‘in all things’, p. 81). Resisting von See’s belief that *dugnaðr* is a late formation, she states that it occurs ‘in *Fornmanna sögur* and *Íslendinga Þjóðssaga*’ (p. 99). But *Fornmanna sögur* (spelt thus) is the title under which a diverse collection of Kings’ Sagas was published in Copenhagen between 1825 and 1837, in twelve volumes; to say that a word is found therein is as if a classicist were to say that a Greek word is found ‘in *Oxford Classical Texts*'. The other title adduced does not, of course, exist, and in fact *þjóðssaga* is not a linguistically possible formation. In taking *viðhlæiendr vini* together as ‘the friend (*sic*) who laughs with you’ (pp. 27 and 40), the writer shows she has misunderstood *Hávamál* st. 25, ll. 1–3, which means ‘the foolish man thinks that all who laugh with him are his friends’. To render *Fáfnismál* st. 20, ll. 1–2 *Ræð ek þér nú, Sigurðr, / en þú ráð nemir* ‘Now I advise you, Sigurðr, and you take that advice’ (p. 83) hardly makes clear that the first verb is indicative and the second subjunctive with imperative force; on the same page *en þú, Fáfnir, ligg / í fíorbrotum* from the following strophe is rendered ‘and you, Fáfnir, lie in life-fragments’, which similarly fails to bring out that the verb is imperative, and *fíorbrot* n. pl. are not ‘life-fragments’ (whatever they may be), but ‘death-struggles’. At times, the text translated is not that printed. In citing part of *Hávamál* st. 135 on p. 58, Jón’s *né á grind hrækis* is kept, but ‘nor drive him from the gate’ renders an emended text with *hrekir* or *hrøkkvir* (for *hrækja* means ‘to spit’. And how can *á grind* mean *from the gate?*). At *Fáfnismál* st. 24, l. 6 the author (p. 84) prints *er híor ne ryfr* [recte *rýfr*], but ‘who does not redder his sword’ renders the emendation *rýðr*. At *Sigrdrifumál* st. 28, l. 4 *sifia silfr* is certainly puzzling, but it is hard to see how it could mean ‘silver-decked women’ (p. 92), which sounds more like a translation of Bugge’s suggestion *sifiar silfirs*.

The Old English is not as bad as this, though I notice *naca* for *nacan* (p. 138), *seþad* for *feþað* (p. 140), *word* for *worda* (p. 146), *dæda* for *deadra* (p. 157, n. 17), *forste* for *forstes* (p. 166), *nefre* and *earme* for *næfre* and *earmne* (p. 186), *onge* for *longe* (p. 192), *forbærnedene* for *forbærnedne* (p. 196), *eorlum* for *eorla* (p. 204), and *pæs* for *pæs ðe* (p. 207); *mist hleopum* (p. 133) is one word, as is *þeoden gedal* (p. 208). When, as is usually the case, the author cites editions which do not mark vowel-length (omitted from this review), she has tempted providence by seeking to add this; innumerable errors result, usually through omission, though macra have been wrongly imposed on the root vowels of *weorþan* (p. 142), *mæge* (p. 142, pres. subj. of *magan*), dat. sg. *gesprecan* (p. 145), acc. sg. *lufan* (p. 145) and *wæg* ‘way’ (p. 157, n. 17). There are also mistranslations: *gerisan* does not mean ‘it is fitting’ (p. 6), *weaxendum* is not ‘grown’ (p. 140), *frode fæder lare* is not ‘the teaching of your wise father’ (p. 147), *soðfaestra sawle* is not ‘a truth-fast soul’ (p. 208), *inwitsorh* is not ‘inner sorrow’ (p. 211), and *Beowulf* l. 2030 *æfter leodhryre lytle hwile* does not mean ‘a little while after the fall of a prince’ (p. 216); the long sentence which runs from 1002 to 1008 in that poem is perhaps somewhat loose, but it can be translated and need not be reduced to the partly unintelligible muddle that appears on p. 214.

Latin, too, comes off badly: the *Breves Sententiae*, the brief maxims prefaced to the *Disticha* (or *Dicta*) *Catonis*, are referred to four times; twice (pp. 105 and 109) the adj. appears as *Breve*, twice (p. 110) as *Breva*. (They are referred to again, on p. 147, but now under another name, *monosticha*, though that in fact is the heading of a different part of the *Dicta*). At p. 148 Virgil's *ignaros agrestis* is cited with *ignoros* and translated as singular. The rendering of *malo* as 'I suppose' (misprint for 'I propose'?) makes p. 96, n. 60 obscure and, at p. 235, under Plummer, Bede is credited with a work called *Historiam Ecclesiam* (further, a Latin title should not be listed in the accusative without explanation). Other languages too go wrong: in German we have *Strophefolge* for *Strophenfolge* twice (p. 68, n. 14 and p. 118, n. 25), an ungrammatical *Englischen* for *Englische* twice (p. 93, n. 2 and p. 233 under Kleineke), and *Spruchs-wissen* for *Spruchwissen* (p. 180); in Swedish, *årsskrift* is usually misspelt (e. g. at pp. 228 and 235), at p. 8 *för* should read *får*, at p. 234, under Lindquist, *tolkingar* should read *tolkningar*, and at p. 235, under Ohlmarks, *Eddan Gudesånger* should read *Eddans gudasånger*. In (Dano-)Norwegian, a sentence of Fritzner is quoted and then mistranslated (p. 95, n. 45), and in two Danish titles *norske-* should read *norsk-* (p. 117, n. 2) and *der* should read *det* (p. 227 s. v. *Grágás*).

Without doing any checking, I noticed twenty false references as I read: for example, it was st. 53, not the innocuous st. 62, that I said contained 'one of the most notorious cruces in *Hávamál*' (p. 118, n. 24) and, at p. 70, n. 70, the reference should be to p. 119, not p. 110, of my edition; at p. 68, n. 14, for 292–313 read 195–222; at p. 70, n. 56, for Sigvatr 37 read Sigvatr 3, 7; at p. 70, n. 66, for Proverbs 30 read Proverbs 31 (in the next note the references to Proverbs become very confused indeed); at p. 71, n. 87 the abbreviation *Hom.* is unexplained (it is not Wisén's *Homiliubók* (1872), listed in the Bibliography); the first quotation from *Hávamál* on p. 91 is from st. 1, ll. 5–7, not sts 15–17; at p. 218, n. 6, for *Reginsmál* 137–8 read *Reginsmál* st. 13, ll. 7–8; and at p. 218, n. 14 read *Hamðismál* st. 27, ll. 3–4 (not 273–4). Again without doing any checking, I have noticed some sixty errors or inadequacies in the Bibliography, of which I will mention two only. First: the entry under *Völsunga saga* (p. 227) muddles together two distinct editions of the *Fornaldar sögur*, one in three vols. edited by Guðni Jónsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson and published 1943–44, and the other in four vols., by Guðni alone, published in the *Íslendingasagnauítgáfan* series in 1954. Second: in 1934 J. Wight Duff and his son A. M. Duff jointly produced a volume in the Loeb series entitled *Minor Latin Poets*, in which they included the *Dicta Catonis* (as they call it). In Dr Larrington's alphabetical list (p. 238) this book appears between Whitelock and Williams, as follows: Wight J. and Duff, A. M. ed., *Disticha Catonis*, (Loeb Classical Library; London, 1934).

'The academic standards in your subject seem to be extremely low,' a classical colleague recently remarked to me. Now this is not just any book, where discredit might attach to the author alone: it is an Oxford doctoral thesis, which means that it had a supervisor and was passed by examiners, and it has been published by the Clarendon Press, the 'academic imprint' of Oxford University Press, in a series devoted to the publication of particularly distinguished theses and over which no

fewer than five General Editors preside with toothless geniality. But the series is *Oxford English Monographs*, and here we see a clue to what has gone wrong: four of the five general editors are experts in English literature from the sixteenth century onwards, which leaves the whole of the medieval and philological areas to Professor Douglas Gray, a specialist in Late Middle English literature. The ultimate source of the trouble is the quirk of academic history whereby Icelandic is not learnt as such, like Italian or Russian or Welsh, but as if it were not a real language at all, rather some kind of broken-down patois which can be adequately mastered in odd moments snatched from musing on *Piers Plowman*. The young C. S. Lewis, newly translated from *Literae Humaniores* to the Oxford English School, detected ‘a certain amateurishness’ in the people by whom he now found himself surrounded (*Letters* (1988), 173), and amateurish is perhaps the best epithet for this volume, not just its contents but the whole academic and publishing machinery that lies behind it. A classicist who has a book published by the Clarendon Press is likely to find that the very proof-reader is Dr Leofranc Holford-Strevens, one of the most formidably learned classical scholars now living. A reviewer of the previous Icelandic volume in this series, which is similarly shot through with elementary blunders, voiced her wonderment (*JEGP* 91 (1992), 617) ‘that this book got past the readers at Clarendon Press’. The present volume supplies the answer: in the poor Cinderella-subject Icelandic the Press evidently employs no readers at all.

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HÁVAMÁL MED FORMÁLA OG SKÝRINGUM. Edited by HERMANN PÁLSSON. *Háskólaútgáfan*. Reykjavík, 1992. xiii + 86 pp.

Hermann Pálsson has complemented his study of the origins of *Hávamál*, which appeared in 1990 under the title *Heimur Hávamála* (HH) and was reviewed in *Saga-Book* XXIII: 3 (1992), 414–16, with a pocket-sized ‘popular’ edition of the poem intended for pupils in Icelandic schools and interested general readers. The text, in modern spelling (retained here), is preceded by a *Formáli* of 13 (small) pages and followed by some 30 pages of notes, *Skýringar*. Archaic suffixes and inflectional forms are necessarily kept; these, or some of them, are explained in a footnote on p. vii, but somewhat cursorily and not (to my mind) always correctly, for I do not believe that *ráðumk* in the Loddfáfnir formula is a reflexive form: see the notes on sts 108 and 112 in my edition of *Hávamál* (1986). And can one feel confident that all Hermann’s not especially learned readers will grasp for themselves (for it is nowhere stated) that, for instance, *bjargig-a-g* in st. 152 is 1 pers. pres. subj. plus suffixed subject plus suffixed negative plus repeated suffixed subject? Admittedly, this is a point which it is difficult for a foreigner to judge, and indeed, as with all annotated editions of Old Icelandic texts for native users, there is an adventitious interest for us barbarophones in seeing (sometimes to our surprise) what present-day Icelanders need to have explained and what they can be assumed to know. Among words they apparently need to have explained are *aldinn*, *ey* (‘ever’), *firar*, *fleinn* (though only on its second occurrence), *fljóð*, *geir*, *gumi*,

*hár* ('grey-haired'), *heift*, *horskur*, *höldur*, *kvíkur*, *mar* ('horse'), *mar* ('sea'), *meiður*, *móður* ('weary'), *nár*, *nauður*, *nýtur*, *snotur* (meaning 'wise'), *unda* ('to wound'), *vega* ('to carry'), *vígðjarfur* and *þjóðann*. This list depressingly suggests that the Icelandic literary tradition is not much cultivated today among general readers and the young (the second edition of Árni Böðvarsson's *Íslensk orðabók* (1983) marks only *ey*, *þjóðann* and *snotur* ('wise') as archaic, and only *fjóð*, *gumi*, *höldur* and the two kinds of *mar* as poetic), but Hermann is evidently correct in his judgement, since all these words except *móður*, *nýtur*, *vígðjarfur* and *þjóðann* are also glossed by Ólafur Briem in his *Eddukvæði* (1968), clearly aimed at much the same readership. On the other hand, Hermann (unlike Ólafur) does not gloss *glíkur* ('like') in st. 46, *jór* ('horse') in st. 89, *gangandi* ('tramp') in st. 132 or *einugi* ('for nothing') in st. 133, though all four are marked by Árni Böðvarsson as either archaic or poetic; nor does Hermann provide any help with the last line of st. 128 *en látt pér að góðu getið*, thought to require explanation not only by Ólafur ('látt pér líka vel hið góða') but also by Guðni Jónsson in 1936 for the more sophisticated Icelandic readers of *Grettis saga* in the *Íslenzk fornrit* series, where the same idiom occurs in ch. 64 (*ÍF VII* 210).

In the printing of the text there is no indication where the Codex Regius has been emended, giving us, for instance, st. 12 *sonum*, st. 21 *mál*, st. 50 *Hlýr-at*, st. 75 *af aurum*, st. 107 *vé* and st. 125 *við pér*, where the MS has respectively *sona*, *mals*, *hlýrar*, *aflaðrom*, *vés* and *pær við*; an exception is however made at st. 39, ll. 5–6, printed as *svo gj[afa fisan] að...* (MS *svagi at*), perhaps because this emendation originates (I believe) with Hermann. In st. 32 MS *recaz* appears as *vrekast* (not deemed to need explanation), suggesting a sensitivity to alliteration not much in evidence elsewhere, cf. *lítioð* sts. 36 and 37, *rás* (interpreted as *hrás*) st. 151, and *sællifðum* st. 70, which neither alliterates nor gives much sense. In st. 155 MS *peir villir*, referring to feminine *túnriður*, has been retained, though *HH* 256 emended to *pær villar*.

In an edition on this small scale there is naturally no scope in the *Skýringar* for discussion of difficulties or citation of variant views; articles by other scholars are alluded to only thrice, though the note on almost every strophe contains page-references to *HH* (thus incidentally making good the absence of an index in the earlier work). Not a few much-debated problems in the text are in fact passed over with no explanation at all. In st. 14 *því er öldur best*, does the noun mean 'ale' or 'ale-party', and what is the force of *því*? Does the last line of st. 18 *sá er vitandi er vits* modify *sá einn* or *gumna hver*? In st. 52 *með höllu keri*, what is the point of 'slanting'? In st. 54, to render *vel margt* as 'mátulega mikíð' certainly removes the apparent contradiction with the first half of the strophe, but how is such a rendering to be defended? In st. 107, what does Óðinn mean by describing his *litar* as *vel keypts*? In st. 137 *höll við hýrógi* the two nouns are explained respectively as 'yllitré' and 'úlfúð á heimili'; but how is an elder-tree a remedy for domestic strife? In st. 140, is *ausinn* nom. with *eg* or acc. with *drykk*? Hermann is not the first to believe that st. 39 *að ei væri þiggja þegið* means 'að hann þægi ekki laun fyrir', but I agree with Finnur Jónsson (*Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 4 (1888), 47) that such a sense cannot be deduced from the text, and I am still more puzzled by Hermann's view that the picture in the second half of st. 67 is of a host so poor that he cannot

invite again a guest who has already eaten half the meat in the house; the text surely says the opposite of this. It will not do to claim that elucidation can be found by turning up the references to *HH*, because, by and large, it cannot, and in any case a ‘popular’ edition should be self-contained. Curiously enough, some of the interpretations offered in the notes differ from those advanced in *HH* a mere two years earlier: given Hermann’s strong proclivity to see Norse gnomes as reflexes of classical and medieval Latin matter, it is surprising that he has abandoned the view (*HH* 111) that st. 73 *Tveir eru eins herjar* mirrors *duo sunt exercitus uni* (found in the 12th-century *Ysengrimus*); he now (p. 69) takes it to mean ‘*Tveir eru í sama her*’ (that is, with *herjar* as gen. sg. instead of nom. pl.). The opening words of the poem, *Gáttir allar*, are now seen as acc. object of *gangi fram*, whereas at *HH* 139 the punctuation imposes the alternative view that they are nom. subject of *skyli*. The much-debated *á bröndum* of st. 2, taken at *HH* 141 to mean ‘on the pile of unkindled firewood’ (*viðarhlaði við eldinn*) is now given the novel interpretation ‘on the floor’ (*á gólfí*), a sense that Hermann alleges is also present in *Grettis saga*, ch. 66, *var þar eldr mikill á bröndum*, though the saga’s editor, Guðni Jónsson, was surely right to gloss it there (*ÍF* VII 215) ‘logandi viðarkubbur, eldibrandur’.

There is a fair sprinkling of slips and misprints, beginning with the publication date, which appears as 1992 on the cover and 1991 on the title-page. In the text itself I notice only the omission of *hann* from the last line of st. 138 *hvers hann afrótum renn*, while section VI of the text has been misprinted IV; elsewhere the first word of st. 141, l. 4 *orð mér af orði* twice appears as *orðs* (pp. v and 82), the reference on p. vi to the third section of the poem (*priðji bálkur*) must be a slip for *fjórði*; st. 15, ll. 5–6 *skyli gumna hver uns sinn bíður bana* is misquoted on p. ix with *skyldi* and *síns*; at the end of the note on st. 4 ‘112’ should read ‘*HH* 112’; in the quotation from the Preface to *Heimskringla* on p. 69 *bautarsteina* should read *bautasteina*; in the note on st. 78 the last word in the phrase *Fitjungur og synir þeirra* should be *hans*; in the quotation from *Sturlunga* on p. 75 *pótt* should read *pótti*; in the note on st. 102 *fékk* should presumably be *ég fékk*; in the note on st. 116 the *fástu* of the text has mysteriously been archaised to *fásktu*; on p. 79 the abbreviation ‘HP 1988’ seems to be nowhere explained, and the reference to ‘Írksa tökuorðið gjalt’ is not quite accurate, since it is found in Norse only as dat. *gjalti*; finally, in the note on st. 137 *beitir* should read *beiti* (an error repeated from *HH* 85).

D. A. H. EVANS

THE RHYTHMS OF DRÓTTKVÆTT AND OTHER OLD ICELANDIC METRES. By KRISTJÁN ÁRNASON. *Institute of Linguistics, University of Iceland*. Reykjavík, 1991. 182 pp.

In this brief handbook Kristján Árnason’s aim is to present *dróttkvættas* it relates to a continuous development within Icelandic metrics, rather than as an isolated phenomenon. Despite the title, the analysis is not restricted to rhythm, though this is the primary concern, but includes all the phonetic equivalences to be found as structural components of the form. In effect, Kristján attempts to find the common ground between philological and linguistic concerns, between Kuhn and Keyser as it were. In his preface he mentions that in doing so he might please neither, and,

though I consider this fear unjustified, it is clear that the reader from the one discipline will require tolerance for the other.

The parameters of analysis are set out in a first chapter which is in effect a survey of current trends in metrical linguistics relevant to *dróttkvætt*. In accordance with the principles of generative metrists such as Halle and Keyser, Kristján Árnason is concerned with establishing the correspondence rules according to which a so-called ‘metrical filter’ operates when mapping linguistic structures onto an abstract metrical pattern. This, however, only becomes clear after a discussion of relevant metrical theories in terms of their own sometimes conflicting terminologies; it is perhaps unduly modest of Kristján not to establish his own terms of reference at the very beginning. Treatment of metrical theories tends at times to be allusive; in particular the diagram on p. 27 will be incomprehensible to a reader not conversant with the Halle-Keyser notation.

In dealing with rhythm, Kristján assumes direct affinity between *dróttkvætt* and the *altgermanische Langzeile*. He distinguishes between two schools of analysis, intensity-based (Sievers) and duration-based (Heusler). Whilst regarding it as axiomatic that duration cannot be disregarded as a relevant feature, he quite rightly dismisses Heusler’s *Taktmetrik* as an aberration. There is no discussion of J. C. Pope’s use of a modified system of *Taktmetrik* for Old English, though this might have been relevant.

Historically, in terms of Kristján’s analysis, *dróttkvætt* does not represent a radical new departure from the principles of the *altgermanische Langzeile* as found in the Eddic metres, but rather an increase in the stringency with which these principles were applied. Isosyllabicity is accidental, a concomitant of the basically trochaic pattern of the metre. This trochaic pattern establishes itself most regularly at the line-ending, hence the cadence-pattern, and can be varied by reversal or syncopation (in the musical sense) in the preceding metrical positions. The only feature of the metre that cannot be explained directly in this analysis is what Kristján calls ‘inrhyme’ (i. e. rhyme within the line, see further below). Here, Kristján makes his only concession to the Irish origin theory; his caveat that ‘the similarities between Irish rhyme and Old Icelandic hendingar are not as great as is sometimes implied’ (p. 109) is apposite and understated.

Ruling out any isosyllabic principle, Kristján determines stress as the central prosodic feature of the metrical set upon which *dróttkvætt* depends, and this stress is for him ultimately dynamic. However, there is considerable interdependence between dynamic stress and mora count, as is clear from the structure of the cadence which characterises *dróttkvætt*, in which the first position must be both stressed and bimoraic. A further characteristic of the metre, internal rhyme (Kristján distinguishes between ‘internal rhyme’, i. e. interlinear rhyme, and ‘inrhyme’, i. e. intralinear rhyme, Icel. *innrím*), is shown to be independent of syllabification. This suggests, though Kristján does not emphasise the fact, that the metre is not ultimately susceptible to analysis in terms of syllables, a form of analysis which I would contend was imposed on the metre by Snorri and others conditioned by Latinity.

Phonetic recurrences are discussed in terms of equivalence classes, and Kristján rightly expends considerable effort in examining the underlying principles of these

and the attempts of previous theorists to account for them. It becomes evident that there is no single overall explanation for the various equivalence classes in *dróttkvætt*, whether for such well-known phenomena as the acceptance of all vowels as alliterators or the non-equivalence of /s/, /sp/, /sk/, /st/, or for such relative rarities as the rhyme of /a/ with /o/ irrespective of whether the latter was developed by u-Umlaut of /a/. He notes that Irish, though similar in the extensive use it makes of broad-based equivalence classes, defines these classes in a manner quite unlike that of Icelandic, a fact often unremarked by those who wish to see common origin. In particular, he alludes to the complications caused in the Irish system by initial consonantal mutations. Here he is faced with the dilemma that the problem is one that cannot be dealt with in a single paragraph but is too peripheral for full treatment. His solution is to offer a possibly over-simplified account; I would have been tempted to leave the whole can of worms unopened.

The relevance of phonetic equivalence-groups in an account of metre based on the stress principle lies in their relationship to stress-patterning, and this, Kristján points out, is complex. A metrical position occupied by alliteration must be stressed, but the converse is not the case, and lack of alliteration in no way weakens stressed positions. The relationship between alliteration and rhyme is particularly complex in the odd-numbered lines, where rhyme is more strictly regulated towards the line-ending, whereas alliteration is more strictly regulated towards the beginning. This means in practice that the fifth position *must* carry rhyme and *may* carry alliteration, while the second position *may* carry rhyme but *may not* carry alliteration. One wonders, though Kristján does not discuss the point, whether this disparity derives ultimately from the nature of alliteration as a word-initial marker and of rhyme as a word-final marker. What is clear is that alliteration is more closely tied to stress than is any form of rhyme in *dróttkvætt*.

It is not Kristján's prime concern to discuss the origin of the metre. In an earlier publication (*Íslenskt mál* 3 (1981), 101–11) he asks the question 'Did *Dróttkvætt* Borrow its Rhythm from Irish?', concluding that 'it was far from unlikely that something of this sort happened' (p. 110). It seems from the present study that Kristján is less ready to endorse the Irish hypothesis; in the light of my investigations of metrical tracts in both countries I would consider this more cautious approach justified.

Non-adoption of the foreign-origin hypothesis removes one main objection to Kristján's conclusion that *dróttkvætt* was a member of the same metrical set that had produced the Eddic metres and was to produce the *ferskeytt*. Unlike the Eddic metres, however, *dróttkvætt* is apparently isosyllabic. Even so, Kristján rejects the primacy of the hexasyllabic form; the basic concept is that of the three-stressed line, from which, given the morphology of Old Icelandic, a series of three trochees is statistically the most likely line-form to be generated. His rejection of the strict syllable-based analysis is further justified by the fact that *dróttkvætt* developed before the introduction of syllabic analysis on the basis of Latin; Irish stanzaic forms, introduced after Latinity, show much greater identity of syllable and metrical position than does *dróttkvætt*. We must therefore assume that Snorri's syllable-based analysis was a product of familiarity with Latin metrics.

The book is designed to be read as one continuous argument rather than to be used as a work of reference, and this presumably explains the lack of an index, which I nonetheless consider a serious disadvantage for which the presence of a detailed table of contents does not compensate. Apart from this, the presentation of the book is pleasing; there are a number of misprints, a puzzlingly Germanic use of the spelling 'Keltic' throughout, and some fluctuations of terminology, e. g. 'disyllabic' stress, p. 131, 'bisyllabic' stress, p. 133, but none of these should severely impair understanding.

Clearly Hans Kuhn has not had the last word on the subject of *dróttkvætt*; it is to be hoped that every bookshelf on which *Das Dróttkvætt* stands will soon have Kristján Árnason's *The Rhythms of Dróttkvætt* somewhere close by.

STEPHEN N. TRANTER

GLOSSARY TO THE POETIC EDDA, BASED ON HANS KUHN'S KURZES WÖRTERBUCH. By BEATRICE LA FARGE and JOHN TUCKER. *Skandinavistische Arbeiten herausgegeben von Klaus von See*, 15. Carl Winter Universitätsverlag. Heidelberg, 1992. xxiii + 321 pp.

The aim of La Farge and Tucker's *Glossary to the Poetic Edda* is to facilitate the reading of the Eddic poems in the original for English-speaking students 'with a limited knowledge of German or of modern Scandinavian languages' (p. vii). The book thus fills a gap that has long needed filling, and starts out with a premise that many beginners will find reassuring, namely that it is not necessary for students to know German before proceeding to study Icelandic. Works such as *Hávamál*, *Voluspá*, *Vafþrúðnismál*, *Prymskviða* and some of the heroic poems such as *Atlakviða*, *Atlamál in grænlenzku*, *Guðrúnarhvöt*, and *Hamðismál* are of course available with notes in English and limited, relevant glossaries. The present work, however, paves the way for the English-speaking student with some basic knowledge of Icelandic to read other works of no less interest, but less frequently dealt with, such as *Skírnismál*, *Lokasenna*, and the *Helgakviður*, without having to resort to the far more bulky and often unreliable *Icelandic-English Dictionary* compiled by Richard Cleasby and Guðbrandur Vigfússon.

It should be emphasised before proceeding any further that the *Glossary to the Poetic Edda* is essentially a translation and revision of Hans Kuhn's *Kurzes Wörterbuch* rather than an independent work. Indeed, it is so heavily 'based on' Kuhn's book that it is somewhat surprising to see La Farge and Tucker credited as authors rather than translators, revisers or editors. Most surprising of all is the notable absence of Kuhn's name from the front cover of the book despite the fact that all the groundwork for it is his. (The words 'based on Hans Kuhn's *Kurzes Wörterbuch*' first appear on the title page inside the book.)

In spite of this, the *Glossary* can be hailed as a clear improvement on the original for several reasons. First of all, the *Glossary* is more wide-ranging than its original in that it has been extended to include words drawn from *Grógaldr* and *Fjolsvinnsmál* which are not included in the Neckel-Kuhn edition on which Kuhn's *Kurzes Wörterbuch* was based. La Farge and Tucker have also gone out of their way to

make the Glossary easy for the reader to use. The spacing, lay-out and use of bold print for Icelandic and etymologically related words and expressions in Gothic, Old High German, High German, Old Saxon, Old English and so on make reference and reading a much simpler process. Another welcome improvement is the decision to normalise the spellings of headwords on the model of Finnur Jónsson's *Lexicon Poeticum* (1931) and Jón Helgason's (1971) and Ursula Dronke's (1969) unfinished editions of the Eddic poems, rather than keeping solely to Kuhn's orthography. Headwords are also given in Kuhn's orthography, but now with cross-references to forms in the alternative normalisation, under which the main information appears—in most cases (one notes, for example, that in spite of this system *bicc-a-c* retains a fuller reference than appears under *pikk-a-k* on pp. 308–09). The book can thus now be used with all the main available editions of the Eddic poems. The only minor irregularity here is that all quotations are still given in Kuhn's orthography (based on Neckel and Kuhn's edition), something that is likely to make this glossary seem rapidly outdated when the new *Íslensk fornrit* edition of the Eddic poems (currently being prepared by Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Olason) appears in some years' time.

Another new feature of this book is the marking of definite *hapax legomena* and the classification of conjectured words (those marked as such by Kuhn) into those that are attested and unattested in other sources. References to etymologically related words in other languages have also been extended, especially to those found in Old English, and a number of proper names (such as *Burr*, *Býleiptr* and *Hraesvelgr*) and place names (such as *Vaðgelmir* and *Pund*) have been added where their meaning is not clear from the contexts in which they occur. Additional references have also been made to certain mutated verb forms found in Eddic poetry that were not included in Kuhn's *Wörterbuch*: here, for example, one finds new references to *téð*, *ter*, and *tét* in addition to the infinitive *tiá*.

The main new feature of the book, however, is the decision to add references to the suggestions of other scholars, especially concerning those words Kuhn found uncertain or unclear. The majority of these references are drawn from Hugo Gering's *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda*, edited by Barent Sijmons, 2 vols (1927–31), Hugo Gering's *Vollständiges Wörterbuch zu den Liedern der Edda* (1903), Finnur Jónsson's *Lexicon Poeticum* (1931), the work of Ernst Albin Kock (especially *Notationes Norrænae* (1923–44)), and Ursula Dronke's *The Poetic Edda*, vol. I (1969). The most recent works consulted are David Evans's edition of *Hávamál* (1986), and Anthony Faulkes's accompanying *Glossary and Index* (1987). These bring Kuhn's work largely up to date, although reference could usefully have been made also to even more recent editions such as Tim William Machan's of *Vafþrúðnismál* (1988) and Gísli Sigurðsson's recent Icelandic editions of *Hávamál* and *Völuspá* (2nd ed., revised (1987)), and of *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* and *Atlakviða* (in *Sigild kvæði*, I (1986)). Gísli, for example, offers some logical suggestions about the words *himiniodyr/himinjódýr* (*Vsp.* 5) and *sælliför* (*Háv.* 70) which deserve to have been included in the *Glossary*, and would have saved La Farge and Tucker from merely echoing Kuhn's statements that the words are 'obscure' (p. 112) or 'corrupt' (p. 257).

In general, the *Glossary* displays a great deal of care and accuracy. One might, however, question the over-dependence on Kuhn's *Wörterbuch*. It would seem that the work under review began first as a translation of Kuhn, and then, not altogether decisively, moved on to the stage of revision. This becomes apparent the moment one begins a careful comparison of the two books, and particularly when one encounters such directly translated statements as the following: 'Generally the dat. and acc. are not distributed differently after *i* than after German *in*' (p. 134, cf. Kuhn, p. 111); this will have little meaning for the students the present book is said to be intended for. The close dependence on Kuhn has also resulted in the repetition of certain minor inconsistencies found in the original, such as the all too irregular use of 'e. g.' and 'etc.' to indicate when a word or expression is commonly used: one is thus never quite sure whether all the references to the word have been given or not. Another minor example of the same thing is found in the irregular classification of sub-headings into a) and b) in the entry for *því* (pp. 314–16; cf. Kuhn, p. 244) when numbered sub-headings are used elsewhere in both books.

As might be expected in a revision of this kind, there are few major errors, but those which do occur tend to derive from too close and slavish a following of Kuhn. For example, one notes the mistaken reference (in the entry for *gaman*) to *unna gamni* (p. 78) as coming from *Skírnismál*, sts 39 and 41 (where the text reads 'unna gamans' in both the relevant manuscripts). This mistake obviously stems from Kuhn (p. 69), where the *Skírnismál* references are grouped alongside another to *Hárbarðsljóð*, st. 30, where the line reads 'gamni mær unði' (from 'una' rather than 'unna'). In La Farge and Tucker's edition, the reference to *Hárbarðsljóð* has been dropped, but the incorrect quotation remains. The expression *unna gamans* is correctly handled, however, on p. 272, in the entry for *unna*.

With a book of this kind, one could naturally go on for ever searching for and complaining about minor differences in interpretation, or bemoaning the fact that a particular article on an individual word or expression has not been cited. This would have little point, however, and would be unfairly destructive. It is not the object of the *Glossary to the Poetic Edda* to provide a detailed bibliography of interpretations of the Eddic poems. It is aimed primarily at helping students, and making the original poems available to a wider audience than they have had in the past. It serves these purposes well. One can see this book becoming a worthy tool of the trade, along with Neckel and Kuhn's, Jón Helgason's and Dronke's editions of the Eddic poems, and Robert Kellogg's *A Concordance to Eddic Poetry* (1988). It is certainly already being put to good use by foreign visitors to Árnastofnun in Iceland.

My only real complaint is with La Farge and Tucker's suggestion that the book is 'affordable and portable' (p. vii). There is no doubt that the book is 'portable'. 'Affordable' for the average English student is another question. Any teacher of an introductory course in Icelandic is bound to balk at demanding that students should buy a paperback costing £20 (48 DM) along with their other main textbooks. The hardback edition costs £31.25. In Iceland, interested English-speaking students studying the Eddic poems would have to pay the equivalent of £30 for the paperback. Such a price is likely to send such students back from the bookshop to

the library, and to copies of Cleasby–Vigfússon whenever the library copy of the *Glossary* reviewed here is not available. Publishers be warned.

TERRY GUNNELL

MEDIEVAL SCANDINAVIA, AN ENCYCLOPEDIA. Edited by PHILLIP PULSIANO and KIRSTEN WOLF, with PAUL ACKER and DONALD K. FRY. Garland Encyclopedias of the Middle Ages, 1. *Garland Publishing*. London and New York. 1993. xx + 768 pp.

Volumes such as this present a problem for reviewers, worthy of mention only because it is also a problem for readers. How do you get into it? There is clearly no overall theme or argument to summarise, for anything like that would defeat the purpose of inclusiveness; and no team of editors, however strict, can impose more than a formal guidance as to length and layout on a list of 150 contributors. So: should one read it alphabetically? Or by individual contributors? By ‘cherry-picking’, taking one topic after another at random? Or perhaps by taking a big topic, *Njáls saga*, say, or ‘Skaldic Verse’, and pursuing the cross-references listed? A first point about this volume is that whichever method is selected, the lists and indexes make it easy to pursue. Contributors and their topics are listed at the front, entries at the back, marked out as bold in a list which also functions as general index. Each entry consists of text, essential bibliography in smaller print and a list of cross-references to other entries. Print is admirably clear, paper and binding—an important point for a book which may take much handling from many readers—of high quality.

Furthermore, any of the methods suggested above will produce immediate payoff. To give a string of eclectic examples—it is bound to resemble the famous list in Borges’s ‘Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge’—Alan Binns’s article on ‘Ships and Shipbuilding’ not only draws attention to the overrating of Gokstad evidence, and summarily dismisses many of the claims made for it on the basis of Captain Andersen’s not-quite-replica (I had certainly been taken in by these); not only gives a brief, highly technical but easy-to-follow account of the Skuldelev and other finds (the Nydam boat in the Schleswig Museum, this informed me, is a poor reconstruction because of differential shrinkage, making it much less of a ‘war canoe’ than previously thought); it also provides a brief effective counter to modern historians’ scepticism over Viking army numbers as recorded in contemporary chronicles. If the Vikings were sailing Skuldelev 3s rather than Gokstads, the fleet sizes given in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* become much more plausible. Much of this information was entirely new to me, as it would have been to any but a specialist. As significantly, much of the misinformation corrected was all too familiar.

Hopping sideways, one might take the vexed issue of *Hugsvinnsmál* and *Hávamál*, both entries being allotted sensibly to the same contributor, D. A. H. Evans. Among novel information gleaned from these entries were the possible derivation of *hugsvinnr* from *catus*, ‘shrewd,’ a false etymology of Cato which I was not aware of; and the large number of manuscripts (42) of *Hugsvinnsmál*. The

entry on *Hugsvinnsmál* does state, clearly if contentiously, ‘*Hávamál* is certainly older than *Hugsvinnsmál* and is probably consciously echoed’, but also adds immediately, ‘the precedence between *Hugsvinnsmál* and *Sólarljóð* is less clear’. There is a topic there in itself; as there is in the *Hávamál* entry’s ‘it is plainly not a unified composition’, compare Carolyne Larrington, *A Store of Common Sense: Gnomic Theme and Style in Old Icelandic and Old English Poetry* (1993), 65, ‘*Hávamál* is a coherent poem.’ Evans here is perhaps slightly more towards the ‘opinion’ than the ‘raw data’ end of that polarity, but what he says is perfectly clear, and the disagreements with von See or Hermann Pálsson can be followed up from the bibliography. Evans writes a third entry on *Viktors saga ok Blávus*.

Or take a saga. Which was the saga (one might want to know) thought to be a sequel to *Hrafnkels saga*? A glance at the entry on *Hrafnkels saga* itself does not tell me—and I was unconvinced by Henry Kratz’s final remark on that work that if it has a message ‘it seems to be that only some are called to be leaders, but those who are must always exercise restraint’—but at this point the Index comes into play. It refers to *Hrafnkels saga* eight times, under *Brandkrossa þátr* (whose author knew of Hrafnkell, it seems, but not of the saga); under *Fljótsdæla saga* twice—and that turns out to be the possible sequel being sought, maybe ‘the youngest of the *Íslendingasögur*’, writes Alison Finlay; and then under ‘Freyr and Freyja’, under *Haensna-Pórís saga* (an entry which again raises a ‘two-version’ issue with interesting serendipity), under *Riddarasögur* by Marianne E. Kalinke, connected with the issue of date, and finally under ‘Varangians’, with reference to Eyvindr Bjarnason, whose killing may, I suppose, be counted as Hrafnkell’s exercise in ‘restraint’, if not in the way that word is moralistically used. Reading the sentence above may perhaps convey a sense of the breathlessness this book is likely to cause. Anyone who followed up all the references above would be a long way on to understanding saga tradition, or the relation in sagas between history and fiction.

The convention of the reviewing genre obliges one to try to find fault, and one way of attempting to do so might be to review the contributions of the chief editor, Phillip Pulsiano. This exercise got off to a poor start, with the entry on *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* as fascinating as any of the above with its references to *Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain*, its mention of Finnur Jónsson’s disputable (and duly disputed) theses over *Víglundar saga* and over dual authorship, and its again helpful bibliography. It was possible to work up more of a feeling of disappointment over the entry on ‘England, Norse in’, but honesty compels me to admit that that was because I had thought ‘Norse’ would be a reference to the language rather than the people. Pulsiano does give space and references to the question of the survival of the Norse language, but his entry is mostly on political history; he has not solved the problem of Norse–English linguistic relations, and if he had, of course, it would have issued as a book rather than an entry. One might conclude here that encyclopedias are there to list what is known, not directly to attack the unknown. Pulsiano’s entry on ‘Old English Literature, Norse Influence on’ also has to be taken as a fair starting-point and authoritative summary. As a patron of the Swordsman pub in Stamford Bridge, I would have accepted a less cool and more romantic account of ‘Stamford Bridge,

Battle of—the story of the Viking holding the bridge over the Derwent till stabbed from below is not there, but once again the reference to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is there for anyone to follow; and as usual the bibliography turns up a reference to a work not known to the reviewer, one put out by the East Yorkshire Historical Society. In short one has to concede that the chief editor's own entries are an image in brief of the whole work: packed with information, rich in suggestion, authoritative without dullness, exciting without exaggeration.

This volume is an essential work for any reference library, while any private reader who buys a personal copy will find it an inexhaustible resource. It has some 150 contributors, more than twice as many entries, and perhaps three quarters of a million words on more than 750 pages. At \$95 that works out as extremely good value, even at words per cent, or penny.

T. A. SHIPPEY

THE HELIAND: THE SAXON GOSPEL, A TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY. Edited by G. RONALD MURPHY S. J. *Oxford University Press*. New York and Oxford, 1992. xviii + 238 pp.

Six years ago Ronald Murphy published a collection of essays on the *Heliand* with the title *The Saxon Savior: The Germanic Transformation of the Gospel in the Ninth-century Heliand* (1989). The present volume is both a complement and a supplement. It contains a full prose translation of the Old Saxon original together with substantial expository footnotes and four appendices. Two of the latter are reprints of essays germane to the *Heliand* ('Magic in the *Heliand*' and 'Symmetrical Structure in the *Heliand*') which Murphy had meanwhile published elsewhere. Taken together, these two volumes—the earlier essays and now the translation plus appendices—provide the sum of Murphy's contribution to the study of the *Heliand* to date, and they are to be welcomed most warmly, by Old Norse scholars no less than by students of the other Germanic languages.

It would be otiose to labour the point, but it has to be observed from the outset that any would-be translator (as distinct from interpreter) of the *Heliand*—as of all literary masterpieces from this period—faces a near-impossible challenge. Readers of *Saga-Book* need no reminding that modern English has no real equivalents for the medieval Germanic cosmic ideas of, for example, *wewurt*, or *mudspel*, or even *middilgard*. Equally, whilst we in modern secularised Europe or North America certainly have our own social bonds and loyalties, our family and political hierarchies bear little resemblance to the structures of medieval tribal society—hence texts which refer to 'chieftains and their retinue', 'earls' and 'clan-relatives' cannot help but come over as archaic or maybe even as primitive. Furthermore, as regards the language of inspired utterance, modern English—even in the realm of sophisticated poetic diction—uses neither kennings nor assonance with much sense of intellectual ease, and alliteration, too, is relatively unusual. The attempt to mediate as translator between ninth-century Baltic culture and ours is thus a massive task, and the best that the *Heliand* translator can hope to achieve now is

an afterglow. Yet the challenge of making the *Heliand* accessible to a modern non-specialist reader is certainly worth undertaking and, despite any criticism of its diction, we should be grateful for the glow in Murphy's new version.

I should emphasise that Murphy's method is primarily expository, and the virtues of that method are admirable: the seventy-one fitts ('Songs') are all provided with a descriptive title, there is plenty of paragraphing within the Songs, the footnotes are frequent and informative, and their numbering is consecutive: 1–320.

Comparison with the most recent previous English *Heliand* translation, by Mariana Scott (University of North Carolina Studies in the Germanic Languages and Literatures, 52 (1966)) is instructive, since the diction of Murphy's version could hardly be more different. Where Scott's technique employs assonance, alliteration and free rhythms, in an attempt to mirror and so to capture the poetic power of the original, Murphy has opted for prose. Aware that the original was written for oral performance, Scott aimed to produce a version which could be read aloud. Murphy's version is that of the teacher-scholar. Scott declared that she had 'settled on a somewhat archaic style as most appropriate for reproducing not only the biblical but somewhat primitive, naive atmosphere of the original'. By contrast, although he acknowledges with emphasis the originality of the *Heliand* poet's work—'Whoever he was, he was an enormously gifted religious poet capable of profound intercultural communication' (p. xiii)—Murphy makes no attempt to convey the formal skill of the original's verbal rhythms and he makes relatively little attempt at verbal artistry.

In his Introduction to the translation, Murphy explains that he set himself two principles: a visual one and a historical one. According to the former, he imagines for example what the Saxon poet must have had in mind when using the word *burg*, as in *Rumuburg* and *Nazarethburg*, visualising this as an Early Medieval hill fort, not a High Medieval stone castle, and so he translates these names as 'Fort Rome' and 'hill-fort Nazareth' respectively. As an example of the historical principle, he translates the word *degen* with 'thane' or 'warrior' (*gisithos* are rendered as 'warrior-companions') rather than 'knight', because the latter implies cavalry, whereas mounted fighting was a development which, for ninth-century Saxony, still lay in the future. (Footnote 13, on the other hand, concerning Zachary's upbringing of John 'to practise the warrior virtue of *treuwa*', finishes with the observation: 'In this ninth-century synthesis lies the first full written expression and perhaps the origin itself of the Germanic-Christian [ideal of] knighthood in the Middle Ages.')

As regards the poetic diction of the original, and in particular its use of *Stabreim*, Murphy explains that the poem's poetic power lies principally in the imagery used by the poet and in 'concept alliteration' or 'concept rhyme' (rather than in the self-echoing sounds of consonants and vowels), i. e. he maintains that the *Heliand*'s poetry parallels the main principle of Hebrew poetry whereby, for example, 'mountain' rhymes with 'hill', and 'fishes' with 'whales', or the clause 'they put Him on a cross' with 'they hanged Him from a tree'. Whilst I concede both that concept poetry is present in the *Heliand* and that its power is undeniable, I would still stress that the artistic skill—and power—in the *Heliand* poet's use of alliteration and assonance is rather more immediate and unmistakable.

As an illustration of Murphy's method we may take the *Heliand*'s opening sentence (the original of these lines is also supplied by Murphy to whet the appetite of 'the curious (and the brave)', p. xvii):

There were many whose hearts told them that they should begin to tell the secret runes, the word of God, the famous feats that the powerful Christ accomplished in words and in deeds among human beings.

(There is a helpful footnote on the interpretation of *giruni* where it occurs here and again later in the poem.) That Murphy is more interested in sense than sound is immediately clear: where the original has twenty-nine words, Murphy uses as many as thirty-six (Scott used twenty-eight).<sup>1</sup> Whilst Murphy's sequence of clauses does reflect the structure of the original well enough, to my ear the diction lacks the conviction of naturalness—in everyday English that opening phrase, 'There were many', requires a complement such as 'people'. Similarly, present-day English (in contrast to Old Saxon) does not readily use article-adjective-noun constructions like 'the powerful Christ'—'Almighty Christ', or 'Christ the all-powerful' are preferable. Equally, whilst the phrase 'among human beings' (for *undar mancunnea*) can indeed be heard at any modern English church service, it too obviously reflects a politically correct attempt to avoid exclusive language ('mankind' does, however, occur elsewhere in the translation).

On the positive side, these opening lines do contain one cheerful, spontaneous alliteration: 'famous feats' for *maritha*. Elsewhere, too, Murphy's diction permits other felicitous and unforced alliterations: 'the high heavens', 'taxes and tolls', 'then and there', 'our decision and doom', 'God's good son set off', etc. To that extent, *Stabreim*—the principal aspect of verbal artistry in the original—is not entirely missing. A reviewer from this side of the Atlantic might have feared the intrusion of American diction, but there is nothing more unfamiliar here than 'stickerbush', 'stein', 'hard cider', 'ray grass', 'mindset of the people', 'sneaky people' or 'gotten her pregnant'.

As observed at the outset, some medieval concepts remain virtually untranslatable. With Old Saxon *middilgard* Murphy compromises: in the text (e. g. Song 11 and elsewhere) he translates it as 'middle world', but for the title of Song 11 he writes 'John announces Christ's coming to Middlegard'. As regards the concepts *uurdand* and *metod*, he writes as a gloss on his translation of *so habed him uurdiscapu metod*

<sup>1</sup> Scott's version of the opening lines, for comparison, reads:

Many there were tensing their minds  
to say what was whispered: that Might-Wielding Christ  
had here among men done miracles many  
With His words and His works.

I have to agree with other critics that Scott's version, in its deliberate attempt to reflect the verbal artistry of the original, errs too far in the other direction (her richly alliterative diction also includes, for example, 'thusly', 'soothly', 'All-Wielder', 'twain', 'hand-gifts', 'Land-Warden', 'winsome possessions', 'aethling', 'wave-farers', 'swarthy flames'). The place-names *Rumuburg* and *Nazarethburg* she adopts without alteration other than the insertion of a hyphen.

*gimarcod* ('this is the way the workings of fate made him, time formed him'): 'Fate and time are the highest entities in Germanic religion', and refers the reader to chapter 3 of *The Saxon Savior* (Footnote 12. Scott's rendering of these ideas is: 'So have the Weird Ones set down: The Measurers have marked it.').

The commentary in the footnotes is a vital part of the translation. As one would expect, words and ideas from the original are expounded, ranging far and wide, but the commentary also raises interesting questions, such as, did Luther know the *Heliand* (note 19)? Theological implications are also explored—as in note 278, where Murphy explains why the *Heliand* poet felt obliged to add a comment on Christ's un-warrior-like passivity during his final trial. And note 68 acts as a vehicle for one of Murphy's major historical interpretative insights—that the *Heliand* contains a hidden polemic against the manner of Charlemagne's imposition of Frankish rule on the Saxons.

'The merry message'—thus Murphy translates Old Saxon *blidi gibodskepi*. This new *Heliand* translation conveys not just 'good news', nor, in Scott's archaic phrase 'blythe tidings', but a 'cheerful sound', a merry message. The translator's joy is evident in his enthusiasm and shared sense of merriment. Whatever may have been the reality of Frankish missionary methods amongst the Saxons, Murphy's translation of the *Heliand* is a labour of love, and it is to be welcomed with gratitude.

RICHARD F. M. BYRN

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# ON THE SOURCES AND COMPOSITION OF RÓMVERJA SAGA

BY ÞORBJÖRG HELGADÓTTIR

## I *Rómverja saga*

THIS WORK IS an early Icelandic version of matter drawn from a number of Latin sources. The most important and substantial of these were Sallust's *Jugurtha* and *Catiline* and Lucan's *Pharsalia*. The saga exists in two redactions, customarily referred to as the older and younger versions. The older is preserved with large lacunas in AM 595 a–b 4to, written in the second quarter of the fourteenth century and printed *44 Prøver*, 253–380, 385–86; Meissner 1910, 4–131. (Manuscript datings follow those given in *ONP Registre*.) The younger is known in two forms. One is the entire text preserved in AM 226 fol., from the end of the fourteenth century, and in copies derived from it; it is printed *44 Prøver*, 108–252. The other is the fragmentary text found in a sixteenth-century manuscript, Perg. 4:o nr 24 in the Royal Library, Stockholm. The younger redaction is much abridged and often reworked, especially in the Sallust sections. On the other hand, it also supplies matter which does not exist in the older redaction because of the defective state of AM 595 4to. This is the case, for instance, with the whole of the conclusion to the *Pharsalia* translation, part 6 in the synopsis below, where we have no option but to accept the younger version's text more or less as it stands.

The saga can be conveniently divided into six parts:

1. A translation of the *Jugurtha*, though with omission of Sallust's introduction, chs 1,1–4,9: *44 Prøver*, 253–326/6; 108–156/19.
2. A bridging passage, giving a brief account of Jugurtha's death, followed by a longer section on Marius and Sulla and the war between them, ending with a brief enumeration of the outstanding men of the next generation, Pompey, Caesar, Crassus and Cato: *44 Prøver*, 326/8–330/20; 156/19–160/14.
3. A translation of the *Catiline*, again with omission of Sallust's introduction, chs 1,1–4,5, and also of his long lament over Rome's moral decline, chs 5,9–13,5: *44 Prøver*, 330/21–354/28; 160/15–179/2.
4. A prelude to the *Pharsalia*, on the forms of Roman government from the foundation of the city down to the struggle between Pompey

and Caesar, in effect a very summary account of Roman history within those limits. It is imperfectly preserved; see *44 Prøver*, 385/9–386/27; 179/3–181/21; and the Appendix, pp. 216–19 below.

5. An abridged prose translation of Lucan's *Pharsalia*: *44 Prøver*, 355/2–380/29; 181/22–246/5.

6. A conclusion to the *Pharsalia*, on the aftermath of the battle, Caesar's death, Octavian's victories over Mark Antony, Octavian's reign as Augustus, and finally the birth of Christ: *44 Prøver*, 246/6–252/9.

In connection with part 3 it may be noted that the translator is manifestly willing to disregard Sallust's philosophical and moral reflections; he obviously wants to get on with the story. The same may be said of part 5, the *Pharsalia*, where the translator is primarily interested in the events, and most of Lucan's poetry gets lost on the way. This is especially true of passages where Lucan expands on mythological and astronomical themes; but other features of his high epic style, the luxuriant introduction of proper names, for instance, also go by the board.

The following discussion aims to identify rather more closely the forms of the Latin originals used by the saga-maker. It leads to a brief consideration of the way in which the saga may have been composed.

## II *The Sallust translation*

No remains of Sallust manuscripts exist in Iceland, and in their absence we can only approach the problem of source identification by studying the Icelandic alongside the Latin to see whether it shows departures from the *textus receptus* which can be matched elsewhere in the Sallust transmission. I discussed this comparison in some detail a few years ago (Þorbjörg Helgadóttir 1987–88), so here I shall merely summarise the main points, though with some brief additional comment.

Sallust texts are extant in 500-odd copies. The early manuscripts, from the ninth to the twelfth century, fall into two main groups. The first group comprises copies which all had the same original lacuna in the *Jugurtha* text, chs 103,2–112,3. In most of them, however, this missing matter was subsequently supplied, commonly by a hand different from that of the main text. The copies of the second group do not have that lacuna and thus appear without the intervention of a second scribe. Otherwise the two groups have a number of smaller omissions in common. Editors of Sallust have arrived at a classification of sorts, with division into three major families of manuscripts, and it appears

that the Latin text followed by the Icelandic translator was a member of the so-called ‘gamma’ family. A noteworthy feature of this set is that all its members are of German provenance. One of them, a late eleventh-century codex now in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Codex Parisinus 10195, has a special status in relation to the Icelandic translation. In four cases it offers a variant which agrees with the saga reading but is at odds with the other available witnesses. This Paris manuscript was in the library of the famous monastery at Echternach, founded by St Willibrord, in present-day Luxembourg but only a few miles from Trier and the Mosel.

The evidence makes it plausible to assume that it was a copy of this Echternach manuscript, or of a text closely related to it, which came early to Iceland. Ways and means are easy to contemplate, impossible to confirm. As students and pilgrims, perhaps as men on clerical or commercial business, Icelanders came to Frisia, Saxony, Franconia, Lotharingia; they travelled by the Rhine and Mosel on their way south to Rome and beyond. On these routes, as on others, monasteries provided lodgings for a longer or shorter stay. Some visitors with time and money, of studious bent and with the right recommendations, might be allowed access to the book-cupboards and scriptoria of their host-communities; they could commission copies or buy them ready-made; they might even be permitted to make them for themselves. There was traffic in the opposite direction as well. English and Continental clerics came to Iceland, missionary bishops in the eleventh century, for instance, though what texts they may have had with them other than their essential service-books is beyond our ken. As first bishop of Hólar, Iceland’s northern diocese, Jón Qgmundarson was in office from 1106 to 1121. He is reliably reported to have brought two foreign clerics to teach in his cathedral school. One of them is described as *franzeis*, which may suggest ‘French’ but in the early twelfth-century context is more likely to mean ‘Frankish’, not least because the name of this priest was Ríkini, a Germanic name, Ricwine, well attested in the region between Köln and Mainz and west into Lotharingia—the region, in fact, where Echternach lies.

A further possibility is that a copy of the Echternach manuscript, or of a sister or a cousin, came straight from that Benedictine house to one of the Benedictine communities in Iceland. Two were established in the twelfth century, both in the Hólar diocese, one at Þingeyrar in 1133, one at Þverá in 1155; both became notable centres of literary activity, Þingeyrar by the end of that century, Þverá rather later. Bishop Jón had

connections, direct or indirect, with the Köln–Trier–Mainz triangle, and it was he who took the initiative in founding Iceland's first Benedictine monastery. The first abbot, Vilmundr, had been educated by Bishop Jón's foreign teachers at the cathedral school of Hólar. He must have subsequently gone abroad, more likely to the mainland than to Scandinavia where monasticism was still in its infancy, and become a novice and in time a professed monk in some abbey which one would guess was in the Gorze rather than the Cluny tradition. There was nothing novel about such an excursion from Iceland; after all, the two boys, Ísleifr and Gizurr, who were to become the first native bishops of the Icelanders, had been sent to school in Westphalia some decades earlier. That Abbot Vilmundr had been in a house of black monks in Mosel or Rhine territory cannot be substantiated, but it is by no means an out-of-the-way conjecture.

I may mention as a coda that AM 595 4to, our sole source for the older redaction of *Rómverja saga*, is of North Icelandic provenance. The scribe shared with another writer the copying of the *Jónsbók* manuscript, AM 127 4to. This rather younger collaborator of his is familiar to us as the scribe of nine or ten other manuscripts, written about the middle of the fourteenth century (Jakob Benediktsson 1980, 10–11), and both men were evidently at work in a cathedral or monastic scriptorium. It is the milieu in which we should expect to find such a work as *Rómverja saga* not just preserved but also made in the first place. If the translations on which it is based are from about 1200 or earlier (Jakob Benediktsson 1980, 23; Þorbjörg Helgadóttir 1987–88, 274–76), we have few centres to choose from in the Northern diocese: Hólar with its cathedral school and the Benedictine houses at Þingeyrar and Þverá. That historians and latinists thronged at Þingeyrar in that period is something we can say for certain.

### III *The Lucan translation*

The *Pharsalia* was another extremely popular work, known today in a good 400 manuscripts, whole or fragmentary. The textual problems are many and complex because Lucan's enforced suicide left the poem unfinished and the ten books he had composed by no means finally revised. It must often be left in doubt whether this or that reading among a multitude of variants represents the word of the poet or a later contribution (Tarrant 1983). Editors have analysed a number of the oldest manuscripts, from the ninth and tenth centuries, and arrived at what passes for a *textus receptus* on the basis of their classified variants.

Affinities among these manuscript texts certainly exist, but a plain demonstration of relatively clearcut family groups, as in the case of the histories by Sallust, is out of the question.

It is not only these circumstances of textual history that complicate the comparison of the Icelandic translation with Lucan's Latin. Another prime difficulty is the distortion which inevitably results when a grand epic poem, highly coloured and studded with rhetorical gems, is put into prose by a translator whose interest lies much more in the history than in the poetry. We have to contend with sharp reduction, by abridgment and omission, and with ready paraphrase. Nevertheless, the comparative study I have so far undertaken suggests that we need not utterly despair of coming closer to the source of the translation, tentative though any conclusion must inevitably be. At present it appears safe to isolate three Lucan manuscripts as having particular relevance to the *Rómverja saga* text: Codex Leidensis Vossianus, Lat. XIX F.63; Codex Leidensis Vossianus, Lat. XIX Q.51 (= V); and Codex Bruxellensis, Bibl. Burgund. 5330–32.

Although the translator did his best to pare Lucan's text down while still giving an intelligible narrative, he was not averse to adding bits here and there, usually by way of explanation. We have to decide whether such comment came out of his own head or was drawn from a written source. It is not difficult to give a verdict in favour of the latter derivation. Many manuscript texts of the *Pharsalia* are glossed in one way or another, and various commentaries on Lucan also exist independently, in so-called *scholia*. Commentaries of both kinds were published by Weber (1831), and an examination of these Latin texts soon makes it clear that the additions in *Rómverja saga* have much in common with them, too much to be accidental. Two commentaries show a more particular affinity with the Icelandic. One is that of the Leyden manuscript designated V (see above); the other is a twelfth-century *scholia* collection in Codex Berolinensis, nr 34 (= X). The provenance of the Leyden manuscript is assigned, rather vaguely, to western Germany (Tarrant 1983, 216); that of the Berlin manuscript is pinpointed to Xanten, on the Rhine, not far from the present German–Dutch border (Rose 1905, 1304–05).

#### IV *The bridging passage between the Jugurtha and Catiline translations*

Meissner (1910, 305–06) saw that the *scholia* of X, the Berlin codex of Xanten origin just mentioned, contain items which correspond rather closely to matter found in this bridging passage in the saga, part 2 in the

synopsis above. The longest of the pieces of commentary relevant to the bridging passage is the *scholion* associated with Lucan's long retrospective digression on the civil war between Marius and Sulla and its atrocities, *Pharsalia*, II 68–232.

The bridging section in the saga begins with these lines, *44 Prøver*, 326/8–14; cf. 156/19–25:

En þó er það sagt á bókum Rómverja að Jugurtha konungr var bundinn læiddr í Rómaborg ok að dómi öldunga var hann lengi kvalðr ok marga vega ok það var gört að við hann að hvarmarnir allir voru klippðir af augunum til þess að hann mætti ægí svefn fá sem manns eðli er til en að lyktum var hann svá dæyddr að honum var stæypt í forað.

(I would translate *honum var stæypt í forað* as ‘He was thrown into an abyss, or over a cliff.’ The sense of *forað* as ‘a dangerous, precipitous place’ is well attested in early Icelandic, see Cleasby–Vigfússon and Fritzner, s. v., and add *Postola sögur* 1874, 724/11–15, where *pú steyptir í forað* translates *tu in præcipitio misisti*, cf. e. g. Mombrutius 1910, II 612/53–57. In later Icelandic it commonly means ‘a dangerous, swampy place’, and it was so paraphrased, *í hit fúlasta fen*, in the younger redaction of *Rómverja saga*, *44 Prøver*, 156/24.)

Jugurtha’s capture and end are commonly recorded by early historians, but only Plutarch (*Life of Marius*, XII 3) reports that he suffered from the violence of his captors (and was starved to death), and Plutarch’s details bear no relation to those given in the saga. On the other hand, Meissner (1910, 305) noticed that the detail of denying Jugurtha sleep by removing his eyelids is reminiscent of a passage in Orosius (IV, 10) telling of the torment of Atilius Regulus, *quem . . . resectis palpebris, illigatum in machina, vigilando necaverunt*.

It must seem unlikely, however, that the Icelandic author/editor pieced together his few lines on Jugurtha’s fate from a variety of sources; much more likely that he was following a commentary of *scholion* kind. It cannot in this case have been a commentary of the kind represented by the Berlin X codex, which contains nothing on Jugurtha’s end, and none of the other available commentaries has a text fully comparable to the Icelandic. Noteworthy parallels are however to be found in Lucan *scholia* compiled by Arnulf of Orléans at the end of the twelfth century. He too begins a corresponding section on the war between Marius and Sulla with a note on Jugurtha’s overthrow. He does not describe his torture but he does say that he was brought to Rome and there thrown off the Tarpeian Rock (*Arnulfi Aurelianensis Glosule* 1958, II 67). The narrative sequence and the manner of Jugurtha’s

execution are thus in harmony with the saga passage, and it seems not unlikely that the commentary on which the Icelandic author/editor based his Jugurtha–Marius–Sulla bridging section began like Arnulf's *scholion* and had a related account of Jugurtha's end.

Most of the bridging passage is on the struggle of Marius and Sulla. Without going into detail, we may safely say that comparison of this matter with the commentary of the Leyden V and the Berlin X manuscripts confirms that the Icelandic writer otherwise had a source similar to them at his disposal.

In *Rómverja saga* the matter of *Pharsalia*, II 68–232, the digression on the times of Marius and Sulla just discussed, appears where it chronologically belongs, in the bridging passage between the *Jugurtha* and *Catiline* sections, while, not unnaturally, it is omitted in the translation of the *Pharsalia* itself. The bridging passage does not, of course, give us straight Lucan: the writer mingles information gleaned from *Pharsalia*, II 68–232, with material of *scholia* kind and he also refers to other parts of Lucan's epic. A similar approach is evident in an interesting fragment of a Lucan commentary in the Beales Collection in Olympia, Washington. The fragment is just a couple of paper leaves in poor shape, written in the fourteenth century but obviously a copy of an older text (Wilson 1933). The first leaf begins with notes on *Pharsalia*, I 691–95. Then comes an *Accessus ad secundum librum*, followed by a kind of division of this book into ten 'chapters'. The third 'chapter' covers *Pharsalia*, II 68–232, the digression on the times of Marius and Sulla. The text the fragment represents was evidently designed as a book for the classroom. The Magister shows that he knew his Lucan thoroughly, referring to appropriate passages back and forth in the *Pharsalia*, and interspersing his own comment. It is a natural conclusion that the source followed by the author/editor of *Rómverja saga* in putting together his bridging passage was akin to the Beales text-book fragment. Admittedly, a good deal of the information in the Icelandic cannot be paralleled in the available *scholia* collections, though most of the extra details can be traced in fourth- and fifth-century historians like Eutropius, Orosius and Exuperantius. We may doubt whether any twelfth-century Icelander had direct access to such authorities, and it seems a better solution to assume that these diverse facts were owed to a Lucan commentary pieced together by a compiler in some centre of learning on the Continent. We should perhaps not entirely ignore the words with which the Icelandic writer begins his bridging passage, *en þó er það sagt á bókum Rómverja*, but it would be rash to conclude that

such a plural, used in citing authority, necessarily implies that he had more sources than one—viz. the postulated Lucan commentary—at his disposal.

#### V *The prelude and conclusion to the Pharsalia translation*

Twelfth-century scholars and teachers more and more turned their hands to providing introductory guides to the works of classical authors, so-called *accessus*, ‘approaches’. Collections of such pieces were made, often accompanied by more immediately utilitarian glosses and annotation on the text selected for study. In most medieval circles Lucan the historian was esteemed at least as highly as Lucan the poet, and the commentaries usually pay ample attention to the historical aspects of his work. An *accessus ad Lucanum* would typically include a section called *summa historiae*, a basic sketch of Roman history intended to give a student the background he needed to understand the events described in the *Pharsalia*. When commentators put such compendia together, they naturally turned to the historians ordinarily used in the schools, and although they do not name their sources, it is often possible to identify the books they relied on. On occasion their information cannot be traced to a known source; and sometimes it is evident that they offer an account which reflects contemporary, twelfth-century, views of the past and which, in the nature of things, is not likely to be without mistakes and anachronisms.

The author of a *summa historiae* in a Lucan *accessus* usually puts the Triumvirate at the centre of interest, commonly paying most attention to the activities of the allies and rivals, Crassus, Caesar and Pompey, as *dictatores*. He treats their characters and careers more or less thoroughly, usually ending with Pompey’s death and so keeping within the chronological bounds of the *Pharsalia* itself. But this scheme is not invariable: sometimes an author would make the foundation of Rome his starting-point; sometimes he would not end his summary before the reign of Nero, thus bringing the history down to Lucan’s own day. And it must have been a *summa* of this extended scope that the Icelandic author/editor had on his desk when he furnished the *Pharsalia* translation with its prelude and conclusion.

At this point other Icelandic sources must be drawn into the discussion. Jakob Benediktsson (1980, 20–22) referred to a text in the late fourteenth-century miscellany manuscript, AM 764 4to, fols 13–14, which parallels substantial parts of the prelude and conclusion to the *Pharsalia* translation in *Rómverja saga*, 4 and 6 in the synopsis given in

I above. (Reference to 764 in what follows is to the text in the Appendix, pp. 216–19 below, where the passage is printed *in extenso* for the first time.) Comparison led Jakob to decide that the saga was the source of the matter in 764. He also discussed similarities which exist between the saga text and some short passages in *Veraldar saga*. In this case, he decided that *Veraldar saga* was the donor, *Rómverja saga* the recipient.

Dietrich Hofmann (1986) then published a fresh study of the relations between these three texts and came to a different conclusion. In his opinion *Rómverja saga* was the source used in both *Veraldar saga* and 764.

I have poached on their preserves, made yet another comparison, and would now advance yet another hypothesis, briefly as follows. Before *Veraldar saga* was composed (at some time after 1152 and before 1190, very likely well before; Jakob Benediktsson 1944, liii–liv), a translation of an *accessus ad Lucanum* was made in Iceland, with a *summa historiae* which stretched *ab urbe condita* to the reign of Augustus and the birth of Christ. The author of *Veraldar saga*, whose own book is only a sort of universal *summa historiae*, used this *accessus* translation on the rare occasions when it suited his purpose, so here only the merest fragments are preserved. The author/editor of *Rómverja saga* also used it, not without some modification, for his prelude and conclusion to the *Pharsalia* translation. Finally, the same *accessus* translation found its place in the epitome of universal history that fills the first twenty-three folios of AM 764 4to. This epitome is divided into eight ages, from the Creation to Doomsday, and the *accessus* translation was introduced to cover the end of the fifth age. The *accessus* matter here is selectively lopped; see the omission after 764, line 16, of a passage to parallel 44 *Prøver*, 385/24–386/23, and evident gaps in or after 764, lines 74, 79, 80, 84, 88, 109. On the other hand, it does not appear to have been seriously altered in the parts remaining.

This hypothesis is formulated on the basis of the demonstration in III and IV above that texts of *scholia* and *accessus* type certainly contributed to the matter of the Icelandic *Rómverja saga*. Detailed examination of all the evidence and every debatable point would be out of place, but a couple of examples may give some idea of the kind of further problem to which this explanation may offer a simple and harmonious solution.

As one would expect, Latin *summa* texts introduce events described in the *Pharsalia* at points where they belong in their chronological order. The author/editor of *Rómverja saga* was adapting his *summa*

merely in order to provide a prelude and conclusion to the Icelandic version of the *Pharsalia* itself. In these framing parts he had no place for any matter in the *summa* which in one way or another depended on the epic. But in the condensed texts of 764 and *Veraldar saga* we find vestiges of matter ultimately drawn from Lucan's poem.

*Pharsalia*, VIII 612–21, is the source of the description of the death of Pompey which comes in its proper place in the translation in *Rómverja saga* (44 *Prøver*, 231/20–26). His death is also described in 764, lines 78–84, a passage which clearly represents the same Icelandic text as that of the saga. But some intermediary seems to have existed between them and the *Pharsalia*, since they have details, the reference to Pompey's cloak, *möttullinn*, and the expression, used of Pompey under the sword, *þagði sem sauðr*, which have no warrant in Lucan. These might result from the inference or even the misunderstanding of a translator, but they are also just the kind of thing a scholiast or school-teacher might introduce.

Among the gaps in the 764 text there is one, after line 84, which can be filled, in skeletal but neatly chronological fashion, from *Veraldar saga*, 49/3–9, where the sentences (here normalised) run:

En Pompeius flýði á Egíptaland ok vænti sér þar trausts af Tholomeus konungi, en hann sveik Pompeium í tryggð ok drap hann síðan. Síðan fór Julius til Egíptalands ok vildi Tholomeus ok svíkja hann. Tholomeus drukknaði í á þeirri er Níl heitir, ok var þá áðr yfirkominn í orrostu af Julius.

The first sentence corresponds in essence to the passages on Pompey's death in *Rómverja saga* and 764 just discussed; the second to the last 200 lines or so of Book X of *Pharsalia*, cf. *Rómverja saga*, ch. 90 (44 *Prøver*, 244/11–245/28). The last sentence, on the other hand, reflects a source similar to one followed in lines at the end of the *Pharsalia* translation in *Rómverja saga* (44 *Prøver*, 245/28–246/2):

Síðan reisti hann bardaga í móti Julio ok veitti ymsum betr. enn sá varð hinn síðarsti at Ptolomeus flýði á skip eitt lítit . . . ok sökk skipit niðr ok allir peir er á váro. enn lík konungsins kenndiz af því at hann var í þeiri brynu sem gör var af brenndu gulli.

The first sentence here depends on Lucan, but his poem ends before Ptolomy's death and the details in *Rómverja saga* and the terse abridgment in *Veraldar saga* seem most easily explained by postulating common use of a source of *accessus* type.

The treatment the original *summa* received when it was put into the vernacular also suggests that the translation was undertaken as an independent exercise. In parts derived from the *accessus* we find a

number of ‘editorial’ additions which offer explanation of Latin terms or other comment specifically intended for the benefit of native readers. See e.g. on Mars, 764, lines 2–3, cf. 44 *Prøver*, 385/11–12; on ‘consules’ and ‘dictatores’, 764, lines 16, 24, cf. 44 *Prøver*, 386/26–27, *Veraldar saga*, 48/1 v. 1.; on Cato, 764, lines 77–78. This schoolmasterly approach is hardly evident elsewhere in *Rómverja saga*, and the contrast is the more striking when we observe that the use of one or two particular words in the *accessus* passages differs from the vocabulary of the main Sallust and Lucan translations as we know them in the older redaction of the saga. Thus, for example, the *accessus* text of *Upphof II* (see section VI below) uses only Latin ‘senatores’ (44 *Prøver*, 385/25, 386/14, 23), and the only other occurrence of the term in the whole of *Rómverja saga* is in 44 *Prøver*, 328/23, cf. 158/25–26, that is in the bridging passage discussed on pp. 207–10 above, also derived from an *accessus* or *scholion* source. (Otherwise the regular term is ‘öldungar’, cf. Meissner 1910, 205–06, and this is the only term used in the 764 text. Here, however, it is reasonable to assume that where the institution of the Senate was described in the primary *accessus* translation, cf. 44 *Prøver*, 385/24–25, ‘öldungar’ was introduced as a specific gloss; that whole passage is lost in 764.) It may well be that close reading will show that other parts of the saga were also affected by the author/editor’s knowledge of an *accessus* text.

It thus seems possible to make a plausible case for concluding that, in addition to his principal Sallust and Lucan texts, the author/editor of *Rómverja saga* profited from Lucan *scholia* and from a *summa historiae* of Lucan *accessus* type in a version which was already available in Icelandic and whose use is also evident in *Veraldar saga* and AM 764 4to. He may have referred to other sources as well, but they cannot be identified so readily.

## VI *The composition of Rómverja saga*

From Konráð Gíslason’s time to the present, scholars have had problems in assessing the component parts of *Rómverja saga* and deciding how they are, or should be, combined. In Section IX of 44 *Prøver*, Konráð printed the text of AM 595 4to as nine fragments, denoted A–I, but he abstracted the beginning of the prelude to the *Pharsalia* translation and printed it in Section X under the title *Upphof Rómverja II*. The number distinguishes it from the text he called *Upphof Rómverja I*, which he printed first in that same section. This is an introductory piece which comes immediately before the *Pharsalia* prelude in AM

595 4to but gives no appearance of being part and parcel of the whole work. Konráð thought that both these ‘beginnings’ were composed later than the saga itself. Meissner (1903) then demonstrated that *Upphaf* II was certainly an older piece than *Upphaf* I but, mainly because of its absence in the younger redaction, he was still inclined to believe that it might have been tacked onto the saga as a later addition, possibly intended to provide an introduction to the whole work (Meissner 1903, 672; 1910, 159).

*Upphaf* I was undoubtedly written later than the rest of the saga. It is even entered in AM 595 4to on pages originally left blank and in a hand-style of rather newer fashion than that of the main scribe (Jakob Benediktsson 1980, 18). It can be safely dismissed from any discussion of the composition of the saga.

It cannot be doubted either that *Upphaf* II, the opening of the prelude to the *Pharsalia* translation, is located in its proper place in the text of the older redaction preserved in AM 595 4to. It has a title which reads, *Hér hefr annan hlut Rómverja sögu ok segir fyrst hversu lengi hvert ríki stóð*. This obviously implies a division into two parts, a Sallust part and a Lucan part, but not necessarily that these parts were separate in origin. It is, on the other hand, quite conceivable that the Sallust histories existed in an independent translation which was later combined with the *accessus* and *Pharsalia* texts to make a larger whole. The bridging passage between the *Jugurtha* and *Catiline* could be used as an argument in favour of this hypothesis. It is clearly an ‘editorial’ piece introduced to forge a chronological link, and at the same time it has connections, both direct and indirect, with the second, Lucan, part of the saga. We may be dealing with a compiling editor who was making one work out of separate texts, a Sallust translation, a Lucan *accessus* translation, and a *Pharsalia* translation.

A task that remains, of course, is to make an exhaustive comparison of the Sallust and Lucan parts to see whether it is possible to conclude that different translators were responsible for them. It may be a hopeless task, for wholesale editorial revision might impose such a degree of linguistic and stylistic uniformity on these major narrative parts of the saga that tell-tale signs are obliterated. And even in favourable circumstances, it is not necessarily a straightforward matter to distinguish between translators, especially if they belonged to the same period and background. The methods followed by Icelanders were very much the same as those employed by medieval translators everywhere. They combined word-for-word and sense-for-sense rendering, with

occasional additional comment to make clear the meaning of individual words. They freely introduced other explanation and interpretation, such as we find here and there in *Rómverja saga*. In the Sallust part we can to some extent talk of word-for-word transfer, inasmuch as the translator is often consistent in using the same gloss for the same Latin term; but where his vocabulary or comprehension failed him, he had to make do with attempts at explanatory paraphrase. He can also invent words and compounds and lend old native words a new sense. Some Latin terms he kept—those for Roman officers of state, for example—others he quite misunderstood. He had no very clear notion of how Roman society was stratified, how the constitution was supposed to function, and how the Roman army and navy were organised. It may be that positive and negative characteristics of the Sallust translation like these will provide useful criteria for comparison with the *Pharsalia* translation. I am not sanguine that they will.

We should however not allow the faults and failures of the translated and transmitted texts to diminish our respect for the Icelandic author/editor of *Rómverja saga*. He made a valiant and thoughtful effort to build the materials he had to hand into an orderly chronological account of Roman achievements and Roman conflicts, mighty and momentous as both were.

## APPENDIX

I print here the remnants of a translated *summa historiae* in AM 764 4to, fols 13r–14r22. The text is normalised, with due regard to the forms and date of the manuscript and with editorial punctuation and paragraphing. Proper names are capitalised, with C for K where appropriate and occasional emendation to assist their recognition; otherwise their forms are as in the manuscript. Minor corrections are not noted. Lines 1–74 are given in diplomatic transcript in Jakob Benediktsson 1980, 21–22. I am very grateful to Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, of the Department of Scandinavian Studies, University College London, for checking this transcript from AM 764 4to.

Romulus ok Remus vóru tveir konungar í Italialandi, ok er svá sagt at þeir væri synir Martis, er Rúmverjar kölluðu orrostuguð en vér köllum Týr. Móðir þeira hét Ilia. Hon var konungs dóttir ok at langfeðgum komin frá Enea, mági Priami konungs í Trójuborg. Þeir bræðr gjörðu

- 5 Rómaborg, en er borgin var gjör, vildi hvártveggi gefa nafn borginni af sínu nafni, ok gjörðiz þaðan af svá mikit missætti at hertogi sá er Fabius hét drap Remum með samþykki ok ráði Romuli konungs. Eftir þat gaf hann nafn borginni af sínu nafni ok kallaði Romuleam. Romulus setti fyrst rímtal ok skipti þá fyrst árinu í tíu mánaði ok kallaði hinn fyrsta
- 10 mánuð af nafni föður síns Marcium. Litlu síðar var skipat árinu í tólf mánaði. Kölluðu þeir hinn fyrsta mánuð Januarium af nafni mikils höfðingja ok heiðins, þess er Janus hét. Skyldi hann vera endir ársins en upphaf annars. Kölluðu margir hann sinn guð ok trúðu á hann.

Öldungar settu þau lög at engi maðr skyldi bera konungs nafn í

- 15 Rómaborg, en tveir menn skyldu vera höfðingjar yfir Rómverjaher ok kölluðu þeir þá menn consules—þat þýðum vér ræðismenn. Þeir skyldu eigi lengr vera í þeiri tign en eina tólf mánuðu hinir sömu nema fyrir nokkur stór verk ok sýndiz oldungunum enn at kjósa hina sömu menn til, ok skyldi þat jafnan gjöra á hinni sömu tíð ákveðinni at skipa ríkinu
- 20 ok velja consules. Consules réðu Rómaríki fjögur hundruð ára tírað ok fjóra vetr hins fimta tigar. Á þeiri æfi óx Rómaríki mest ok gjörðiz svá mikit at þeir lögðu nálega undir sik öll lönd þau er vér kunnum nöfnum at nefna í veröldinni, ok helt þat mjök til þess at þeir keptuz við consules at hvern skyldi meira ágæti gjöra en annar á sínu ári, svá sem
- 25 ráð var til sett. Þar kom loks at þat þótti of skamt verða ríkit ef þeir skipti höfðingjum á hverjum tólf mánuðum þar sem þeir fóru herferð í fjarlæg ríki. Þá gáfu þeir því nafn þeiri tign, er þá skyldi mest heita, at þeir kölluðu þá dictatores—þat köllum vér dómara—ok skyldi þat vera fimm vetra tign ok vera svá margir þeir menn senn sem oldungarnir vildu,
- 30 ok skyldu þó vera consules tveir á hverju ári sem áðr.

En er þessi æfi var mjök liðin, þá var skipt öllum Rómverjaher í þriðjunga ok var settr sinn höfðingi yfir hvern þriðunginn, þeir menn er æztir höfðingjar vóru áðr í Rómaborg, ok vóru þá allir gjörvir dictatores. Þar var einn sá maðr er hét Marcus ok Crassus öðru nafni. Hann átti konu þá er Cornelia hét. Hon var dóttir þess manns er 35 Marcellus hét ok einn var af hinum æztum höfðingjum í Rómaborg. Annar var sá maðr er hét Julius Cesar, er í þann tíma var hinn ágaetasti maðr í borginni. Hinn þriði var sá er kallaðr var Pompeius Magnus ok lengst hafði þó þessarra manna allra ráðit fyrir Rómverjaher. Hann hafði sjau sinnum verit gjörr consul í Róma. Hann átti í þenna tíma 40 konu þá er Julia hét. Hon var dóttir Julii Cesaris ok var Pompeius þó miklu ellri en Julius.

Marcus Crassus var sendr til þeira þjóða er vóru í Affrica ok heita Parthi ok Assirii ok Medii. Þær allar þjóðir gengu móti Rómverjum með úvingan. En er Marcus kom þangat meðr sinn her, þá barðiz hann 45 þar margar orrostur ok hafði sigr. En um síðir varð hann sigraðr ok handtekinn af Parthis, svá heitöndum þjóðum, ok deyddr með þeim hætti at þeir steyptu gulli vellanda í munn honum ok mæltu þetta yfir: ‘Til gullsins þyrsti þik, enda drekktu nú gullit svá at þú hafir gnógt.’ Lauk nú svá yfir hans æfi. 50

Julius fór til Saxlands með lið sitt. Jarlinn af Svavaralandi var mestr móttöðumaðr Julii. Hann hafði lagt undir sik mikinn hluta Saxlands ok Fríslands. Julius háði þar margar orrostur ok höfðu ýmsir sigr.

Pompeius Magnus fór með her sinn fyrst með skipaliði um Grikklandshaf ok Grikklandseyjar ok barðiz þar við víkinga margar orrostur er þar höfðu margt illt gjört ok höfðu fjölda liðs. Hann drap þá suma en rak alla af sænum ok af skipum. Síðan helt hann liði sínu út yfir haf ok barðiz þar við Metridatem konung í Ponto ok sigraði hann. Þaðan fór hann í Spánland ok sigraði þar Sertorium konung. Eftir þat fór hann í \*Erminland ok Rabitaland ok Gyðingaland ok vann nefndar þjóðir 60 undir Rómaríki. Hann barðiz í austrríki við tvá konunga ok tuttugu ok vann þá alla. Eftir þat kom hann til Rómaborgar ok gengu móti honum öldungar ok óku honum í gullkerru í Þórshof, er þeir kölluðu Capitolium. Þaðan af var hann kallaðr faðir borgarinnar.

Pompeius sendi orð Julio at hann færi heim til Rómaborgar eða sendi 65 honum alla sína menn, þá er hann hafði honum létt til fylgdar, en Julius vildi hvárki gjöra. Vóru þá ok þeir fim vetr úti er Julius átti at stríða.

42 Julius] so in 764, AM 226 fol. and Stock. papp. 4:o 24; Julia would make better sense.

60 Ermin-] eirin- or errin- in 764.

- Varð þetta upphaf til ósamþykkis þeira mága. Síðan fór Julius um allt Saxland, Frakkland ok Fríslund, Valland ok England, ok lagði þau ríki öll undir sik er voru fyrir norðan Mundiufjall. Þá dæmdu öldungar í Rómaborg með ráði Pompei at Julius skyldi einkis sóma eiga vón fyrir þann sigr er hann ynni þaðan í frá, er hann hlýddi eigi boðorði þeira. Óx þá fjándskapr þeira í milli. Svá segir Lucanus at Julius vildi engan mann vita sér hærra, en Pompeius engan sér jafnan.
- 75 Þá er Julius hafði sigrat Yspaniam ok Yberium ferr hann út yfir hafit eftir Pompeio, ok áttu þeir tvær orrostur. Var hin síðari í Thessalonialandi. Fellu þar flestir kappar Pompei, en hann sjálfr flýði ok með honum Cato spekingr er gjört hefir Hugsvinnsmál. Pompeius flýði á Egiptaland ok vænti sér þar friðar. En hann varð þar dreppinn svikliga með þeim hætti at \*Septimius, riddari Tholomei konungs er þá réð Egiptalandi. Ok er Pompeius sá bana sinn ráðinn, vafði hann mötlinum um höfuð sér ok lauk saman augun ok helt at sér öndunni, ok eigi vildi hann spilla sinni frægð með né einu andvarpi. Þá var hann laginn í gegnum með sverði, en hann þagði sem sauðr, ok lauk svá hans æfi.
- 80 85 Cato var enn í \*Leptis er hann spurði þau tíðindi at \*Juba konungr var sigrarðr ok Pompeius var fallinn. Þóttiz hann þá sjá at Julius ríki mundi ganga yfir alla veröld, en hann vildi engum kosti honum þjóna. Tók hann þá þat ráð at drekka eitr með sínum vilja, ok dó hann með því. Julius kom nú til hofsins, er Capitolium var kallat, ok gekk inn. Síðan var lokit aftr dyrum ramliga. Þá gengu þeir Brutus ok Cassius at Julio ok særðu hann fim sárum ok tuttugu með smám handsöxum, ok létt hann þar líf sitt. Ok er líkit stirðnaði, var höndin stirðnuð at bréfi því er honum hafði selt verit, ok var ekki brotit innsiglit. En þá er bréfit var sét, var þat á ritat at hann var varaðr við at fara á stefnuna til hofsins, 90 95 ok sagt at honum var bani ráðinn ef hann kæmi þar. Lík Julii var síðan brent eftir rómverskum sið, ok våpn hans ok merki. Síðan var askan tekin öll ok búit um dýrliga ok látit koma í eirknapp einn mikinn, ok var hann allr á at sjá sem gull væri. Sá umbúningr var færð upp á steinstólpnum þann er stendr á torginu ok heitir þat ‘petra Julii’ en pílagrímar kalla 100 ‘Pettarsnál’.

Systir Julii Cesaris hét Actia, ellri miklu en Julius. Hennar dóttir hét Octavia ok var hon móðir Augusti. Var hann ok af því kallaðr Octavianus Augustus. Antonius ok Augustus börðuz við Róma. Þar fellu Ircius ok \*Pansa. Þá var Augustus einn yfir Rómverjaher þar til at þeir sættuz,

80 Septimius] Siptinnius in 764.

85 Leptis] Leptini in 764. Juba] Inba in 764.

104 Pansa] Pinsa in 764.

þeir Antonius, með þeim hætti at þeir skyldu vera tveir höfðingjar yfir Rómáriki, jafnir at metorðum. Þat var litla stund at þeir mætti þat samþykkja at vera jafnir menn. Skiptu þeir þá ríkinu ok hlaut Augustus Rómaborg ok þat ríki er þar var til skilit, en Antonius tók þat ríki er liggr fyrir utan haf. 105

Varð Augustus einvaldskonungr yfir öllum heimi ok var þá kallaðr Augustus Cesar. En þá er Augustus kom auð þeim öllum í Rómaborg er hann eignaðiz á Egíptalandi eftir dauða Antonii ok Cleopatre, létt hann brenna í eldi öll skuldablöð Rómverja. Af því lét hann þat gjöra at hann vildi at allir Rómverjar væri frjálsir á hans dögum ok engi ætti öðrum skuld at gjalda. Hann galt af sínum fjárlut hverjum manni skuld sína. Augustus bætti mjög Rómaborg bæði í því at hann lét gjöra mörg hús ok hallir innan borgar, þau er mikit skraut var at. Hann lét vel búa öll stræti þau er í Rómaborg voru. Hann lét oft borgarveggi efla ok svá vígi umhverfum borgina. Augustus mælti ok svá fyrir vinum sínum: ‘Leirborg var Róma er ek tók við ríki, en svá skiljumz ek við at nú er hon marmaraborg.’ Frá því er ok sagt at hallæri kom svá mikit á hans dögum at fjöldi manna dó af sulti. En Augustus sýndi svá ástríki sitt við borgarmenn at hann lýsti því fyrir alþýðu, ef eigi kæmi vistir ok leiðangrar innan þriggja nátta þeira er næstar voru, vildi hann drekka heldr eitr ok deyja en sjá vesold á fólkini. En á hans dögum varð sá atburðr at í borginni spratt upp viðsmjörsbrunnr ór bjargi einu einn dag, svá gnógliga at hverr maðr mátti upp ausa svá sem vildi. Ok virðu Rómverjar at í því merkti miskunnsemi keisarans, en betr skiljandi menn virða at í því merkiz guðs miskunn, sú er birtiz á hans dögum þá er dróttinn Jesus Christus var borinn í heim þenna. 125 130

Augustus hefir verit mestr stjórnarmaðr allra Rómverja konunga í fornum sið, ok hann setti þann frið um allan heim er engi hefir verit slíkr hvárki áðr né síðan. Af hans nafni hefir hvern sem einn yfirkonungr Rómaveldis kallaz Augustus, enda er þat hæst tignarnafn kallat í heiminum. Augustus var alls konungr sex vetr eða sjau hins séttu tigar. Hann varð sóttdauðr þá er hann hafði sjau vetr hins átta tigar. En í þessum tíma sáz á himninum þrjár sólir en varð ór ein. Þýddu vitrir menn at sá mundi koma til jarðríkis er bæði væri þrennr ok einn. 135

Hér lyktaz hinn fimti heimsaldr, hafandi í sér þúsund ok sextigi ára, en frá upphafi heims voru liðnar fim þúsundir hundrað ok nítigí ok níu ár. 140

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## INTERTEXTUAL ASPECTS OF THE TWELFTH-CENTURY CHRISTIAN DRÁPUR

BY KATRINA ATTWOOD

*Gefr döglingr sólar stóls dýra orðgnótt?*

THE EXISTENCE of a sizeable sub-group of Christian poetry within the corpus of later skaldic poetry needs no arguing. The most casual reader of Finnur Jónsson's *Skjaldedigtning* (1912–15) cannot have failed to notice the large proportion of the stanzas assembled there that deals with matters of Christian import, ranging in scope from the largely devotional couplets and *helmingar* which illustrate the *Third* and *Fourth Grammatical Treatises* and which are scattered thinly in the *samtíðar* and *biskupa sögur*, to the impressive versifications of Marian legends, saints' lives and moral treatises which culminate in Eysteinn Ásgrímsson's *Lilja*. Among the pearls of this sub-group are undoubtedly the four magnificent *drápur* usually dated to the twelfth century with which this article is concerned: Einarr Skúlason's *Geisli* (*Skjd.* A I 459–73, B I 427–45), Gamli kanoki's *Harmsól* (*Skjd.* A I 562–72, B I 548–65), and the anonymous *Plácítusdrápa* (*Skjd.* A I 607–18, B I 606–22) and *Leiðarvísan* (*Skjd.* A I 618–26, B I 622–33). Scholars have not always been generous in their praise of these poems. Guðbrandur Vigfússon, for example, dismissed them collectively as ‘mere cloisterwork, void of inspiration’ (Rydberg 1907, i), and suggested that *Geisli* be read for its ‘historical notices and associations’ alone, ‘for the long-winded and sanguinary synonyms mixed up with grotesque religious “kennings”, and the tiresome repetitions of the “stal” [stef?] will quickly weary the hearer or reader’ (Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Powell 1883, II 284). Other scholars have not tired so easily, and the poems have been thoroughly examined in terms of their importance as sources for Scandinavian religious history (Paasche 1948, 104–52; Kahle 1901), their place in literary history (Finnur Jónsson 1920–24, II 65–68, 114–19; de Vries 1964–67, II 19–23, 54–61; Schottmann 1973, *passim*; Tucker 1985; Vésteinn Ólason 1992) and for their own sake (Sveinbjörn Egilsson 1833 and 1844; Finnur Jónsson 1887; Kempff 1867; Rydberg 1907; Lange 1958; Astås 1970; Black 1971; Chase 1981; Louis-Jensen forthcoming).

That the four poems are intimately related has long been recognised. Paasche (1948, 104–52), Finnur Jónsson (1920–24, II 114–19) and de

Vries (1964–67, II 54–61) all devote considerable space to the enumeration of parallels between the *drápur*, and Skard (1953, 104–08) suggests a relative dating of them on the basis of these parallels. My intention here is somewhat less dramatic, although I do discuss the pitfalls of Skard's technique later on. My immediate purpose is to reconsider the intertextual aspects of the four poems in terms of the insights that such reconsideration may give us into their compositional context and technique.

It might be as well to begin by offering a summary of the poems concerned. In view of their stylistic similarities, it is interesting to note that they vary considerably in their subject-matter. *Geisli* is preserved complete in the *Bergsbók* version of *Óláfs saga helga* and in a fragmentary state in the *Flateyarbók* text, and isolated stanzas are quoted in *Snorra Edda*, *Heimskringla* and the so-called ‘Great Saga’ of Saint Óláfr (Chase 1981, 2, 12–19). It is part eulogy, part saint’s life: a celebration of the death and miracles of Óláfr inn helgi Haraldsson, who is identified, from the opening stanza, with Christ, *gunnoflugr geisli miskunnar sólar* ‘the battle-strong beam of the sun of mercy’ (1/5–8).<sup>1</sup> *Plácítusdrápa* survives only in AM 673 b 4to, where the beginning and end of the poem are missing (Finnur Jónsson 1887, 214–22). We are left with some fifty-nine stanzas, which recount most of the legend of Saint Eustace (known in Old Norse as *Plácítus*), from his conversion after receiving a vision of Christ crucified between the antlers of a stag, through the various trials and tribulations suffered by him, his wife and their children, during which they are separated and eventually reunited, to *Plácítus*’s recall to the military service of the Emperor Trajan. The manuscript breaks off at this point, so we are left to supply the end of the story from other sources, notably *Plácítus saga*, of which several versions survive (Tucker 1985, 1057–58; *Heilagra manna sǫgur* 1877, II 193–210): an elderly *Plácítus* and his entire family are martyred for their faith by being roasted in a brazen bull.

<sup>1</sup> Quotations from *Geisli* are from the normalised text in Chase 1981, 76–362. References to *Plácítusdrápa* are to Finnur Jónsson’s edition in *Skjd*. A I 607–18, B I 606–22, which I have checked against the diplomatic transcript in Finnur Jónsson 1887, 214–22. Quotations from *Harmsól* and *Leiðarvíðan* are from my own normalised texts of the poems, which appear in full in my unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leeds [1996], ‘The poems of MS AM 757 a 4to: an edition and contextual study’. Stanza numbers accord with those used in *Skjd*., but all translations are my own.

Both *Harmsól* and *Leiðarvísan* seem to be conceived as versified sermons, if the poets' repeated references to their *systkin* (e. g. *Harmsól* 46/5, 62/1–4, 64/1–8; *Leiðarvísan* 2/4, 39/1, 45/1) are evidence for the original context of the works. *Harmsól*, which is attributed to Gamli kanoki in a marginal note in the only surviving manuscript (AM 757 a 4to 12r42), is essentially an exploration of and exhortation to the sacrament of penance. Gamli exploits the traditional tripartite form of the *drápa* to structure his argument. Having secured the indulgence and help of his divine patron, he launches into an explanation of why sinful men are denied access to God's glory, using a detailed confession of his own failings (st. 7–16) as an illustration. The *steffabálkr* (st. 17–45) develops the theme established in this *upphaf*, being an account of how the Incarnation was intended to resolve this problem. A description of the Nativity of Christ is followed by a haunting evocation of the Crucifixion, focusing on the story of the penitent thief, which in turn gives way to treatments of the Resurrection and Ascension. The necessity of repentance is further urged by an account of the Last Judgement and by picturesque descriptions of the fate of the impenitent and the rewards of the just. This narrative is interspersed with meditations on the nature of the believer's response to the undeserved salvation offered by Christ. The *slæmr* (st. 46–65) further illustrates the theme of penitence by the use of the *exempla* of three famous penitents to whom God responded with pity, King David, Mary Magdalene and St Peter, before the poem closes with prayers to God for mercy and to the Virgin Mary for intercession.

*Leiðarvísan* survives complete only in AM 757 a 4to (10r39–11r38), though a partial text is also found in AM 624 4to (fols 85–90). It deals with a popular medieval motif: the so-called Sunday Letter, which purports to have been written by Christ and dropped into Jerusalem from heaven one Sunday *borgar lýð til bjargar* 'as a help for the townsfolk' (6/7).<sup>2</sup> After a brief introduction, in which the poet begs

<sup>2</sup> On the history and dissemination of the Sunday Letter, see Priebsch 1936. Of particular interest to students of Old Norse are the Old English homily versions discussed by Priebsch (1899; 1907), Napier (1901) and Lees (1985), and the Irish and Old High German versions considered by Tveitane (1966). In addition to *Leiðarvísan*, the Letter is twice mentioned in Old Norse sources. Nikúlas Bergsson's *Leiðarvífir*, the account of the abbot's pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the mid-twelfth century (Kedar and Westergård-Nielsen 1978–79, 206), describes the interior of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre: '[P]ar suðr fra þi vid veggin er alltari sancti Simeonis, þar kom ofan brefit gull-ritn[a].' The

God for inspiration and his audience for a hearing, *Leiðarvísan* summarises the contents of the letter, as it was understood by the wise men who studied it after its sudden appearance. Briefly, the letter warns that damnation will follow soon for those baptised people who fail to pay the correct tithes or to observe the feasts of the Church and, above all, who work on Sundays. The theme is developed in the *stefjabálkr* (st. 13–33), which comprises an enumeration of occasions in Biblical history in which God demonstrated His love for mankind by performing acts of grace on a Sunday. This seems to be an elaboration of the original Sunday Letter motif, and is possibly related to an allegorical passage in the *Drottens daga mal* preserved in the *Stockholm Homily Book* (Wisén 1872, 25/24–27/28; cf. Finnur Jónsson 1920–24, II 119). The poem ends with a series of prayers and exhortations, and a blessed priest (*gofugr prestr*) named Rúnolfr is thanked for his help in the composition of the poem (43/4, 8).

Although, as I hope to demonstrate below, it is clear that these poems are intimately related, there is little reliable evidence either for a precise dating of the individual texts or for the establishment of a relative chronology. There would appear to be only two fixed points. A *terminus ante quem* is provided by the *Plácitusdrápa* manuscript, AM 673 b 4to, which is one of the earliest surviving Icelandic manuscripts, dating from around 1200 (Hreinn Benediktsson 1965, v). Finnur Jónsson (1887, 213) uses this fact as a basis for his dating of the poem itself:

Da nu håndskriftet ikke er digterens eget, men, som de mange skriffejl og misforstælser viser, en afskrift, følger deraf, at drapaen ikke kan være yngre end fra midten af det 12. árh. omrent. Hvor mange afskrifter der ligger imellem denne, som vi har, og digterens exemplar, er selvfølgelig umuligt at sige, men ifølge vor afskrifts beskaffenhed kunde der godt være 2–3.

Though I have some reservations as to the reliability of this assessment of the speed of manuscript transmission, this dating does seem to accord with our other fixed point. In *Geisli* (st. 8–9), Einarr Skúlason asks for a hearing, naming four prominent members of his audience: the

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description of the same church in *Kirialax saga* (1917, 65; cf. Hill 1993, 447–49) is more explicit about the nature of this letter: ‘Par stendr Simions kirkia . . . þar kom ofan bref þat, er sialfr drottin ritadi sinum haundum gullstaufum um hin helga sunnudag.’ For Icelandic, Danish and Swedish examples of the Letter from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, see Sandfeld-Jensen 1895–96, 193–96, 212–13, and on the use of a version of it in sixteenth-century Icelandic witchcraft, see Einar G. Pétursson 1993, 256–57.

joint kings of Norway, Eysteinn, Sigurðr and Ingi, sons of Haraldr Gilli, and Archbishop Jón Birgisson. Jón was consecrated archbishop during the papal legate Nicholas Breakspeare's visit to Niðaróss in 1152 (*Haraldssona saga* ch. 22, *ÍF XXVIII* 332, 333 note 1), and the violent disagreements between the Haraldssons seem to have begun in earnest during the summer of 1154, before the slaying of Sigurðr in 1155 (*Konungsannáll* 17). *Geisli* must, therefore, have been recited, almost certainly at St Óláfr's shrine in Niðaróss cathedral, sometime between winter 1152–53 and summer 1154.<sup>3</sup>

Evidence concerning the dating of the remaining poems is even more scanty. Gamli kanoki, author of *Harmsól*, is also mentioned in the shorter version of *Jóns saga postola*, where four verses of his *Jóansdrápa* are preserved (*Postola sögur* 1874, 510–11; *Skj. A I* 561, *B I* 547–48). The saga describes him as *kanunk austr i Þykkabe* (*Postola sögur* 1874, 510), and lists him between two other authors of *drápur* about St John: Abbot Nikulás Bergsson and Kolbeinn Tumason. The Augustinian house at Þykkvabær was founded in 1168 (*Konungsannáll* 20), and the deaths of Nikulás and Kolbeinn are dated to 1159 and 1208 respectively (*Konungsannáll* 19; 30). It is clear from *Harmsól*, if not necessarily from his name, that Gamli was an elderly man when the poem was composed, and the chronology suggested in *Jóns saga postola* (if, indeed, it is a chronology) would seem to accord with Finnur Jónsson's approximate dating of the poem on linguistic grounds (1920–24, II 115):

Digtet synes ikke at kunne være ældre end fra omkring 1200 eller den sidste fjærdedel af det 12. årh., der findes rim som *tjallz* : *alla* 65/6 . . . ligeledes former som *vár-* (*várum*, *vára*; 18/8, 21/4, 57/8) ved siden af *ór-*.

The *prestr Rúnolfr* thanked for services rendered at the end of *Leiðarvísan* (43/4, 8) cannot be identified with any degree of certainty,

<sup>3</sup> In *Morkinskinna* (1932, 446) we read of the exceptional circumstances surrounding the composition and recitation of *Geisli*:

Einar S[kvyla]s[on] var með þeim bröðrom S[igurþi] oc Eysteini. oc var Eysteinn konvngr mikill vin hans. oc Eysteinn konvngr bað hann til at yrkia Olafs drapo. oc hann orti. oc forpi norþr i Prandheime i Kristz kirkio sialfri oc varp þat með miclom iartegnom. oc kom dyrligr ilmr ikirkiona. oc þat segia menn at þer aminingar vrþo af konvnginom sialfum. at honom virþiz vel qveþit.

There would seem to be two possible occasions for the recitation of such a poem in the presence of the three Haraldssons and the Archbishop. Perhaps most likely is the feast of St Óláfr—29th July—in 1153 (the first celebration of this festival since the establishment of the Norwegian archbishopric), though the Christmas feast during the same year must also be considered as a possibility (cf. Chase 1981, 44).

though speculation has generally centred on the two priests of that name mentioned in a *prestatal* dated 1143 and attributed to Ari Þorgilsson (*DI* I 180–94): one Rúnolfr Dálksson, nephew of Bishop Ketill Þorsteinson of Hólar (bishop 1122–45), who is probably to be identified with the Rúnólfr Dagsson named in chapter 19 of *Bjarnar saga Hítdælakappa* as the source of information concerning Bjorn’s composition of religious poetry (*ÍF* III, 163 n. 2; Astås 1970, 266 col. b to 267 col. a, note 15),<sup>4</sup> and Rúnolfr Ketilsson (died 1186), son of Bishop Ketill. Rúnolfr Ketilsson was the author of a poem about the new church built at Skálaholt by Klöengr Þorsteinsson (bishop 1152–76), one verse of which survives (*Hungrvaka* ch. 9, *Biskupa sögur* 1948, I 27–28; *Skjd.* A I 533, B I 513–14). As a known *skáld*, Rúnolfr Ketilsson is often considered to have the better claim, and *Leiðarvíðan*’s mention of a *ramligt hús* ‘strong house’ (43/7) which Runólfr and the poet have built has been taken as an oblique reference to Klöengr’s church (*DI* I 186, 193; Finnur Jónsson 1920–24, II 121, note 5). Other more cautious scholars, however, have taken it to be a *heiti* referring to *Leiðarvíðan* itself (see Paasche 1948, 141 note 1; Astås 1970, 267a). While it might be possible to cite *mærðar hús* ‘house of praise’ in *Katrínardrápa* 1/4 (*Skjd.* A II 516, B II 569) as a supporting example of the use of *hús* for poetry (see *LP* s. v. *hús*), I am not entirely persuaded by either explanation. Rúnolfr Dálksson/Dagsson’s interest in, and knowledge of, Christian skaldic poetry, as evinced by *Bjarnar saga*, would seem to bolster his claim too.

It is possible to identify three types of parallel in diction between the poems grouped together here. Firstly, there is a small group of individual words which, though shared by two or more of these poems, do not appear to be attested elsewhere in Old Norse poetry or prose. In *Geisli* 26/2, Óláfr is described as *margfriðr jofurr* ‘a very beautiful [holy] king’, the adjective appearing again only in *Harmsól* 51/8, where St Peter is characterised as *margfriðr skorungr* ‘a very beautiful [holy] leader’. In each case, the word occupies the *hofuðstafr* position, and therefore anchors the couplet’s alliterative scheme. A wounded priest healed by Óláfr is called *auðskiptir* ‘sharer of wealth’ (*Geisli* 60/5), a man-*heiti* otherwise only applied to Plácitús (*Plácítusdrápa* 17/1). The word carries alliteration in each case. In *Geisli* 63/7, Óláfr is praised as *fárskerðandi fyrða* ‘diminisher of men’s harm’, while *Leiðarvíðan* 11/1 refers to God as *fárskerðir*. A relationship between the poems is further suggested by the fact that *fárskerðir* alliterates with *fyrðum* in the same

<sup>4</sup> I am very grateful to Dr Alison Finlay of Birkbeck College, University of London, for informal advice on this matter.

line. Similarly, God is *dýrðhittandi dróttinn* ‘glory-finding lord’ in *Harmsól* (7/7), and the man-*heiti* *dýrðhittir* used of Plácítus (*Plácítusdrápa* 18/1) alliterates with *dróttin*. These are the only occurrences of *dýrðhittir*, but LP draws attention to *dáðhittir* ‘deed-finder’, used of Páll Jónsson, bishop of Skálaholt, by Ámundi Árnason, where the alliteration is again with *dróttin* (*Skjd.* A II 50, B II 59 *lausavísá* 3/1; LP s. v. *dýrðhittir*). Ámundi’s *lausavísá* must postdate the death of Bishop Páll in 1211, so it appears likely, if there is any direct connection here, that the *Harmsól/Plácítusdrápa* compound is serving as the model for his. *Málsgnótt* ‘eloquence’ (*Leiðarvísan* 3/8) appears to be a *hapax legomenon*, but it is obviously on the same model as *orðgnótt* ‘loquacity’, which occurs three times in *Leiðarvísan* (1/8, 2/6, 4/8) and once in *Geisli* (10/2), always in stanzas asking God to inspire the poet with the gift of eloquence and always providing the *hofuðstafr*. The only appearances of *orðgnótt* in (supposedly) earlier poetry are in Arnórr jarlaskáld’s *Magnússdrápa* 5/2 (*Skjd.* A I 339, B I 312) and a fragmentary verse attributed to Ormr Steinþórsson (*Skjd.* A I 416, B I 386; LP s. v. *orðgnótt*). Similarly, *brandél* ‘sword-storm’, used as an element in an extended man-kenning in *Plácítusdrápa* (*beiðir brandéls* 40/1–2) and as a battle-kenning in *Geisli* (51/2), is rare elsewhere: LP lists only two other examples (Pórvarðr Þórgeirsson, *lausavísá* 2/4; Guðmundr Svertingsson, *Hrafnssdrápa* 10/6; *Skjd.* A I 533, II 49, B I 514, II 57), though it is, of course, a familiar kenning-type.

Secondly, evidence for a connection between the poems is afforded by the fact that they occasionally share identical kennings not otherwise attested in skaldic verse. Many of these are adaptations of traditional ruler-kennings to refer to God. Thus we find *himna valdr* ‘ruler of the heavens’ in *Geisli* 63/6 and *Plácítusdrápa* 19/7, *himna* carrying alliteration in each case. God is *jofurr sunnu* ‘king of the sun’ in *Harmsól* 65/4 and *Leiðarvísan* 42/6, and the relationship between the poems here appears to be confirmed by the fact that the lines in which the phrase occurs are identical (*miskunn jofurr sunnu*). *Salvorðr grundar* ‘warder of the hall of earth [sky; heaven]’ appears as a God-kenning in both *Geisli* 19/3 and *Leidarvísan* 6/5, the lines being strikingly similar both phonetically (*sýndi salvorðr grundar* (*Geisli*) and *sendi salvorðr grundar* (*Leiðarvísan*)) and in construction: the first word in each case is the subjunctive form of the verb of which the kenning is the subject. The heaven-kenning *fjalla salr* ‘hall of the mountains’ appears as the determinant of an extended God-kenning in *Harmsól* 30/2–4 (*vørðr fjalla salar*) and *Leiðarvísan* 1/2–4 (*harri fjalla salar*), and the struc-

ture of the *helmingr* is similar in each case: *fjalla* *salar* furnishes the two non-alliterating stresses of the second line of the first couplet, and the base-word is the *hofuðstafir* of the second couplet:

Ítr lofar engla sveitar  
allr herr *salar fjalla*  
víst með vegsemð hæstri  
*vorð*, ok menn á jorðu. (*Harmsól* 30/1–4)

Þinn óð sem ek inni  
allskjótt, *salar fjalla*,  
harðla brátt til hróðrar,  
*harri*, munn ok varrar. (*Leiðarvísan* 1/1–4)

Similarly, in *Geisli* 25/1–4, Óláfr is described as *fremðar lystr týnir tandrauðs fasta vala strætis* ‘renown-desiring destroyer of the flame-red fire of the hawks’ street [arm]’, i. e. ‘destroyer of gold’, *fremðar lystr* again forming the adjectival component of an extended man-knelling in *Plácítúsdrápa* 9/3. In each case, the expression forms the first words of the odd line of a couplet, and establishes an f-alliteration:

Tolf mánaðr var *týnir*  
*tandrauðs* huliðr sandi  
*fremðar lystr* ok *fasta*  
fimm nætr *vala strætis*. (*Geisli* 25/1–4)

Hrætskat *vorðr* þótt verðir  
(ves traustr ok ger hraustla)  
*fremðar lystr* í freistni  
fránskiðs af mér Vánar. (*Plácítúsdrápa* 9/1–4)

Although it must be admitted that, despite the lack of parallels to these forms, most of the kennings do follow traditional patterns, and might, therefore, have suggested themselves independently to different poets, the structural similarities outlined above would seem to suggest some direct connection between the poems.

Finally, as well as these identical expressions, groups of obviously related kennings for God and heaven are found in these poems. I do not accept Skard’s belief that these may be used as a basis for an evaluation of the relative dates of the poems (Skard 1953, 101), or even necessarily as evidence of direct relationships between them, but offer them rather as evidence for the general currency of several basic lexical units and kindred images in the compositional context of the *drápur*.

Perhaps most striking are the group of kennings based on the familiar concept of God’s holding creation in the palm of his hand. *Geisli* 16/7–8 and *Harmsól* 29/7–8 contain kennings in which the base-word is a

compound with the second element *geypnandi* ‘clutcher’. The components of the kenning are linked by alliteration in each case, and the base-word furnishes the first two stressed syllables in the couplet:

*umgeypnandi opnask  
alls heims fyr gram snjöllum.* (*Geisli* 16/7–8)

*skríngeypnandi, skepnu,  
skýstalls, sælu allri.* (*Harmsól* 29/7–8)

*Umgeypnandi allrar skepnu* in *Katrínardrápa* 36/3 (*Skjd.* A II 523, B II 578) is almost certainly modelled on *Geisli*, and the concept also informs the God-kenning *frónspennir fagrtjalda* ‘clasper of the land of fair tents [heaven]’ in *Harmsól* 44/5–6. Other conceptually related groups may be discerned. For example, the God-kenning *ítr stillir gagls leiðar* ‘glorious regulator of the path of the goose [sky; heaven]’ (*Plácítusdrápa* 28/2–3) is reminiscent of *dáðreyndr jofurr svana flugreinar leygs* ‘deed-proved prince of the flame of the flying-land of swans [sky; i. e. prince of the sun]’ (*Harmsól* 44/1–3). A similar concept lies behind *konungr mána slóðar* ‘king of the path of the moon’ (*Plácítusdrápa* 4/7–8) and the more complicated *skryðir skýja slóðar skríns* ‘adorner of the track of the shrine of clouds [sun; i. e. adorner of heaven]’ (*Harmsól* 19/7–8). Very common are God-kennings whose determinants are heaven-kennings meaning ‘residence of the weather’. Lexical parallels are frequent in expressions of this kind. Thus, the Christ-kenning *sonr sólar hauðrs* ‘son of the land of the sun’ (*Leiðarvísan* 31/3–4) recalls *sannstýrandi sólhauðrs* ‘true ruler of the land of the sun’ (*Harmsól* 27/3–4), *sól*- providing the *hofuðstafr* both times. The compound *sólhauðr* is a *hapax legomenon*, and *LP* lists no other occurrence of *sólar hauðr* (*LP* s. vv. *sólhauðr*, *sól*). Similarly, *snjallr dróttinn dags hallar* ‘wise lord of the hall of day [heaven]’ (*Leiðarvísan* 15/5–8) is reminiscent of *snjallr konungr dagstalls* ‘wise king of the home of day’ (*Harmsól* 35/6). Apart from one other appearance in *Leiðarvísan* (45/6), *dagshöll* occurs elsewhere only in *Líknarbraut*, which is demonstrably later than, and borrows heavily from, *Leiðarvísan* and *Harmsól* (*Skjd.* A II 150–59, B II 160–74; Tate 1974, 28–33). *Mariúdrápa* 24/3–4 (*Skjd.* A II 468, B II 501) refers to the Virgin Mary as *dagstalls drotning*, which is probably a borrowing from *Harmsól*, as there are several parallels between the Marian section of *Harmsól* (st. 59–61) and *Mariúdrápa*. In *Harmsól* 4/6–8, we find the God-kenning *fylkir veðrhalla* ‘king of the storm hall [heaven]’, which is paralleled by *vísi veðrs hallar* ‘ruler of the hall of the storm’ in *Geisli* 2/3–4, neither expression being attested

elsewhere (*LP* s. v. *veðr*). The sun-kenning at the heart of *skrýðir skýja slóðar skrín* (*Harmsól* 19/7–8) is identical with that in *skjoldungr skýja skrín* ‘prince of the shrine of clouds [sun]’ (*Leiðarvíðan* 32/5–6), and *skrín* provides the *hofuðstafr* in each case. Although *skýja skrín* is popular in later poetry, and is of a familiar pattern, it seems not to occur earlier than here (*LP* s. v. *ský*). Two of the poets indulge in particularly elaborate variations on this ‘ruler of the weather-dwelling’ pattern, and produce kennings which are conceptually, if not lexically, related: Einarr’s heaven-kenning *hriðblásim heiða sal* ‘storm-blown hall of the heaths’ (*Geisli* 7/5–6) recalls Gamlí’s *valdr blásinna tjalda hreggs* ‘ruler of the wind-blown tents of the storm’ for God (*Harmsól* 57/6–7). A more obvious lexical relationship may be observed in *qðlingr røðla* ‘prince of suns’ (*Harmsól* 16/6) and *qðlingr røðla* *salar* ‘prince of the hall of suns’ (*Leiðarvíðan* 33/2). What we might expect to be a very popular rhyming pair appears elsewhere only in a fragment of a *drápa* on Sveinn Forkbeard by Þórleifr jarlsskáld (*Skjd.* A I 141, B I 133), and in *Mariugrátr* 3/2 (*Skjd.* A II 473, B II 506), which may have been influenced by the earlier Christian *drápur*. A variant of the ‘residence of the weather’ type of heaven-kenning is demonstrated by *Leiðarvíðan* 10/1–2, where God is invoked as *vørðr vallraefrs* ‘warden of the roof of the plain [earth]’, i. e. ‘warden of heaven’, which may be compared with *gramr landa ræftrs* ‘prince of the roof of lands’ in *Harmsól* 43/1–4.

Structural parallels between the *drápur* may be discerned on three levels: overall structure, *helmingr* arrangement and individual lines. Although the poems differ greatly in subject and tone, certain similarities may be observed in their overall arrangement. Such pre-Christian, heroic *drápur* as survive in a complete state conventionally begin with an invocation, in which the *skáld* asks his audience, and particularly his patron, to maintain silence and listen attentively to his poem, and end with a similar section, in which a reward of some kind is demanded. The Christian poets retain these features, but adapt them to their new audiences. Thus, although Einarr Skúlason does beg his royal audience for a hearing (st. 8 and 9), *Geisli* begins with an elegantly crafted prayer for divine inspiration (1/1–4):

Eins má orð ok bœnir  
—alls ráðanda hins snjalla  
vel er fróðr sá er getr góða—  
Guðs þrenning mér kenna.

The Trinity of the one God can teach me words and prayers; he who tells of the grace of the excellent ruler of all is extremely well-taught.

Similarly, Gamli kanoki and the *Leiðarvísan* poet make no opening reference to their *systkin*, but call directly on God for help in the composition of their poems, Gamli establishing one of his major themes by stressing the inadequacy of his technique for the praise of God:

Hár stillir, lúktu, heilli,  
hreggtjálda, mér, aldar,  
upp, þú er allar skaptir,  
óðborgar hlið góðu,  
mjúk, svá at ek mætti auka  
mál gnýlundum stála  
miska bót af mætu  
mín fulltingi þínu. (*Harmsól* 1/1–8)

High regulator of the storm-tents, you who made all men, unlock my tongue [lit. ‘gate of the fortress of poetry’] with good grace, so that, with your excellent aid, I might augment my soft words, the remedy for misdeeds, before men [lit. ‘trees of the noise of steel’].

Pinn óð, sem ek inni,  
allskjótt, salar fjalla,  
harðla brátt til hróðrar,  
harri, munn ok varrar;  
mér gefi döglingr, dýra,  
dœmi, stóls ok sólar,  
enn, svá at ek mega, sanna  
orðgnótt, lofa dróttin. (*Leiðarvísan* 1/1–8)

Lord of the hall of the mountains, I compose your poem very eagerly [lit. ‘quickly’], just as (I compose) my mouth and lips very briskly for purposes of praise. May the king of the seat of the sun give me precious, true loquacity and information, that I may yet praise the Lord.

Although the beginning of *Plácítusdrápa* is lost, it seems reasonable to suppose that it, too, started with an invocation of divine assistance.

*Geisli* ends, as we might expect given the situation surrounding the poem’s original recital, with a direct appeal to Einarr’s patron, Eysteinn Haraldsson, for a handsome reward for his work:

Bœn hef ek þengill þína  
þrekrámmr stoðat framla  
iflaust hófum jofri  
unnit mærð sem kunnum.  
Ágætr segir æztan,  
Eysteinn hvé ek brag leysta  
—hás elskið veg vísa  
vagnræfrs—en ek þagna. (*Geisli* 71/1–8)

Powerful king, I have amply done your bidding; I have certainly done my best to praise the king. Glorious Eysteinn will tell how I carried the splendid poem off. Praise the honour of the high prince of the roof of the waggon [Ursa major, Charles's wain; i. e. of the God of heaven]—but I will stop speaking.

*Harmsól* and *Leiðarvíðan*, by contrast, end with prayers for God's mercy and requests for the intercession of the poets' *systkin* and, in each case, the poem's title is given in the penultimate stanza:

Létum hróðr, þann er heitir  
*Harmsól*, fetilhjóla  
 fyr hugprúða hríðar  
 herðendr borinn verða;  
 mér biði hverr, er heyrir,  
 heimspenni, brag þenna,  
 œskiprórr ok eira  
 unnröðla miskunnar. (*Harmsól* 64/1–8)

I caused the poem, which is called *Harmsól*, to be borne before the strong-minded promoters of the storm of shields [men]; may each craving-Óðinn of wave-suns [gold; i. e. each man] who hears this poem pray to the clasper of the world for mercy and peace for me.

Skulu eldviðir qoldu  
 alljósan brag kalla,  
 þjóð hafi þekt á kvæði  
 þvísa, *Leiðarvíðan*. (*Leiðarvíðan* 44/5–8)

Let the trees of the fire of the wave [men] call the very bright poem *Leiðarvíðan*; may people derive pleasure from this poem.

Remarkable similarities may be observed between the *stef* of the various poems. Each has a repeated double refrain, the refrains occupying the second *helmingr* of the verses in which they appear and being introduced in the first *helmingr* with an explanation of the difficulties inherent in composing a good *stef*. The first *stef* of *Leiðarvíðan* is strongly reminiscent of the *helmingr* introducing the second *Plácítusdrápa* refrain:

Lúta englar ítrum  
 ótlaust ok lið drótni;  
 einn er siklingr sunnu  
 setrs hvívetna betri. (*Leiðarvíðan* 13/5–8)

Angels and people bow down to the glorious lord without fear; the one king of the seat of the sun [heaven] is better than everything else.

Lýtr engla lið ítrum  
 angrhrjóðanda ok þjóðir  
 einn es qllu hreinni  
 alt gótt sá er skóp dróttinn. (*Plácítusdrápa* 32/1–4)

The company of angels and races of men bow down to the glorious destroyer of sorrow; the one lord, who made all (that is) good, is purer than everything else.

These should be compared with *Geisli* 66/5–6, which, though not a *stef*, displays remarkable similarities in subject, diction and structure:

Lúti landsfolk ítrum  
lim sals konungs himna.

Let the people bow down to the glorious limb of the king of the hall of the heavens [God, whose ‘limb’ is St Óláfr].

The first *stef* of *Harmsól* is very similar to *Leiðarvíðan*'s two *stef*: the final couplet is reminiscent of that of *Leiðarvíðan*'s first *stef* (st. 13/5–8, quoted above), and the opening lines are clearly paralleled in *Leiðarvíðan*'s second *stef*:

Ern skóp hauðr ok hlýrni  
heims valdr, sem kyn beima;  
qr er ok qllu dýrri  
élsetrs konungr betri. (*Harmsól* 20/5–8)

The active keeper of the world made land and heaven as well as the race of men; the liberal king of the seat of the storm [heaven] is better and more precious than everything else.

Gramr skóp hauðr ok himna  
hreggranns, sem kyn seggja,  
einn er salkonungr sólar  
snjallr hjálpari allra. (*Leiðarvíðan* 25/5–8)

The king of the house of the storm [heaven] made land and skies as well as mankind; the one king of the hall of the sun [heaven] is the excellent helper of all.

It is interesting to compare this last example with a *helmingr* preserved in the *Fourth Grammatical Treatise*, attributed there to Markús Skeggjason the lawspeaker (died 1107). Finnur Jónsson (*Skjd. A* I 452, *B* I 420) assigns this *helmingr* to a lost *Kristsdrápa*, and Fidjestøl (1982, 153), while not ruling this out, suggests that it is ‘ikkje umogeleg at ho kan ha høyrt heime i eit dikt om Knut den heilage’:

Gramr skóp grund ok himna  
glyggranns sem her dyggvan,  
einn stillir má qllu  
aldar Kristr of valda.

The prince of the house of the gale [heaven] made the earth and skies as well as the faithful army [of saints?]; Christ, the one ruler of mankind, has power over all things.

Given the likelihood that Markús's poem was composed and in circulation up to fifty years before the probable date of composition of *Leiðarvíðan*, it seems possible that *helmingar* on this model were widely current in the Christian authors' milieu. The similarities between these *helmingar* also highlight the dangers of assuming both direct relationships and comparative datings from parallels in diction and structure between poems.

Identical lines are shared between two of the poems on four occasions. *Harmsól* 65/4 and *Leiðarvíðan* 42/6 both read *miskunn joſurr sunnu*, and the poems concur again at *Harmsól* 37/5 and *Leiðarvíðan* 35/5, which run *oss skyldi sú aldri*. Indeed, the correspondence between the *drápur* at this latter point is yet closer, as the final lines of the *helmingar* are also closely related:

*Oss skyldi sú aldri  
unaðs-gnótt fira dróttins,  
þar er qrsløngvi engum  
angrasmá, ór hug ganga. (Harmsól 37/5–8)*

The abundant grace of the lord of men should never pass from our minds; no arrow-slinger [man] is sorrowful there.

*Oss skyldi sú aldri  
ógnar-tíð en stríða,  
drótt biði sikling sáatta  
sólvangs, ór hug ganga. (Leiðarvíðan 35/5–8)*

That severe time of terror should never pass from our minds: people should beg the king of the field of the sun [heaven] for reconciliation.

When one considers that both stanzas refer to the Second Coming, and that what *skyldi oss aldri ganga ór hug* is the terror of the time (*Leiðarvíðan*) and the grace of God (*Harmsól*), it becomes impossible not to assume some direct relationship between the two texts. Moreover, *Geisli* 64/6 and *Harmsól* 45/4 correspond exactly, except that the verb is indicative in *Geisli* (*heitfastr joſurr veitir*) and subjunctive in *Harmsól* (*heitfastr joſurr veiti*). Similarly, *Plácítusdrápa* 31/8 and *Harmsól* 24/8 also differ only slightly: *Plácítusdrápa* reads *sín heit friðar veitir*, while *Harmsól* has *pín heit friðar veitir*. Finally, *Leiðarvíðan* 40/6 and 41/8 both read *óttalaus með drótñi*, which recalls *óttalauss fyr drótñi* at *Harmsól* 32/4. These lines are possibly related to the phonetically similar phrases in *Leiðarvíðan* 13/6, *óttalaust ok lið drótñi*, and *Harmsól* 36/6, *óttalaust af því móti*.

It is interesting to note that some of the apparently otherwise unparalleled words and phrases shared by poems in the group occur in lines

which are also strikingly similar. Thus *Geisli* 26/2, *margfríðr jofurr síðan*, is reminiscent of *Harmsól* 51/8, *margfríðr skorungr síðan*. The alliteration and internal rhyme in *Geisli* 60/5, *auðskipir lá eptir*, and *Plácítúsdrápa* 17/1, *pás auðskiptis eptir*, are identical. *Leiðarvíðan* 2/6, *orðgnóttar mér dróttin*, and *Geisli* 10/2, *orðgnóttar bið ek dróttin*, are also similar, though we should perhaps note, with caution, that these might be independent exploitations of a popular rhyming pair; of the two other occurrences of *orðgnótt* in *Leiðarvíðan*, one (1/8) forms a hending with *dróttinn*, as does *málsgnótt* (3/8). The *orðgnótt : dróttinn* hending is also found in Arnórr jarlaskáld's *Magnúsdrápa* 5/2 (*Skjd.* A I 339, B I 312).

Other phonetically similar lines are shared by poems within this group. In their treatments of the Incarnation, *Leiðarvíðan* and *Harmsól* invoke Christ in almost identical terms: *Leiðarvíðan* 23/3–4 has *mæztr frá meyju beztri berask hingat*, which is paralleled in *Harmsól* 19/1–4, *bú mæztr vast borinn frá mildri meyju*. *Leiðarvíðan* 20/8, *margri þjóð til bjargar*, is echoed in *Harmsól* 12/8, *margir þar til bjargar*, and *Harmsól* 35/1, *orð megu vonduð verða*, is twice paralleled in *Leiðarvíðan*: *orð munu eigi verða* (12/5) and *orð mun allra verða* (43/5). A similar phonetic relationship seems to link the partial man-kenning in *Plácítúsdrápa* 31/3, *láðhofs lypti-Móða*, with the parallel lines *Leiðarvíðan* 4/3, *láðs fyrir lyptimeiðum*, and *Harmsól* 18/3, *láðs til lyptimeiða*, which share an otherwise unparalleled man-kenning (*linns láðs lyptimeiðr* 'lifting-pole of the land of the serpent [gold]') completed in the following lines. Similarly, *Harmsól* 49/3, *hoppum reifðr sem hæfði*, recalls *Plácítúsdrápa* 15/3, *hoppum reifðr pás hafði*; and *Harmsól* 36/5, *sponð laetr qll til ynðis* is reminiscent of *Plácítúsdrápa* 54/5, *spanði ítr til ynðis*. *Harmsól* 16/5, *elsku kuðr alls yðvarr*, is clearly related to *Leiðarvíðan* 36/3, *eljunkuðr of aðrar*, as is *Harmsól* 59/3, *ramligs bús af ræsi*, to *Leiðarvíðan* 43/7, *ramligt hús þars reistum*. Finally, although the affinities might not be quite so pronounced, it is interesting to note the similarity between *Plácítúsdrápa* 32/2, *angrhrjóðanda ok þjóðir*, and *Leiðarvíðan* 11/6, *meinhrjóðandi þjóðum*; and between *Geisli* 20/3, *gramr vanðit sá syndum*, and *Harmsól* 15/7, *esa vanði sá synða*. In each of the cases noted here, similar lines are used to fulfil the same function in the rhyme- and alliteration-scheme of a couplet, and very often a *helmingr*.

In conclusion, I hope I have demonstrated that there is evidence of close relationships between the major twelfth-century Christian *drápur*, and that parallels in structure and diction between the texts suggest that

the authors were familiar with one another's work, either directly or indirectly through the medium of lost intermediary texts. Vemund Skard takes this one stage further. Assuming that the relationship is direct, he considers the parallels between each possible pairing of the poems in turn, concluding, on the grounds of an increasing complexity and sophistication of style, that the poems must have been composed in the sequence *Plácítúsdrápa* – *Geisli* – *Leiðarvísan* – *Harmsól* (1953, 108):

Stutt vil vi då seia, at ein kan rekna med at *Plácítúsdrápa* er dikta i fyrste helvta av 12. hundreåret, kanskje ikkje alt for nær 1150; *Harmsól* er dikta ikring 1200 eller kanskje heller litt før; *Leiðarvísan* er dikta før *Harmsól*, men likevel etter 1152.

It is difficult to extract the evidence on which Skard bases this chronology, though he does explain his reasons for considering *Plácítúsdrápa* to be the earliest of the poems under consideration. His argument seems to be based on Seip's conviction (1949, 20) that the poem is ultimately of Norwegian provenance:

Ved ei gjennomgåing av dei norske sermerke av paleografisk og språkleg art slår han fast at skrivaren må ha hatt eit (aust)norsk førelegg, og han finn det mest rimeleg at P[lácitúsdrápa] også er dikta av ein nordmann og dikta i Noreg, rimelegvis samstundes med at legenden om Placitus vart overførd til norsk,—truleg før 1150. (Skard 1953, 108)

Even if Seip's belief in the Norwegian authorship of *Plácítúsdrápa* is correct (and this is by no means established), the precise nature of its relationship with the surviving versions of *Plácítús saga* is far from certain (cf. Tucker 1985). The poem's Norwegian provenance alone does not, as Skard seems to imply, necessarily prove that it must predate *Geisli*; far greater precision in the dating of the *Plácítúsdrápa* manuscript (AM 673 b 4to) and the identification and dating of the recension of *Plácítús saga* which served as its source are necessary if the chronology is to be established with any degree of certainty. It would seem at least possible that *Geisli* in fact predated *Plácítúsdrápa*; the status of *Geisli* as a royal commission, dedicated to Scandinavia's favourite saint, would assure its wider popularity within the Christian corpus, and it is perhaps more likely that such a high-profile work would serve as a model for a rather obscure clerical composition than that Einarr should have been influenced by *Plácítúsdrápa* (cf. de Vries 1964–67, II 56).

Skard's stylistic analysis of the poems seems to depend on an assumption that a more complex kenning-structure must represent the

work of a more accomplished, and therefore later, poet. He appears to base his belief in the anteriority of one poem to another upon this assumption. In particular, he notes that, in several cases, *Harmsól* has two or three versions of kennings found only once in *Leiðarvíðan* (1953, 101):

Men større interesse har dei stader der det frå eit punkt i det eine diktet synest gå liner til fleire punkt i det andre. I slike tilfelle tykkjест det gje ei vitring om kva for eit dikt som er opphavet.

Although I admire the dexterity of Skard's argument, I have several reservations about the boldness of his technique, and would advocate a more cautious approach to the problem. Although several of the parallels outlined above are striking, it is perhaps dangerous to assume a direct relationship between the poems on these grounds alone. It is clear that the output of Christian skalds during the eleventh and twelfth centuries was vast: a glance through *Skjaldedigting* reveals the loss of dozens of full-length *drápur*, many of them generically related to the texts considered here, whose existence is now attested only by the survival of a stray couplet or *helmingr*, and references to several now lost *drápur* are found in the prose literature (e. g. *Hrafns saga Sveinbjarnarsonar* ch. 19 (1987, 47), 'Andréasdrápa'; *Jarteinabók Þorláks biskups in yngsta* ch. 12, 'Maríuvers' (*Biskupa sögur* 1948, I 247); *Bjarnar saga Hítðælakappa* ch. 19, 'Tómas drápa postula' (ÍF III, 163)). It is difficult to imagine some of these poems having more than a very limited readership, and perhaps more reasonable to suppose that full-length works by such known and gifted skalds as Arnórr jarlaskald, Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld and Markús Skeggjason might well have been more influential in the wider development of the Christian skaldic genre than such esoteric works as *Leiðarvíðan* and *Plácitíusdrápa*. In other words, it is impossible to know just how many intermediaries may be missing between the poems in our 'group'; the preservation of Markús Skeggjason's *Kristsdrápa/Knútsdrápa* fragment suggests that certain patterns of phraseology and stanza structure may well have been widely current at that time. I am also sceptical of Skard's assumption that, in the case of *Harmsól* in particular, greater complexity in the lexical and grammatical structure of the stanzas necessarily implies a later date for the *drápa*. Surely it is just as likely that Gamli kanoki's magnificently constructed, hauntingly evocative *Harmsól* might have acted as inspiration for a rather lesser poet—the author of *Leiðarvíðan*—as that Gamli superseded his uninspiring predecessor.

**Note**

This is a substantially revised version of my paper ‘The twelfth-century Christian *drápur*: evidence for a partially formulaic composition?’, given at a meeting of the Skaldic Studies Group held in Leeds on 22nd January, 1994. A shorter version of the paper was presented at the First International Medieval Congress (Leeds, 6th July, 1994). I am very grateful to members of both audiences, particularly to Professor Peter Foote and Dr Alison Finlay (both of the University of London), and to Professor Jónna Louis-Jensen of the Arnamagnæan Institute, Copenhagen, for much helpful advice. I am also indebted to the Leverhulme Trust for generous financial support which enabled me to undertake primary research on the poems in Copenhagen.

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THE EMERGENCE OF A SAINT'S CULT AS WITNESSED BY  
THE JARTEINABŒKR ÞORLÁKS BYSKUPS

By HANS KUHN

THE *Jarteinabœkr* are three collections<sup>1</sup> of miracles attributed to Þorlákr Þórhallsson, Bishop of Skálholt in southern Iceland from 1175, miracles that occurred not during his lifetime but after his death in 1193. The first collection is said to have been read at the *Alþingi*, the annual general assembly of free men, in 1199; on this occasion he was officially declared a saint, and the day of his death, 23 December, was instituted as a holy day. The second collection must have been gathered over the following years by his nephew and successor Páll Jónsson, Bishop of Skálholt until 1211. The third collection was not completed until more than a century later, for some events in its final chapters are dated 1323 and 1325. The total number of distinct miracles recorded in these three collections is approximately 120. Þorlákr's *Vita*, the *Þorlákssaga byskups*, contains, apart from its panegyrical and heavily homiletic biographical sections, a great number of miracles too, but they are for the most part identical with those recorded in the first Miracle Book and in the very beginning of the second. In the older version of the *saga* they are very brief, barely more than a list; in the younger version they are fleshed out a little more but the narration is still much barer than in the *Jarteinabœkr*. The compiler of the *saga*, whether it was a Helgafell abbot such as Ketill Hermundarson or Hallr Gizurarson or some other churchman, must have been using the collections already existing and felt it unnecessary to transcribe the miracles in detailed form. For my purposes, however, it is less the bare facts, which are often conventional within a hagiographical context, than the details that count, and hence I feel justified in limiting my references to the *Jarteinabœkr*.

It is not a work that has attracted much interest among students of Old Icelandic literature. Neither the bibliographies of the *Islandica* series nor the annual *Bibliography of Old Norse–Icelandic Studies*, which covers the field since 1963, mention a single study of the *Jarteinabœkr*, and they do not rate a separate entry in the monumental *Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for*

<sup>1</sup> In this article referred to by Roman numerals; Arabic numerals indicate chapters. The edition used is Guðni Jónsson's *Byskupa sögur* 1953, I 155–249.

*nordisk Middelalder*. No paper on these texts was delivered at the 1985 Saga Conference devoted to Christianity and Old Icelandic literature, but no fewer than three dealt with them at the 1994 Saga Conference on *Samtíðarsögur*, so the period of neglect may well be over.

One can see some reasons for such a state of affairs. These reports, varying in length between half a dozen lines and about two pages, are episodic and to some extent repetitive; there is little build-up, little psychological depth and little dialogue—in short, a poverty of those elements which make Old Icelandic prose literature so captivating. Even the Lives of Bishops, moulded as they are by partisanship and often by hagiographic stereotypes, have at least the story line of a life, a career with its struggles and triumphs, to keep us interested.

But I do not think the neglect stems merely from these aesthetic causes. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, in his classic work on the period, *Sturlungaöld* (1940), has a curious chapter entitled ‘Jarteiknir’, where he discusses the change from what he sees as a comparatively enlightened, critical attitude in twelfth-century Icelandic society towards an appetite for the miraculous and rank superstition in the thirteenth. He admits that there was a substratum of folk beliefs among the people who populated Iceland, although he would have us think that much of it was lost during Viking expeditions and settlement in a new land not seen through a haze of popular traditions; but basically he thinks it is the influence from Europe, mainly through the Church, that was responsible for a new credulity. He suspects Bishop Páll of ‘having opened the door to religious superstition, that formless monster hating all moderation’ (*að opna hlíðið fyrir oftrúnni, hinum formlausa og hófhatandi óskapnaði* (1940, 129); curiously, in an article entitled ‘Jarteiknir’, which was published in *Skírnir* four years earlier (1936, 23–48), he showed a much more sympathetic attitude).

A deep-seated Lutheran aversion to Popish forms of religious worship probably combined with modern rationalism and an exaggerated notion of the enlightened humanism of the saga age to make works such as the *Jarteinabær* unattractive to scholars of his generation. Today we have lost a good many certainties, both Lutheran and rationalist, and are less inclined to pass value judgments on past or remote civilisations, knowing that our vantage-point is as partial and insecure as any other. Also, we are less inclined to identify Icelandic society simply with the picture presented in the sagas and the attitudes implied by their narratives. We know that the detached, even humorous view of the gods we find in the Homeric epics, or the scepticism of the Augustan golden age in Rome, did not go very deep, sociologically speaking, and the same may have been true of Iceland,

although we tend to think of it as a simpler and more homogeneous society. The fact that the same century, the thirteenth, saw the flowering of saga writing and of sophisticated history (if we think of *Heimskringla*) and a spread of superstition and an appetite for the miraculous, should have alerted Einar to the existence of vastly differing modes of thinking at the same time and in the same place. And in view of what followed in Icelandic literature in the late Middle Ages and in modern times, books like the *Jarteinabækr* may have been more representative of the age that produced them than the classical sagas. Historians no longer reconstruct a past civilisation on the works of its greatest writers but on the scraps documenting daily life, and to some extent on the wishes and dreams reflected by trivial literature. Just because the *Jarteinabækr* only marginally conform to literary conventions and expectations, they deserve the attention of the social historian. The French *annalistes*, probably the most influential school of historians in recent times, have done much to vindicate the value of such sources.

A traditional Protestant materialist bias might dismiss these stories as fabrications of a Church eager to exploit to its own advantage the afflictions and the credulity of the uneducated masses. That is, after all, where Luther's initial protest against the sale of indulgences sprang from; he thought that true faith in God's grace could provide more lasting relief at no cost, and such a 'special' (if I may use a commercial expression), even though it defied normal human expectations of give and take, was hard to resist. I am not denying that Bishop Páll and other clerics at Skálholt, once a belief in the effectiveness of Þorlákr's help had taken root, were likely to be pleased with gains both tangible and intangible brought to the place where the blessed bishop had lived and worked and where his relics were kept. What I deny is the likelihood of such a belief taking root simply as a result of clerical propaganda. Visions and apparitions, miraculous events and resulting claims of saintliness for the agent or mediator involved, have almost always sprung up spontaneously outside the ranks of the Church, and the Church has normally provided a brake of scepticism. The tortuous judicial process of canonisation, which has been in place since the thirteenth century, seems designed to place as many delays and obstacles as possible in the path of potential sainthood. Indeed, none of the Icelandic saints ever made the list of officially recognised saints, neither Þorlákr nor the two bishops of Hólar that were venerated in Iceland, Jón Ögmundarson and Guðmundr Arason. It was not for lack of trying. As late as 1526 the Archbishop of Nidaros received a sum of money from Iceland for the purpose of furthering Guðmundr's canonisation; the Reformation sweep-

ing the country soon afterwards must have put paid to that plan. Yet there is no doubt that Þorlákr's cult was firmly established in pre-Reformation Iceland; his Office (text and music) has been preserved in AM 241 fol. (first published in Bjarni Þorsteinsson 1906–09, 71–119, and, in facsimile and with full critical apparatus, in Róbert A. Ottósson 1959).

Nor is it likely that Þorlákr was launched as a miracle-maker by the Icelandic establishment to provide the common people with a handy remedy for their miseries. While he never got into strife with the chieftains to the same extent as Bishop Guðmundr did in the early thirteenth century, he was anything but popular with the leading men, as is evidenced by the record of *Oddaverja þátr* in the younger version of *Þorláks saga byskups*. His determination to bring the numerous private churches under his sway, his ascetic lifestyle and insistence on fasting and confession, and his stand against sexual permissiveness in a society traditionally lax in such matters, must have made him a pain in the neck of an establishment which had not yet learnt to live with the church as a separate power structure.

The value of the Miracle Books is threefold. First, by their lack of literary ambition and their closeness in time to the incidents described, these stories give us a direct insight into life in Iceland around 1200, life not only among the land-owning class but among those categories of people that appear only marginally in the family sagas: children, shepherds, housemaids, beggars and vagrants. The accounts give us an idea of the occupational hazards of farming and fishing and housework, e.g. women being scalded when lifting heavy kettles off the fire, or children being victims of a variety of accidents with cutting tools. We also get an idea of prevalent diseases, many of them probably a result of malnutrition, such as children being crippled by rickets; afflictions affecting the eyes seem to have been particularly frequent. A scholar knowledgeable in medicine would find valuable information both about health problems and about the medical ways of laymen. Secondly, we get some insight into people's wishes, beliefs and expectations, and what they felt they could or had to do for the saint in return for his help. Thirdly, we are enabled to some extent to chart the growth and spread of a cult, and how it settled into generally accepted patterns.

In the last chapter of the Second Book the author, probably Bishop Páll, breaks the normal procedure of recording isolated events and looks back on Þorlákr's posthumous history. He regrets that his record is incomplete and adds, with a touch of humour, that God's store of mercy and generosity must exceed human resources of memory and preservation (*at almáttkum guði hefir glöggilgar enzt mildi ok miskunnsemi til at gefa oss ótallig tákna*

*og jarteinagerðir fyrir verðleik ok dýrð ins sæla Þorláks byskups en oss geð ok geyming at gera eftir ok varðveita, svá sem oss hæfði, II 23).* When miracles first occurred, they were eagerly reported and written down. But gradually they became so frequent that the novelty of these happenings wore off and people no longer bothered to record them. But when God in His goodness extended Þorlákr's activities to foreign lands and reports of miracles and gifts started reaching Iceland from afar, this kindled fresh attention and devotion to their saint in Icelandic hearts. For the author, Þorlákr's miracles are mercy traps, set up to catch people and bring them to eternal bliss and salvation, just as the devil baits *his* traps with 'perverse unnatural love and greed, worldly honour and murderous intent, wrath and unrighteousness and all perverse desires' (*En at teygja til þessarar gildru eru þessi ögn: röng ást óskaplig ok ágirni, metnaðr ok mannráð, reiði ok ranglæti ok allar rangar fýsnir*, II 23) to catch people and send them to eternal damnation. He also contrasts Þorlákr's story with those of other saints and martyrs, which are often filled with the cruelty and depravity of godless people and make us grieve for those lost souls, whereas the narration of Þorlákr's deeds is 'all full of joy and happiness, nowhere followed by grief or harm' (*En þessi frásögn, sem hér er nú sögð frá hinum sæla Þorláki byskupi, er öll full fagnaðar ok farsælu, ok fylgir hvergi þó hryggð né hörmung*, II 23).

This is indeed quite an apt description, for while there is no shortage of human misery in the form of illness, injury, destitution and suicidal depression, it surfaces only to be relieved by the saint's intercession. There is none of the sadomasochism of the martyrs' legends, and there are only a very few punitive miracles, miracles designed to teach the godless or irreverent a lesson. One such occurs in chapter 16 of the First Book, and it says something about attitudes then current to pain and suffering. A man gets ill in the middle of the haymaking season; he swells to the size of an ox and is in terrible pain. His wife invokes Þorlákr for him, and with good effect; he improves quickly. A young woman on the next farm, who is something of a loudmouth, wonders what the world has come to if a saint's help was invoked for a man as if it were a woman facing childbirth. During the following night she wakes up with her eyes aching awfully. She quickly sends for the woman whose prayers had done so much for her husband. But she is aware of the fun the girl had had at their expense and lets her suffer through the night. In the morning she comes across and invokes Þorlákr for her, and that quickly frees her of her pain. Another example where a mocker is punished occurs at the beginning of the Second Book, where one of the miracles in foreign lands, which, according to the epilogue, helped

to rekindle enthusiasm for Þorlák in Iceland, is related. A certain Auðunn in England has a likeness of Þorlák made and put up in a church. An English cleric, with metropolitan scorn for the rustic, offers the statue a suet-sausage with the words: 'Do you want it, suet-lander? You are a suet-bishop' (*Viltu, mörlandi? Pú ert mörbyskup*, II 1). Punishment is immediate: he cannot move from the spot where he stands, and the hand holding the sausage is crippled. Only after true repentance and much intercession through prayer by his colleagues is he released and healed.

I do not know how much we should make of these reports of Þorlák miracles in foreign lands. We know from the sagas how tales get taller the farther their location is removed from Iceland, and there is little in other records to suggest that Þorlák was venerated outside Iceland. He is said to have had an altar in the Church of the Holy Cross in Bergen, but his feast does not figure in the calendars of the Archbishopric of Nidaros (to which Iceland belonged) until 1519, and then only in the lowest category of saints' feasts. There is no record to support the claim made in II 14 that Norse warriors in the service of the Latin Emperor of Constantinople built a church to Þorlák after receiving help from him in a seemingly hopeless battle against the heathens, with the emperor himself laying the foundation stone. Yet Icelanders, still fairly footloose in the period around 1200, may well have taken their trust in their particular saint to the countries they frequented. There is in II 13 the story of a rich merchant in Norway whose property is the only one to escape the attention of the pirates who otherwise clean out the ship on which he travels, because he invoked Þorlák. The two preceding chapters record the help a rich lawspeaker in the Shetlands by the name of Hávarðr received from Þorlák. Fleeing a party of raiding Norwegian vikings, he hastily hides his gold and silver in the sand of a beach and promises Þorlák a gold ring if the vikings miss the treasure and if he finds it again. Both conditions are fulfilled, and he sends the gold ring to Skálholt. Next, he falls victim to an eye disease, and Þorlák not only restores his sight but makes him see better than before. Hávarðr calls an assembly, tells his *pingmenn* what has happened, and asks each farmer who has grain to send a handful of flour to Skálholt—a nice way of spreading around the burden of payment for a favour received. And the author adds that this contribution was made not only once but regularly for a long time. Unlike the case of the Þorlák church in Constantinople, Bishop Páll probably could produce some evidence for the gratitude of the Shetlanders.

These are, however, the only reports of Þorlák miracles occurring in foreign parts, despite claims in the final chapter of Book II that such stories and gifts reached Skálholt in great numbers (*at kom af öðrum löndum*

ógrynni auðæfa með fjarlægri frásögn margra merkiligra atburða hans jarteikna, II 23). Otherwise he remained very much a local saint, not only Icelandic but diocesan, to judge by the number of churches dedicated to him in the diocese of Skálholt (of the 51 churches of which he figures as patron or co-patron, only 5 were in the diocese of Hólar; for a complete list see Cormack 1994, 159–61). There is probably nothing extraordinary about that; few of the approximately 13,000 saints of the Catholic church have made it into the international league. In earlier times canonisation, too, was normally a diocesan affair. It was sufficient that the remains of a prospective saint were taken up, washed and put in a suitable receptacle and that a commemoration day was fixed in the calendar of the diocese with masses being said in the saint's honour.

This happened to Þorlákr on 20 July, 1198, four and a half years after his death. What is typical of Iceland is that it was not an internal matter for the Church but that the *Alþingi* was actively involved. It was the *Alþingi* that authorised the practice of invoking Þorlákr, after a letter from Bishop Brandr of Hólar reporting miracles attributed to Þorlákr had been read, and after some miraculous healings had occurred during the *Alþingi*. As a result, the first collection of miracles was made in writing and read out at the *Alþingi* the following year; hence the customary title *Jarteinabók 1199*. This public reading, too, produced a small crop of miracles: an almost deaf old man hears it without difficulty and enjoys from now on perfect hearing, and an almost blind, and hence destitute, young man is so impressed by what he hears that he enters the church, invokes Þorlákr, and regains his sight. Þorlákr's sainthood is then officially declared at the *Alþingi*, just as Christianity had been adopted by act of parliament, so to say, two centuries earlier.

The three books do allow us some insight into how a cult develops from scattered and spontaneous beginnings into something governed by a set of conventions, where the individual seeking help and the clergy, holy places and holy objects, services and payments, all have their accepted place. The Third Book mostly contains miracles of the traditional kind, healings and rescues from deadly dangers, rescues not only of people but also of farm animals, crucial supports of livelihood in agricultural Iceland. It gives the impression of having been gathered as material to serve an official canonisation process. There is a tangible concern to be correct in doctrine with regard to the nature and position of saints; people no longer simply call upon the saint, but invoke God Almighty and the blessed Bishop Þorlákr for intercession. A great deal of trouble is taken to be specific concerning time, place and the names of the persons involved, including the names of

witnesses who had sworn, or were prepared to swear, to the truth of the events as described. These were important elements of evidence in the very legalistic process of canonisation. The Second Book is more of a mixed bag. Its last section, from chapter 16 onwards, lists, rather than describes in detail, miracles that occurred in the diocese of Hólar. It is also stated that Guðmundr, the later controversial bishop, sent a collection of them to the monk Gunnlaugr *at hann skyldi dikta*, so that he could write them in Latin, and fragments of a Latin collection of Þorlákr miracles have indeed been preserved and are accessible in the second part of Jón Helgason's critical edition of *Biskupa sogur* (1978), which also contains the first two *Jarteinabœkr*. The First Book, which recently has been included in Ásdís Egilsdóttir's edition of *Þorlákssaga helga*, produced on the occasion of Pope John Paul II's visit to Iceland in 1989, is in some ways the most appealing one. Although it already contains stereotyped elements such as 'he (she, they) called upon the blessed Bishop Þorlákr' or 'and this event seemed to him (her, them, those who heard it) very remarkable (*mikils verðr*)' or 'and they praised God and the blessed Bishop Þorlákr', there is not yet a more or less predictable set of situations, steps and responses.

The 1199 collection also contains the sort of light-hearted, one might even say trivial, miracles that do not occur (or are not recorded) later. Maybe even the dead bishop had to learn when it was appropriate to intervene—or else the faithful learned after a while not to trouble him unnecessarily, since he was obviously quite a busy man even beyond his grave. In II 22 he appears in a dream to a woman who suffers from a very painful leg, and while he gives it a healing stroke, he says: 'It will now be better, but I have to go and help Guðmundr dýri, who I hear has been taken prisoner' (*Heðan af mun þér batna, en ek verð at fara at veita lið Guðmundi inum dýra, sem ek nú heyri bundinn*, II 22). In the same night Guðmundr, who has a saga of his own in the *Sturlunga saga* collection, was attacked.

Returning to the light-hearted miracles, in two instances (I 3, 4) Þorlákr provides fair weather for the bishop's party when storm and rain prevail all around, and in two more chapters (I 13, 17) he saves the local ale-brewing from being ruined, which would have been a disaster since Bishop Páll had to be entertained. In these instances it is the hosts that invoke Þorlákr; they may have thought that Þorlákr had his nephew and successor's welfare and comfort especially at heart. Generally, these are homely miracles, whether it is a matter of pacifying a dangerous bull (I 29), immobilising a seal that seems to be ready to attack (I 5, 22), overcoming the pain in a limb dislocated at sport (I 28), giving sight to a blind sheep (I 2) or saving a rejected child from night and bad weather (I 36). The latter incident has,

again, a specially Icelandic flavour in its social context. The priest at Arnarbœli has a wife with an illegitimate child. As he is poor and getting old, it is decided that the boy, seven or eight years old, should be brought to his natural father, who lives on a farm at some distance; on the way two rivers in spate with strong currents have to be crossed. The boy is duly delivered to his destination but the farmer's wife is anything but pleased and chases him away. The weather turns foul, and at night the unwilling stepmother gets worried. A search party goes out to look for the boy and finally also comes to his former home. The priest is much distressed by the news, goes to the church, sings the psalter and invokes Þorlák to take care of the boy. And lo and behold, after a short while the boy turns up, dry from his ankles up and happy. He had apparently sought refuge in a sheep shelter, invoked Þorlák and fallen asleep, and when he woke up, he saw his former home at a short distance. Far be it from me to call this happening trivial but it definitely has a homely flavour, whereas the bulk of the miracles in the later books seem to be patterned on the types occurring in the New Testament, approved occasions for miracles to happen, one might say.

It may be appropriate to look at the verb I have translated as 'invoke', where English has simply taken over the Latin term used in such cases (*invocare*). The Icelandic expression is *heita á*, which originally may have been a loan translation but acquired a dimension the Latin word did not have because of the second transitive sense of *heita* in Icelandic, 'to promise'. So *heita* takes two complements, one indicating what you want the saint to do (the normal complement of verbs meaning 'to request') and one specifying the engagement undertaken, i. e. one referring to the object and one referring to the subject. The Lutheran doctrine of 'by grace alone', which devalues any human contribution to insignificance, must have struck many people as weird, for getting something for nothing is not a normal thing within the experience of people moving in a world of average selfishness. In Iceland, the notion of a deal or bargain (*kaup*) was fundamental to social relations. So people calling upon Þorlák must have been quite prepared to pay in some way for the help received, but it may not have been immediately apparent to them what sort of payment a dead bishop expected, as there is little evidence of the veneration of particular saints earlier. A certain number of Paternosters—fifty is the most frequent figure used—seems to have been standard payment, at least for poor people. Candles or wax for candles appears to have been the next most frequent gift, often related to the wish, e. g. a candle as long as the aching limb or the wished-for fish. Feeding a certain number of poor people, usually on a feast day, was another way of 'paying back', but all sorts of other things occur as well.

If it was a matter of lost property, people were inclined to promise part of its value—a finder's reward, so to say—or to make the saint a partner, if the object was indivisible. In I 30 a farmer gelds a good young stallion but the operation goes wrong; first the horse bleeds copiously, then a tumour develops, the wound keeps secreting pus and blood, a fist-size opening appears, the whole foreskin has to be removed and yet the rot seems to spread inside (I mention these gory details to show how circumstantial these accounts can be):

En at hestinum kom blóðrás mikil, en eftir þat sullr æsiligr, ok svall allr kviðrinn á hestinum, svá at ekki mátti ganga at mat sér of siðir, ok gerðust vágföll mikil ok hol á svá stór, at maðr mátti stinga í hnefa sínum. Ok þar kom of siðir, at fúnaði kviðrinn, ok váru skornar af allar skauðirnar af hestinum, ok þótti ekki ván, at lifa mundi lengi. (I 30)

The owner promises Þorlákr half the horse if it survives but has little hope for it; he leaves it to its own devices in the paddock. But Þorlákr, who now has a stake in the matter, looks after his new property well; despite a storm which could finish off a healthier animal, the horse recovers. After half a month it is in top form again and also has a foreskin like other geldings. In spring the owner consults Bishop Páll concerning the fulfilment of his obligation and buys back the saint's half by giving half the value of the gelding to the see. A similar deal is reported, in chapter 35, of a lady in the neighbourhood of Skálholt. She lost a valuable gold brooch during Þorlákr's lifetime, and invoking the saints led to no result. Fourteen years later, when Þorlákr's fame as a miracle-worker has started spreading, she offers the saint the same terms as the horse-owner. Shortly afterwards, a man on the neighbouring farm carting out manure notices something glittering on the road. It is the long-lost brooch, unharmed and more beautiful than ever, and that in a spot where countless beggars had gone past without noticing it. Indeed, one of them trod on it while the manure man watched.

One last example from the lost-property division: a man living near the sea in steep country misses some cattle, and all searches prove fruitless. He then promises one of the cattle if the herd is found. After a new search they all turn up, with the exception of one ox. The farmer says: 'I can see now that Bishop Þorlákr wants to keep the ox we have not found, and he shall do so if it turns up' (*Sé ek nú, at Þorlákr byskup vill nú eiga uxann, sem ófundinn er, ok skal svá vera, ef hann hittist*, II 7). Three weeks later they sight it on an inaccessible ledge on a steep mountain-side, well-fed and lively, and the grass on the ledge is not even touched. They tie ropes around it and lower it to level ground and then bring it to Skálholt.

Sometimes the faithful entering into this sort of bargain are no less specific than if it were a commercial transaction, e. g. stipulating ‘if I recover my boat and nothing is missing in it’ (*Pá hét hann . . . til þess, at bátrinn með öllu því, sem í var, fyndist, at ljá hest upp í Skálaholt*, III 22). It also seems to have become increasingly common to make such vows or promises not in the intimacy of prayer but in front of witnesses like any legally binding act; the phrase *festa heit* ‘fasten a promise’, i. e. make it legally binding, is often used in the Third Book. But there is also evidence of the saint’s reminding the faithful of their vows. The sportsman in I 28 with the wrenched arm, whose pain will not go away, sees Þorlák in a dream complaining that many people do not fulfil their promises. It occurs to the dreamer that the summer before he had made a vow concerning his brother’s eyes and then forgotten about it. When he has lived up to his obligation, the arm hurts no more. In II 5 a man promises prayers and six lengths of *vaðmál* to the saint if his dangerously wounded son recovers. In the summer he makes his usual shopping expedition and runs out of material to pay for a kettle he needs. He takes some of the woollen cloth promised to Þorlák to pay for it and promptly finds the kettle broken when he arrives home, the only broken object in the cargo.

Another aspect which impresses itself upon the reader is the importance of the physical presence or proximity of the mortal remains of the saint. This is a form of primitive magic which imposed itself successfully upon the inherited Jewish spiritualism of Christianity, not only in Scandinavia, of course, but throughout medieval Christendom, in the West more than in the East. There is a spiritual interpretation of relics, as there is in the East of icons; they are meant to help the believer concentrate his mind on the qualities represented by the saint and thus make them more accessible to his own striving. But there is no doubt that the mass of the faithful ascribed to them an inherent beneficial or protective power. In Scandinavia there must have been an inherited readiness to believe in the potency of a person’s remains, as is evidenced by the importance of the family grave-mound. It has been said that no feature in Christianity was harder for the primitive Scandinavians to accept than the Church’s demand that the dead should be buried in churches or churchyards rather than on the family farm. Þorlák’s success as a saint may be ascribed not least to his presence, his proximity; he was within earshot, so to say. If I may recall the lady with the gold brooch: after the first unsuccessful search ‘there was invoking of saints with promises of fasts, almsgivings, songs [prayers and masses] and candles, and yet the brooch was not found’ (*Pá var síðan heitit á helga menn bæði föstum ok ölmusgjöfum, söngum ok kertagerð, ok fannst þó ekki*

*sylgjan*, I 35). Maybe half the value of the brooch later promised to Þorlákr was worth more than that and hence was more likely to trigger a supernatural intervention, but I think the point was rather that with Þorlákr the magic potential was closer. We have a similar story of the local saint outdoing a remote saint in the last chapter of the Third Book, dated to 1325. The shepherd Hallr of a farmer in the Reykjavík area passes out after he returns to the farm one day, and when he comes to he has lost the power of speech. When his state is still unchanged after three days, the farmer invokes St Blasius with a promise of train-oil if his shepherd is cured. The farmer Snæbjörn chooses the appropriate saint to invoke, for Bishop Blasius of Sebaste, who was martyred in Cappadocia in 287, was the saint whose speciality was diseases of the throat. But it does not help, so he tries the local saint, Þorlákr. The shepherd falls asleep and sees two men in black cloaks entering his room and discussing his case. They agree that he deserves to be healed, Þorlákr blesses him and he wakes up perfectly healthy. There is no hint of invalidating St Blasius's position as a throat specialist; the implication rather seems to be that if you have a doctor close at hand with a proven record, try him first rather than the remote specialist who may require time to make his way to Iceland.

Even for Icelanders it would seem to have become more and more important actually to go to Skálholt in order to be successful with their petitions, or else to do so once the saint's help was received, so as to show gratitude and testify to his power. The expression used at first (it happens only occasionally in the first collection) is *sækja helgan dóm* 'to visit the holy relic'; by the time of Book III it seems to have become standard practice, and the most usual term is *ganga í Skálaholt* 'to go to Skálholt'. Sometimes the ailing person already notices an improvement as he or she gets closer. One then prayed at the shrine or, better, kept vigil at the shrine a whole night or longer; critical cases were bedded down near the altar on which the shrine stood. The best thing was to combine the magic of place with the magic of time, i. e. be at Skálholt on one of the two *Þorlákmessur*. His proper feast was on 23 December, the day of his death; but because of the difficulties of travelling in Iceland in winter his summer feast, on 20 July (the day of his *translatio*), seems to have become as popular. The meeting of so many people on such days and the swapping of stories about Þorlákr's effective help must have been a tremendous boost to his cult; even those who only arrived hopeful must have left convinced. The saint, who often appeared to people in their dreams, did not fail to point out the benefit of such visits. In I 40 we hear of a young woman on the Vestmannaeyjar who had been ailing for years and who had invoked

Þorlákr, but without any lasting improvement. In this case he appeared to an acquaintance of hers and indicated that something more was needed: a pilgrimage to Skálholt. This proved successful, and as the *Alþingi* was just in session and she was of some standing in society, she went there straightforwardly to tell the assembly of her miraculous cure. The notion became established that fasting strictly for a whole day (*vatnfasta* is the verb used) at Þorlákr's shrine before one of his feasts was a particularly beneficial and meritorious exercise.

Connected with this stress on physical presence are the magical qualities ascribed to any object or substance that had been in physical contact with the saint. Here, too, there are only isolated instances in the first collection, whereas by the time of the third collection, *Þorláksvatn* and *Þorlákssmjör* seem to have become standard remedies. *Þorláksvatn* was the water in which his bones had been washed after exhumation, and *Þorlákssmjör* seems to have been butter blessed by the bishop (I remain sceptical of Margaret Cormack's interpretation (1994, 62) of *smjör* in this instance as 'oil consecrated by Þorlákr' or 'oil produced from his relics'). Both were primarily used for treating open wounds, and that there still was a sufficient supply of these substances a century after his death should perhaps not surprise us in view of Þorlákr's well-attested generosity and biblical precedents. Other substances with healing potential by association were his hair (II 15), his clothes (II 16), soil from his grave (III 1) and a linen bandage that had lain on his coffin (III 7). The connection can be as tenuous as in the case of a man who had been the victim of a cauterisation accident. The glowing iron had pierced his belly and left a gaping wound. After invoking Þorlákr he drinks water in which has lain a stone that once had been put on Þorlákr's coffin (*Eftir þat drakk hann vatn þat, er í var lagðr steinn sá, er lagðr hafði verit á kistu ins sæla Þorláks byskups*, III 7). While it does not cure him completely, it at least allows him to ride home; when the pain returns, Þorlákr's bone water is applied and does the trick.

Miracles are to some extent international and interchangeable; what many readers will find more absorbing and moving are the circumstances of the people experiencing them. One thing striking a reader in Australia is the exacerbation of misery brought to poverty by a harsh climate. And there must have been many poor: all those who did not own land or other property, who had no extended family to support them or who had no employment. The feeding and sheltering of the destitute was certainly a much needed exercise of charity. Elderly single women were probably among the hardest hit, as they still tend to be in our society. The *Jarteinabækur* contain some memorable scenes in this respect. As conditions became

harder in winter, beggars would seek the relative warmth and security of the bishop's see at Skálholt. What if the swollen Hvítá was too full of ice floes for the ferry to cross yet there was no solid ice over which one could walk? Freezing, shivering and crying, the beggars would gather on the banks of the river waiting for an opportunity to cross, and a good-hearted ferryman on the spot once almost lost his life when the ferry overloaded with these pitiful figures overturned in the middle of the river. On another occasion he admonishes them to sing five Paternosters for Þorlák instead of crying and feeling sorry for themselves, and it works: a quiet passage opens between the ice floes and the boat can be rowed across (I 45–46).

In III 21 there is a pauper called Álfheiðr with a bad leg that is swollen and looks as if the plague or gangrene (*drep*) has come into it. She still drags herself from farm to farm, coughing and groaning, knowing that she must not outstay her welcome anywhere. In the cold and wet weather the wound gets worse; finally the open area is about a span in each direction and discharges blood and rotting flesh. She finally has to give up at a farm called Þorvarðsstaðir, unwelcome as she is, for it has been a bad year and many poor people in the south are simply dying of starvation. She, too, expects to die, but as it is the day of the winter *Þorláksmessa*, she concentrates all her mental powers on the saint and vows prayers and a pilgrimage to Skálholt if she recovers. The rest is predictable. And there is the woman Guðfinna up in Steingrímsfjörðr, who sets out one Sunday in December with nothing but tatters on her body, nothing to warm her head or her hands, and only one shoe. The weather turns bad, a biting wind comes up, there are showers of sleet and finally a mighty snowfall. She has not arrived anywhere by nightfall, and the following few days the weather is so nasty that people cannot even go out to feed their sheep and cattle. Then there are frost and harsh winds again, and finally two days of rain. Everybody is sure that she has perished. On Sunday, a full week later, a shepherd finds her and brings her to Tunga, neither cold nor hungry. She said she had invoked Þorlák 'to help her, if he was as good as she had heard it said; she promised she would give him four ounces of train-oil' (*Sagðist hon heitit hafa á Þorlák byskup, at hann hjálpaði henni, ef hann væri svá mikils verðleiks sem hon hefði heyrt sagt. Hét hon at gefa hálfá mörk lýsis*, III 10).

The point of the *Jarteinabœkr* is the miracles brought about by invocation and faith; they do not set out to survey material conditions and social relations in Iceland around 1200, or to entertain far-away latter-day readers with reported incidents of a strongly local flavour such as a boy's drowning in a tub of sour whey (I 7), an eagle's spoiling the bird-egg harvest for the people of Viðey (I 38) or a wife's sewing up her husband's badly cut face

when he has fallen on his weapon during a trip on a bitingly cold winter's day (I 6). It is remarkable that these vignettes, sketched with the deft, realistic strokes of what we would call classical saga prose, were written down *before* most of the sagas were committed to parchment; maybe this can be taken as an argument for the strength of oral narrative in Iceland before the flowering of written literature. They provide an invaluable insight into life in medieval Iceland, and it would be a pity if such insight were missed simply because the title 'Miracle Books' seems to locate their contents outside the world of everyday experience, as the long lack of attention to these texts suggests.

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## NOTE

### BRIGÐ ERU ÚTLENZK ORÐ

BY D. A. H. EVANS

In his *Heimur Hávamála* (1990) Hermann Pálsson, like others before him, divides the poem into a number of sections: five in his case (or six, if the last strophe is counted separately). To each of these, he gives a name of his own devising; the second section, which begins (rather implausibly, since it breaks into the *málahátt* sequence) with st. 84 and continues to st. 110, he calls *Mankynni*. This is a *hapax legomenon*, which he has taken from st. 31 of *Hárbarðsljóð*, where it evidently means ‘relations with women, love affairs with girls’ or the like. (He apparently had second thoughts about the wisdom of this appellation, since in his edition of the poem, reviewed in *Saga-Book* 24:2–3 (1995), 186–88, he replaced it with the more familiar *Mansöngur*.) I much regret that in my review of Hermann’s book in *Saga-Book* 23:5 (1992), 414–16, I confused *mankynni* with *mannkyn*, ‘mankind’. Unless Hermann has an even weaker sense of reality than I had supposed, he must have realised that that was what had happened, but nevertheless he has used my slip as a pretext for the preposterous rigmarole which occupies pp. 496–98 of *Saga-Book* 23:7 (1993), presumably (to be charitable) in an elephantine attempt at humour, always risky in a foreign tongue.

Hermann calls my review ‘hostile and ill-informed’, though he does not adduce any instance of ill information beyond this one point. I suppose that any review which advances reasons for dissenting from a book’s conclusions might strike its author as hostile, especially where wounded feelings come into play; a less partial reader would, I hope, have realised that what I was aiming for was to be gently indulgent to a seasoned scholar with a bee in his bonnet.

## REVIEWS

SNORRI STURLUSON. HEIMSKRINGLA. Edited by BERGLJÓT S. KRISTJÁNSDÓTTIR, BRAGI HALLDÓRSSON, JÓN TORFASON and ÖRNÓLFUR THORSSON. *Mál og Menning*. Reykjavík, 1991. xi + 848 pp. (vols I-II), cxvi + 514 pp. (vol. III).

This handsome three-volume work is a product of patient scholarship in the service of a wide Icelandic-speaking public. The first two volumes contain the text of *Heimskringla* in modernised spelling, while the third, the *Lykilbók*, supplies a generous array of complementary texts, tables, maps, a glossary and other aids.

The arrangement of the *Heimskringla* text into two volumes, with the break after *Óláfs saga helga* ch. 143 (the end of Óláfr's attempted dealings with the obdurate Faeroe islanders), is an interesting departure from the three-volume format of the standard editions by Finnur Jónsson (1893–1901, henceforth FJ) and Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson (*Íslenzk fornrit* XXVI–XXVIII, 1941–51, henceforth BjA), though it seems to have been determined by practicality rather than principle, since the 1991 editors in several places accept the traditional, and justifiable, notion of *Heimskringla* as a tripartite work.

The orthographic policy in the *Heimskringla* text matches that adopted in its companion volumes, the recent editions, by virtually the same team of scholars, of *Íslendinga sögur og þættir* (I–III, 1987, originally in two volumes) and of *Sturlunga saga* (I–III, 1988). Since these were not reviewed in *Saga-Book*, it seems appropriate to dwell on the orthography for a moment here. It is somewhat of a compromise, designed to give the flavour of the original without obfuscating the meaning for present-day readers. Modern spelling and morphology are used throughout, so that, for instance, *gengur*, *langur*, *hið*, *hún*, *svo*, *æðstir* and past participle *dvalist* appear where FJ and BjA have *gengr*, *langr*, *it*, *hon*, *svá*, *æztir* and *dvalzk*. This—like the use of modern pronunciation in reading Old Icelandic aloud—has the theoretical advantage of being an authentic system, in contrast to the normalised orthography used almost uniformly throughout the *Íslenzk fornrit* series and widely elsewhere, which, though convenient, has a kind of false monumentality about it, and which implies judgements about the dating of sagas which may not stand the test of time. On the other hand, the modern-spelling approach produces rather a strange hybrid, since many lexical items in *Heimskringla* are now either obsolete or have undergone sufficient semantic change to require explanation—which is supplied in good measure in the glossary in volume III. The grammatical system also has its own artificialities, especially since certain old nominal, pronominal and adjectival forms are retained but given a modernised spelling. *Hverigur*, for instance, rendered ‘*hvaða*’ in the glossary, is rather an oddity, and the differing treatments of verbal and nominal forms create inconsistencies: modern *dóu* rather than *dó* (past 3rd person pl. ‘died’), but archaic *fám* rather than *fáum* (dat. pl. ‘few’). However, since the making of modernised editions is very well established in Iceland, the compromises involved here are presumably not felt to be obtrusive.

As to punctuation, this edition differs from FJ and BjA in its very restrained use of commas to separate off subordinate clauses and coordinate clauses beginning with *en*, so that the text looks smoother, but is less immediately comprehensible. On the other hand, the numerous paragraph breaks make for easier reading. Another feature which, for me, improves on the BjA edition is the use of chapter headings, mainly based on those of the *Kringla* group of manuscripts. Although it is impossible to know whether these had Snorri's sanction, they appear to be old, and if nothing else they are a useful guide to the often complicated narrative.

For an international readership the value of the 1991 *Heimskringla* as an edition will depend largely on its choice of base manuscript and handling of variant readings. The policy here is clearly stated in III, lxxxvi–lxxxviii. The transcripts of K (*Kringla*) are taken as the base text, unless a majority of the main alternative mss agree against K on a particular reading, the chief alternatives being AM 39 fol., *Fríssbók* and *Jöfraskinna* in part I; AM 39 fol., Stock. Papp. fol. nr. 18 and AM 70 fol., together with the Stock. Perg. 4to nr. 2 ms of the *Separate saga of Óláfr helgi* in part II, *Óláfs saga helga*; and AM 39 fol., *Fríssbók* and *Eirspennill* in part III. Two lacunas in K are filled from *Fríssbók*. The policy and the resulting text (as a few samplings suggest) hence differ only slightly from those of FJ, and still less from those of BjA. The editorial decisions taken appear sound, but the fact that any departures from K are undetectable—there being no textual notes—reduces the textual value of the work. For instance, in *Ynglinga saga* ch. 12, where the drunken King Sveigðir accepts a dwarf's invitation to seek Öðinn inside a huge rock, the prose narrative ends in the 1991 edition with: 'Sveigðir hljóp í steininn en steinninn laukst þegar aftur og kom Sveigðir aldrei út' (I, 15). The last five words, 'og/ok . . . út', are lacking from K and imported from *Fríssbók* and *Jöfraskinna*, as is made clear in BjA at this point, but there is no signal at all in the 1991 edition. FJ has fuller textual information still, though he prints the less satisfactory reading of *Jöfraskinna* 2 (AM 238 fol.): 'ok kom Sveigðir eigi apr'. Thus, while the 1991 *Heimskringla* admirably fulfils its role as a reading edition, the completion of a new scholarly edition, for which desiderata were stated by Vésteinn Ólason in 1988 ('Planer om en ny utgave av *Heimskringla*', in *Textkritisk teori og praksis*, ed. Bjarne Fidjestøl *et al.*, 130–37), still appears far off.

The verse quotations in *Heimskringla*—some six hundred—are handled according to textual principles similar to those used with the prose, though alternative readings are imported where those of the *Kringla* transcripts are particularly problematic. Emendation as such is almost entirely avoided, and some archaic word-forms (e. g. *emka*, *brandr*) are retained in order to preserve metrical features. The verses are accompanied by parallel notes, mainly explanatory rather than textual.

The supplementary materials in volume III, *Lykilbók*, are largely new and immensely useful, amply fulfilling the stated aim of smoothing the reader's path (I, ix). The introductory essays give sound and balanced coverage of the traditional topics of sources, manuscripts, editorial policy and the biography of

the author (this last covered by Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir), while the essay on *Heimskringla* itself concentrates on literary features, in tune with the current orthodoxy that *Heimskringla* is best approached as a work of literature whose prime historical value is as an exposition of Snorri's view of Norwegian history rather than as a source for Norwegian history itself. The most thought-provoking essay is 'Ólafur helgi eilifur konungur', in which Sverrir Tómasson argues that Snorri intended to write about Óláfr Haraldsson as 'konunglegan píslarvott', one who lived on through his successors and through his miracles.

The supplementary texts which follow the essays are the most unexpected bonus in the edition. The first four, as the heading 'Í grennd við Heimskringlu' suggests, have an obvious bearing on *Heimskringla*: the two versions of the prologue to the *Separate saga*, the AM 392 fragment (included to represent *Heimskringla* mss not used in the edition) and *Rauðúlfss þátr*. The remainder of the selection, however, is unusual—not the predictable 'sources and analogues', but learned texts, some hitherto unavailable in modern editions, exemplifying aspects of the intellectual world of Snorri and his (near-)contemporaries. These include passages on the geography of Scandinavia extracted from *Historia Norvegiae* and *Flateyjarbók*, extracts from the *Physiologus*, together with learned scraps from *Hauksbók* and elsewhere covering the theory of the four elements and humours, astrology and physiognomy (the well-named *gamanfræði*). Finally there is a printing of *Skáldasaga* from *Hauksbók*, extracts from the *Hirðskrá* of Magnús lagabœtr and *Reykjaholtsmáldagi*. Manuscript illustrations are reproduced where available.

In the rest of vol. III, *Lykilbók*, almost everything in *Heimskringla* which is susceptible of dating, locating or tabulating is presented in the form of tables, lists and maps. The seventy-seven tables are mainly genealogical, embracing not only single dynasties but also, for instance, the relationships between the Norwegian royal line and the Danish descendants of Sveinn Úlfsson (table 75). Particularly valuable are the tables clarifying areas of complexity and potential confusion: the contenders for the throne in the twelfth century, for example (tables 70, 71, 73), or the numerous wives, mistresses and children of the great womanisers (e. g. Haraldr hárfagri, table 8, Magnús berfœttr, table 60). The ninety-seven maps are likewise well-designed and informative. Most of them collate information given in *Heimskringla* about journeys, military campaigns, battle-sites and territorial divisions, or topics such as the youthful travels of Óláfr Tryggvason (map 30) or the miracles of Óláfr helgi (map 90). Symbols used throughout show such things as burial mounds, pagan and Christian worship sites, assembly places and markets. Page references identify the relevant sections of *Heimskringla*, while in the text volumes relevant maps and tables are clearly signalled in the margins. Obviously, gaps and uncertainties are difficult to handle in tabular or cartographic form, but on the whole admirable caution is shown, as when map 92, showing the places of origin of Icelandic skalds, relegates any doubtful cases to an inset list. One could quibble over a few details of content and ordering in the tables and maps, or more radically object that the seriousness with which the seemingly factual content

of *Heimskringla* is treated here is at odds with the editors' disinclination to confront the question of *Heimskringla*'s value (or lack of it) as a historical source (III, xxviii). Nevertheless, the risk of misinformation is far outweighed by the great wealth of material here, and the editors deserve thanks for the evident patience and vigour with which they have undertaken the task.

Further supporting materials complete volume III. A tabular chronology of events compares their presentation in *Heimskringla* with that of *Konungsannáll* and *Resensannáll*; *Skáldatal* is printed in three texts parallel; and there is a list of skalds, their patrons and page references to their verses as quoted in *Heimskringla*. The glossary contains over 3000 words and phrases, and is reader-friendly to the extent of explaining, for example, that *alvel* means 'mjög vel', as well as glossing more recondite words and idioms. The indices to the *Heimskringla* text are characteristically thorough and helpful.

The lack of scholarly aids in the form of notes and references is, despite the substantial bibliography at III, xcvi–cxvi, the biggest drawback of this work from the point of view of this reader. It is frustrating that many specific points have to be taken on trust and can only be followed up with difficulty. Map 6, showing the distribution of settlements in Viking Age Scandinavia, for instance, is based on 'the conclusions of archaeologists', but this is too woolly to mean anything. References and cross-references are also sparse in the introductory essays, and the lack of textual notes has already been mentioned above. Although it is unrealistic, even churlish, to complain that the volumes have not been designed to one's own, quite different, specifications, it seems a pity that the detailed scholarship that has gone into them could not have been brought more to the surface in the finished product.

Produced as a boxed set, these volumes are attractive in looks and content, and are generally well planned, with great consideration for the reader. The text is readable and reliable, and it will complement, though by no means replace, the standard editions, one of which is now nearly a century and the other half a century old. The third volume contains a wealth of materials which all will welcome, and it is probably here—at least for those who already own a text of *Heimskringla*—that the main value of the enterprise lies.

DIANA WHALEY

TWO TALES OF ICELANDERS: ÖGMUNDAR ÞÁTTR DYTTS OG GUNNARS HELMINGS. QLKOFRA ÞÁTTR. Edited by IAN WYATT and JESSIE COOK. *Durham Medieval Texts* 10. Department of English [University of Durham]. Durham, 1993. xliv + 84 pp.

Despite reservations registered below, this volume may prove to be one of the most useful of a useful series devoted to affordable texts for students. The stories are good, the Glossary and Notes helpful; the book will fit into the Old Norse curriculum well as a follow-up to Gordon. The editions united here were both initially produced as M. Phil. theses at Birmingham, but the differing editorial approaches, as well as the contrasting style, genre and language of the

stories themselves, will add to the pedagogical value of the volume. I noticed few mechanical errors and inconsistencies.

Jessie Cook's edition of *Olkofra þátr* is accomplished in its range of allusion to primary sources and in its factual work with geography, real life (e. g. charcoal production), and language; her notes highlight, though not exhaustively, interesting links with other texts. Cook is more or less a book-prosist, whose 'author . . . chooses to develop his story' in four sections corresponding to the manuscript divisions (why not keep the manuscript title and divisions?), and she makes a good case that 'much of his raw material is borrowed' (p. xxxix). Her critical reading, which in my opinion relies too much on 'literary caprice' (p. xxxix) and 'lighthearted entertainment' (p. xliv), is rather inconclusive, muting social applications of the story and finding its core in simple ridicule of 'great men who persecute little men' (p. xliv). A good discussion of dating emphasises law and arrives at a plausible range, 1250–1271. A discussion of 'four metaphorical phrases' that 'can be linked tenuously by association with the sea' (p. xlvi and notes) could have included a fifth, 'Hvaðan rann sjá alda undir?' (p. 13, l. 140), and perhaps a sixth, *selfeitr* (l. 185, erroneously 186 in the glossary).

The proportions of Cook's ten-page Introduction and nineteen pages of notes are reversed in Ian Wyatt's twenty-eight pages of Introduction with only seven of notes. He chooses to edit the *Flateyjarbók* text of his *þátr* because 'all previous editions and translations of Ögmundar þátr dyttis have used AM 61 fol. as the base text' and because *Flateyjarbók*, while it may be further from a presumed 'original', has interesting literary qualities of its own (p. ix; also pp. xxxiv and vi). This reasoning is valid, but to correct the record, Þorleifur Jónsson's separate edition of the story in his *Fjörutíu Íslendinga-pættir* (1904) had already been based on *Flateyjarbók*, with some use of AM 61 as printed in *Formannana sögur* II (see his p. xiii); and Þorleifur's text is reproduced by Guðni Jónsson in his *Íslendinga-pættir* (1935; 1945). Neither of these predecessors is mentioned by either Cook or Wyatt. A quick comparison suggests that Þorleifur's normalisation from *Flateyjarbók* is liberally seasoned with improvements from AM 61; interestingly he chose to follow AM 61 *in extenso* in Ögmundr's sailing accident. Wyatt's fourteenth-century normalisation reads well, and his notes pick out some interesting points for comparison among the different texts. At l. 116 his tentative association of slavery with cowardice seems excessively cautious, and the gnomic expression in l. 146 is almost certainly a proverb even though its unique citation in Bjarni Vilhjálmsson and Óskar Halldórsson's *Íslenzk málshættir*, which is not cited, is circular evidence. Wyatt's comment on an odd usage of *garðr* at l. 187 needs a reference to the explanation given in *Íslenzk fornrit* IX (1956), 110; I would guess, however, that the word here refers to a palisade to protect the vulnerable side of the town. A number of scribal mistakes are briefly noted, but at l. 227 we might have wished for an explanation of the more substantial series of errors.

Wyatt's informal introduction ranges even to a disquisition on Freyr, but his best points concern differences among the texts and their interpretation. The varying presentations of the sailing accident and a few other features early in

the story support his idea that *Flateyjarbók* and AM 61 fol. (and AM 564 a 4to as far as it goes) contrast in the severity of their attitude toward the hero; but the differences or the editor's explication of them fade as the story proceeds, and the promise of stylistic comparison is not realised despite repetitions in the Notes. Wyatt's attempts to apply the observed variations to literary-critical interpretation of Ögmundr's character seem heavy-handed (as at p. xxvi, 'the idiot abroad'), and exposition itself is somewhat muddled by imprecise language (as at pp. xx–xxi); his stylistic analysis is not uniformly illuminating (e. g. 'This extract is short, punchy' (p. xxiv)) or even accurate ('Ögmundr acquires a ship' (p. xxiv), but in AM 564 a 4to he simply *has* the ship; 'the crew cannot see the other ships in the sound' (p. xxiv, cf. p. xxv), but vision figures only in *Flateyjarbók* and AM 61 fol., not in AM 564 a 4to, where reaction time is mentioned instead). The treatment of date contains a good point about the comparative chronologies of the *pátr* and *Víga-Glúms saga* but is strangely silent about my extensive discussion of this textual relationship (p. xxx). Throughout Wyatt shows himself more attuned to the existence of oral tradition than Cook; nevertheless, his discussion of dating seems unsubtle. The major struggle of his Introduction, however, is with the question of the unity of the story; his one-sentence critique of my article on this subject seems beside the point, and he fails either to dismantle my arguments or to build on them (p. xxxiii).

In my opinion the editions collected here share one shortcoming: the failure to come to grips with antecedent scholarship. (When our own precious words are involved, *amour propre* makes such a failure easy to spot but embarrassing to point out.) Both lack any real *Forschungsbericht*; the customary listing of previous editions and translations is missing; even something as well known and student-friendly as Hermann Pálsson's translation and critical remarks on *Qlkofra pátr* (in his Penguin *Hrafinkel's Saga and other Icelandic stories* (1971)) is absent, and the great Íslenzk fornrit editions (by Jón Jóhannesson and Jónas Kristjánsson) go unmentioned in the Bibliography, which simply expands the abbreviation IF. Cook comments on the meanings of the word *pátr* and its use as a genre designation (p. xxxvi), citing an unpublished British M. Phil. thesis but ignoring John Lindow's article on the subject (in *Scripta Islandica* 29 (1978), 3–44) and my discussions in various places (see further below). Both editors treat direct speech in terms of its proportions and effects without reference to the classic treatments, and the *senna* in *Qlkofra pátr* does not tempt its editor to cite the literature on the practice or Lindow's article arguing a direct 'mythic modeling' of *Bandamanna saga* on *Lokasenna* (in *Michigan Germanic Studies* 3 (1977), 1–12). There is, of course, no end to the secondary literature that could have been used in Wyatt's discussion of Freyr; it is a question whether this kind of extensive but elementary presentation is needed in an edition of the story, but some notice should have been taken, I think, of recent literature on the Christian treatment of comparable pagan material, such as T. M. Andersson on the idol of Gudbrandsdal (in Gerd Wolfgang Weber, ed., *Idee, Gestalt, Geschichte: Festschrift Klaus von See* (1988), 261–84). The discussion of *Volsa pátr* would be more responsible with

an allusion to Heusler's article (in *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Volkskunde* 13 (1903), 24–39), still the principal general treatment, and to the study by Gro Steinsland and Kari Vogt in *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 96 (1981), 87–106. Wyatt does argue—and convincingly—against Helga Reuschel's article on his *pátrr*, but he does not even mention that of A. H. Krappe (in *Acta Philologica Scandinavica* 3 (1928–29), 226–33). In puzzling over 'why [the two constituent stories of his *pátrr*] were brought together in the first place' Wyatt tentatively proposes: 'It could be argued that they are thematically related, each offering a story of self-redemption after going astray, the first in conformity with the old heathen ethic of achieving honour by blood-revenge, the second following the Christian ideal of repentance and reform' (p. xxix). I would have to agree, since this is exactly the major theme of my article on the *pátrr*, which (though referred to in the Bibliography) goes unacknowledged here. Wyatt's musings on generic classifications proceed as if there were no antecedent literature on the subject; especially relevant to p. xxxiv would have been my 1980 effort (in *Folklore Forum* 13, 158–98) on *Rognvalds pátrr ok Rauðs* and a subgenre that centres on the opposition of Christianity and paganism, but two more of my articles deal extensively with this group; they will be found in John Lindow *et al.*, eds, *Structure and Meaning in Old Norse Literature* (1986), 187–219, and in Flemming G. Andersen and Morten Nørgaard, eds, *The Making of the Couple* (1991), 43–66. None of these studies is cited; nor is my overview 'Pættir' in the *Dictionary of the Middle Ages* (1982–89), XII 1–6, with its extensive bibliography.

The *pátrr* is a small sub-field, and its literature relatively easily mastered. Nevertheless, I would not want to argue that the *Forschungsbericht*, as invented in Germany and perfected in Italy, should precede every word an anglophone writes. Conventions vary, but to avoid provinciality scholarship must, in my opinion, come to terms with what has been written, not merely citing it, but engaging with it in the course of building an independent argument. Of course there are limits to anyone's reading in secondary literature, and reinventing the wheel can be a good exercise; but in a series expressly for students, I feel, there should be a sense of intellectual engagement with the tradition of scholarship.

JOSEPH HARRIS

BOTH ONE AND MANY: ESSAYS ON CHANGE AND VARIETY IN LATE NORSE HEATHENISM.  
By JOHN MCKINNELL. With an appendix by MARIA ELENA RUGGERINI. *Philologia*  
1. Rome, 1994. 209 pp. + 17 ills.

'The whole [Norse] mythological system was rather fluid' (p. 23); 'if the system is seen as a shifting one, any meaning we attach to a myth should simply be what we believe it meant to the poet or artist who produced the work we are looking at, and perhaps (but not necessarily) to his or her contemporaries' (p. 26). In this collection of papers John McKinnell sets out his theoretical stall early. The texts, mythological figures and stories for which he offers close

readings cannot be integrated into an overarching system designated as the 'Norse mythic world' and so they ought not to be teased into yielding up an 'original' form. McKinnell is content to look at what we have and, for the most part, to interpret the texts within their own system of signification, though his selection of texts which may be the products of 'late heathenism' means that possible Christian influence is frequently taken into account.

From this standpoint then, McKinnell proceeds from a chapter entitled 'Basic Considerations' to an analysis of the functions of Loki. Chapter 3 deals with the various tellings of the myth of Pórr and Geirrðr while Chapters 4 and 5 offer close readings of *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Völuspá*. An appendix by Maria Elena Ruggerini, containing some observations on *Vafþrúðnismál* and some lexical notes, completes the book.

The study originated in a series of lectures given at the University of Rome; hence the style is simple, there is considerable paraphrase of the plots of the different texts and a kind of lecturer's bonhomie survives the revisions. McKinnell states at the outset that he has produced 'a series of distinct papers on different topics' (p. 9), linked by the theme of variety; thus it would be churlish to complain of the disunified nature of the volume. Nevertheless some inconsistencies may strike the reader. The assertion that we must interpret myths in terms of what they have meant to the authors of individual texts sits rather uneasily with McKinnell's treatment of *Lokasenna*. Admittedly the full argument concerning Loki's motivation in this poem is set out in McKinnell's article in *Saga-Book* 22:3–4 (1987–88), 234–62, but it underpins much of what he has to say about Loki here. If Loki is seeking to provoke the gods to bind him in order to hasten the onset of Ragnarök, this seems to point to a more complex and interrelated mythic system than McKinnell has suggested earlier in his book.

The chapter on Pórr and Geirrðr sets out with exemplary clarity the different versions of the pattern of this myth in *Pórsdrápa*, the *Poetic Edda*, Snorri and Saxo. McKinnell is adamant in his rejection of Margaret Clunies Ross's socio-psychological approach to *Pórsdrápa*, finding that 'social reasons for this mistrust of women, especially among aristocratic men, are not hard to suggest' (p. 70). The examples he adduces from the sagas, however, are of dubious relevance; even if one does not wish to accept all of Clunies Ross's suggestions, the psychological reading remains productive as a means of interpreting *Pórsdrápa*, and, as McKinnell himself demonstrates on p. 78, also illuminates *Hymiskviða*. There is an unexamined assumption, most insistent in this chapter, that humankind—in particular the poet and his audience—will identify with Pórr and his exploits and find 'messages' in the poetry: '[Pórr's] followers could also take heart, whatever unheroic situations they might be placed in' (p. 81). On what basis we can assume that texts that deal with the Æsir and their giant antagonists while scarcely mentioning humans are at some level 'really' carriers of messages to humans is never made clear.

The chapters on *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Völuspá* are detailed and valuable analyses of those texts; the poems are ascribed to roughly the same period and the author demonstrates the distinctive use each poet made of the origin and developing history of the cosmos. Vafþrúðnir's display of knowledge is, rather

unfairly, castigated as ‘an empty parade of knowledge without wisdom, reflecting Vafþrúðnir’s arrogance but no real understanding of the world’ (p. 94); this characterisation does not square with the progress of the contest nor with what one understands to be its rules. Reference to Anne Holtsmark’s sensible suggestion that the questioner must know the answers to his questions if he is to verify the truth of the replies might have clarified both McKinnell’s and Ruggerini’s understanding of the contest’s rules. McKinnell’s proposal that the suspense in the poem is generated by the anxiety that Óðinn will not be able to ‘put the unanswerable question before the giant realises who his questioner is’ (p. 101) is an intriguing one. Not every reader will be persuaded that the unmasking of Óðinn is a significant risk however, since it occurs nowhere else in the corpus; giants simply do not recognise Óðinn until he chooses to reveal himself; hence frost-giants turn up at the hall of Hávi in *Hávamál* 109 enquiring about the health of Bolverkr/Óðinn who has just stolen the mead of poetry.

The speaker in *Völuspá* too is found guilty of deploying ‘mere knowledge’ as opposed to Óðinn’s ‘wisdom’, though it is conceded that she does understand ‘causal links’; this makes the distinction between the speaker’s knowledge and the interlocutor’s rather confusing. The reading of *Völuspá* might have benefited from the useful concept of the ‘mythic present’. By the end of *Völuspá* ‘Ragnarök is upon us and there is no time to do anything more about it’ (p. 114), but there is no suggestion in the framework of *Völuspá* that the ‘fimbulvetr’, described in the body of the poem as happening in the future, has in fact occurred—indeed it is not clear that Baldr is already dead. The analysis of *Völuspá* modulates into a broadly Nordalian interpretation of the poem as driven by a (probably) Christian morality, though in places McKinnell’s reading conflicts with Nordal’s. Little account is taken of other writing on *Völuspá* however.

In the appendix Ruggerini makes a series of points about various lexical and linguistic aspects of *Vafþrúðnismál* and comparable poems; though whether *Hofuðlausn* belongs to the wisdom contest tradition is debatable (p. 143). Some of these observations are securely grounded and point towards a degree of lexical characterisation of Óðinn as a speaker, others are less so, however, for instance the suggestion on p. 165, on the basis of two examples, that ‘mæla orðom’ might be an Odinic trait.

*Both One and Many* represents a useful contribution to the sceptical position in the debate about Eddic poetry and its meaning. How we read Eddic poetry is a question which has been considered only intermittently in recent years; the dearth of writing in English on the mythological poems of the Edda means that little debate of any kind has been generated beyond close readings of one or two texts. However, with the publication of this book, Margaret Clunies Ross’s *Prolonged Echoes I* (1994) and Terry Gunnell’s book on *The Origins of Drama in Scandinavia* (1995), a new era of Edda studies in English seems to be dawning. McKinnell’s writing, in particular the work on *Vafþrúðnismál*, will carry discussion forward into that era.

SKÍRNMÍMÁL: MODELL EINES EDDA-KOMMENTARS. By KLAUS VON SEE, BEATRICE LA FARGE, EVE PICARD and MARIA-CLAUDIA HESS. Universitätsverlag C. Winter. Heidelberg, 1993. 101 pp.

This commentary on *Skírnismál* is offered as a model for future commentaries on other Edda poems which, when combined, will ultimately form a *Gesamtkommentar* on the whole corpus of Eddic verse. The authors of this first volume invite their readers to regard it as a test of procedures and methods of presentation which will, depending on how they are received, be carried forward in this or a modified form into the larger project.

The book opens with a section ('Zweck und Ziel des Kommentars', pp. 5–18) justifying this ambitious enterprise and stating its aims. A new general commentary on the poetic Edda is, it is claimed, long overdue. The Gering-Sijmons commentary, though still valuable, is now over half a century old, Detter-Heinzel and Boer even older. More recently, complete commentaries, or editions of all the Edda poems incorporating extensive commentaries, have been conceived but have foundered (Magnus Olsen) or been slow to appear (Ursula Dronke). The heavy administrative burden under which most university teachers now labour is held responsible for this lamentable state of affairs; no one scholar has the time to complete anything so long in the writing as a general commentary on the Edda poems. One of the consequences of this is that any kind of broad evaluation of work on individual aspects of the subject is indefinitely delayed.

The shortcomings of the commentaries already published are mentioned. Of the more recent efforts, Olsen is blamed for allowing his special interests in runology and onomastics to dominate his work, Dronke for overestimating the archaic qualities of the texts she edits. All the earlier general commentaries have inevitably dated. Thus Gering's contribution, in some respects out of date even when it was published, is overburdened with metrical emendations according to Sievers's five-types theory, and vitiated further by the author's commitment to a nature-based mythology, monolithic and static, of which the texts themselves afford only occasional glimpses—a view greatly at odds with the currently prevailing conception of Germanic mythological and religious ideas as fluid, varied and unsystematic. The style and genre of individual poems have never received proper attention. Detter-Heinzel is praised for its careful linguistic analysis but criticised for its neglect of historical and mythological questions. Boer was too ready to explain textual difficulties in terms of interpolation and revision during the course of transmission. The present authors join with Andreas Heusler in condemning all three of these older commentaries as preoccupied with minor details and consequently more or less blind to the broader interest and significance of the primary texts upon which they are based.

The choice of *Skírnismál* as *Demonstrationsobjekt* for a new commentary was determined partly by the fact that its subject-matter is largely unrepresented in other Eddic poems (though this does imply that the real test of this series will be the way it handles poems which require much more cross-

referencing than this one). Another attractive factor was the sheer variety of current critical opinions of the poem, which the authors see as a challenge to find the right balance in a commentary between the presentation of objective information and the divergent interpretations of critics. The authors are generally very scrupulous in attending to problems of method and procedure, some of them difficult to solve in practice. For example, a strophe-by-strophe, line-by-line commentary (*Stellenkommentar*) cannot hope to convey an idea of a poem's general nature as a literary work; nor does it offer the right framework for exploring the literary-historical milieu from which the poem emerged. Yet if the *Stellenkommentar* fails to keep in view a strong idea of the poem as a whole, it will suffer from the myopia which Heusler condemned in the early commentaries. Some place must be found for general observations and ideas in a commentary, but where should they come? The present authors' solution to this problem is to preface the *Stellenkommentar* itself with an introduction dealing with general matters and providing summaries of topics later considered piecemeal at various points in the *Stellenkommentar*. Again, we will have to wait for later volumes in this series to see how cross-referencing between individual commentaries is handled. Obviously there will be difficult decisions to be made about the degree of repetition permitted from commentary to commentary.

Careful thought has obviously been given to the structure and content of the introduction to the commentary. A standardised scheme consisting of ten numbered sections (p. 12) has been designed with a view to providing an adequate framework for discussion of any Eddic poem:

- §1 bibliography;
- §2 an account of the manuscripts and of the textual condition in which the poem has survived;
- §3 a history of modern criticism of the poem;
- §4 a broad history of the poem's subject-matter and of any later literary manifestations of this material;
- §5 the imaginative and generic conception of the poem;
- §6 form and structure;
- §7 metrical character;
- §8 vocabulary and stylistic peculiarities;
- §9 position of the poem in literary history;
- §10 date of composition of the poem.

Each of these ten sections is liable to subdivision into paragraphs on particular topics, indicated by lower-case letters (here only §§ 2 and 10, both very brief, are not subdivided in this way), the aim of this subdivision being to enable the user to find the appropriate part of the introduction when the *Stellenkommentar* refers back to it. The presentation of the bibliography is quite complicated. First comes a general bibliography, with primary and secondary sources listed separately, consisting of works dealing in some way with several Eddic poems. The bibliography for each individual poem which follows will invariably be tripartite, as it is here: under a) come references back to the general bibliography

giving the page-numbers of those works which refer to the poem currently being commented on; under b) appear (with full bibliographical details) works dealing only with the poem in question; and under c) are to be found works testifying to the later survival of the poem's subject-matter. This elaborate system seems to work well, especially as the authors have distinguished between works listed under a) and those under b) and c) by citing (both in the bibliography itself and elsewhere in the book) the first in lower-case letters, the second in capitals (e. g. p. 41, §5, 'Larrington 1992, 143; s. auch LARRINGTON 1993, 5f.'). Reference back to the bibliography from the commentary is an easy matter as a result.

Another theoretical problem faced here is the proper attitude of the commentator to the history of the text. The authors of the present work emphasise very firmly the importance of accepting the surviving text as it is, rather than as it might have been at some earlier stage in its development; indeed, they claim that the commentary's main task is to reveal the coherence of this surviving version as a product of a certain milieu (p. 9: 'Die vornehmliche Aufgabe des Kommentars wird es daher sein, die Stimmigkeit dieser überlieferten Fassungen herauszuarbeiten, sie als Ausdruck eines bestimmten kulturellen, sozialen und literarischen Milieus zu begreifen und nicht als bloßes Abfallprodukt ihrer nichtüberlieferten Vorgeschichte'). There is no doubt that this is a sensible *initial* approach to any medieval text, particularly as a test of its coherence; but it seems to me to embody some very modern and so possibly anachronistic (and prejudicial) assumptions about medieval authors and how they worked. I was reminded here of J. R. R. Tolkien's approach to the Old English poem *Beowulf* in his essay: '*Beowulf*: the monsters and the critics' (*Proceedings of the British Academy* 22 (1936), 245–95) where he drew a similarly firm distinction between the 'original or aboriginal nature' of the 'ancient and largely traditional material' out of which *Beowulf* is made, supposed to be of interest only to antiquarians, and 'what the poet did with it', which is the concern of literary criticism (see p. 250). No one would oppose the disencumbering of a medieval text from the burden of supposed or even real antecedents if its true literary character stood revealed as a result; but this approach does imply certain rather large assumptions about the attitudes of the poet to his material. It is almost bound, in effect, to cast this poet in the mould of an independent-minded, innovative literary artist, organising the fragments of received traditions and imposing a fresh unity upon them in line with his own interests and priorities; but for all we know, the organising and unifying tendencies of the *Beowulf* poet and the Edda poets alike may have been tempered with standards and enthusiasms hidden from us—a regard, for example, for literary or non-literary qualities inherent in the material they received, qualities they thought worth preserving, perhaps at the expense of the kind of artistic coherence the modern critic of these works looks for as a test of their value. It is worth remembering, for example, that the distinction between material and treatment made by the authors of this commentary, though an easy one for us to make, might well have been meaningless to a medieval poet working within a tradition of composition retaining a considerable residuum of 'oral' habits and thought and procedure.

It therefore seems to me that, although it is both convenient and methodologically sensible to work on the hypothesis that any Eddic poem is wholly the product of one age, one place and one poet, we should be prepared to modify our critical perspective if and when we are faced with narrative inconsistencies, apparent irrelevancies, dislocations of one kind or another—all, perhaps, signs of a complex history of the story within which the surviving text is, so to speak, in transit. It is to be hoped that the authors of this series of commentaries will not seek to obscure these less satisfactory aspects of the texts they work on, but will respond to them with sensitivity and caution.

I can find little to criticise in the technical presentation of this volume, or in the coverage of the *Stellenkommentar*, which seems exemplary. I would have liked to see some discussion of the parallels between str. 35 and the Norse poem ‘The Waking of Angantýr’, especially in the phrase *undir viðar rótum*, used in the latter poem in a terrestrial context of grave-mounds, which closely matches *Skírnismál* 35/5 *á viðar rótum* and supports the impression of the death-like state of existence with which Gerðr is threatened under the terms of the curse (see my ‘*The Wife’s Lament* and *Skírnismál*: some parallels’, *Úr Dólum til Dala: Guðbrandur Vigfússon Centenary Essays*, ed. Rory McTurk and Andrew Wawn, Leeds Texts and Monographs, n. s. 11 (1989), 221); but one cannot but admire the skill and thoroughness with which the secondary literature on *Skírnismál* has been sifted and summarised. If future volumes match this one, the study of Eddic verse will have taken an important step forward.

PETER ORTON

NORDENS KRISTNANDE I EUROPEISKT PERSPEKTIV. By PER BESKOW and REINHART STAATS. *Occasional Papers on Medieval Topics* 7. *Viktoria Bokförlag*. Skara, 1994. 62 pp.

This balloon of a title strings along three short but rewarding papers. Professor Staats of Kiel prints a lecture, ‘Missionshistoria som “Geistesgeschichte”; ledmotiv i den nordeuropeiska missionshistorien 789–1104’. Like English, Swedish can apparently offer no adequate rendering of *Geistesgeschichte*, so the author thoughtfully explains what the term implies in German scholarship. We might perhaps roughly paraphrase it as the study of a given period’s mental and emotional climate viewed in the conditions of that period. He then deals in well-known facts, with authority and occasionally a little fantasy, but shades his emphases with sympathy and originality. In keeping with current modes of mission thought, he stresses that the conversion process involves not simply central cultic change but large-scale cultural mutation. The substance of Christianity may be differently moulded and coloured in different surroundings, but it is not essentially altered. I may mention one or two of the numerous sensible and suggestive points that he makes. Semantic studies are of basic importance and can be undertaken in good heart, not because we know that much about, say,

eleventh-century Danish or Swedish but because our interpretations can be reliably guided by the continuity of Christian teaching and practice as then established in the western world. While we should not underestimate political pressures, secular and ecclesiastical, in leading toward conversion, we should not overestimate them either. The propagators of the Faith in the North did their work before crusades were legitimised. They made a deep impression through their schools and their hospitality (both strong in the Benedictine tradition), doubtless through diplomatic gift-giving too. To maintain these and to advance their proselytising, prosperity and peace—not dominion as such—were imperative needs, and the missions promoted these ends directly and indirectly. Corporate dedication to poverty would have made little sense in the missionary circumstances. The author cites Rimbert's description of the commercial benefits which followed Ansgar's mission to Slesvig—German merchants then felt safe to go there—and he would see ambition for similar benefit in the initial response to Ansgar in Birka. But the author has many more wise things to say and his paper may be warmly welcomed, not least perhaps because it gives those of us who are more familiar with Norway and the Atlantic islands and their connections with the British Isles a cheering glimpse of the North German perspective on the Scandinavian conversion.

In the other two papers Dr Beskow of Lund considers special topics but elucidates them against a wide background. In 'Runor och liturgi' he criticises the authors of two recent discussions of runic inscriptions of Christian import (E. Segelberg, 'Missionshistoriska aspekter på runinskrifterna', *Kyrkohistorisk Årsskrift* 1983, 45–57; C. F. Hallencreutz, 'Runstenarnas teologi: våra första uttryck för inhemsks kristendomstolkning', *Religion och Bibel* 1982, 47–56), either for making too much of native independence in the formulation of the inscriptions' Christian elements, or for finding more direct Byzantine influence in them than the evidence can possibly warrant. Beskow works through the contexts and terminology: prayers for the soul, God, *Drotten*, Christ, the verb *hialpa*, the nouns *andi* and *säl(a)*, God's Mother, light and paradise, Michael, the phrase 'better than he deserved'; and ends with consideration of some later runic messages in Latin. He shows convincingly that they are all best understood in terms of missionary preaching and the requiem liturgy. He sensibly thinks that liturgical explication would have been no less, and probably more, significant in catechetical instruction than biblical exposition. Some terms are used in the North which do not have immediate parallels in the early English, Saxon and Frisian which provided most of the Christian vocabulary of Scandinavia. One such is *hvítaváðir* for the baptismal robe. Beskow notes that this term is known from six Uppland inscriptions; in fact, it is known in damaged form certainly from one more, possibly from two, see Lena Peterson, *Svenskt runordsregister*, 1989, s. v. (I may mention in passing that Beskow does not seem to know Erik Moltke's *Runerne i Danmark og deres oprindelse*, 1976, a not-to-be-neglected revision of his and Lis Jacobsen's *Danmarks runeindskrifter*, 1942.) He goes on, 'Förutom i dessa inskrifter och på ett ställe i Flateyarbók [sic] (1, 383) är ordet obekant i germanska språk.' The term *hvítaváðir* is of

course nothing like as rare in West Norse as he claims. It occurs in a section on *guðsifar* in *Gulabingslög* and *Frostabingslög*, see E. Hertzberg in *Norges gamle Love* V, 1895, s. v.; and Fritzner offers six other Icelandic instances, as well as *hvítváðungr* in *Eigi var hann enn þa scirþr, oc góðri hann þó hvitvoðungs verc . . .* (*Heilagra manna sögur*, ed. C. R. Unger, 1877, I 554/26–27; cf. *hvitvædings verk* in another text of the same passage, *ed. cit.* I 608/25), which answers literally, and surely also idiomatically, to *Necdum tamen regeneratus in Christo, agebat quendam . . . baptismi candidatum* (*Sulpicii Severi Vita Martini*, ed. Jan W. Smit, in *Vite dei Santi*, ed. Christine Mohrmann, IV, 1975, cap. 2, ll. 32–34). As commonly acknowledged, the origin of *hvítavāðir* is not itself obscure, it is a calque on *vestis alba, vestes albæ, vestimenta candida*, the act and phrase of the baptismal rite, ‘Accipe vestem candidam, quam immaculatam perferas ante tribunal Domini nostri Jesu Christi’—and missionaries obviously thought in Latin as well as in their vernaculars. Beskow mentions Sven B. F. Jansson’s suggestion that it was formulated in some mission centre and spread from there to Uppland and Iceland. It is certainly natural to think that some appropriate terms arose from discussion between missionaries and converts, which were then either established or replaced in the usage of first-generation native clerics. Beskow would not venture an opinion on where the mission centre might have been in this case, and the second element in the compound could as well have been prompted by Old Saxon *geuuēde* as Anglo-Saxon *wæde, gewæde*, though the collocation found in *hvítavāðir* is recorded in neither of these dialects. One might perhaps prefer attribution to a western mission centre, but only on tentative analogy with the well-attested *hvítadagar, hvítasunnudagr, hvítadróttinsdagr* for Whit week, Whitsun(day), terms which are restricted to West Norse and have only English antecedents. (Early Danish and Swedish followed specific German usage in calling the Sunday before Ash Wednesday ‘White Sunday’; German *Weisser Sonntag* for Low Sunday, *Dominica in albis*, earlier *post albas*, is said not to have become established until late medieval times.) Easter and Pentecost were of course the prescribed major baptismal seasons, and though the Latin liturgical *albae* referred only to the weekdays after the paschal ceremony (and still linger in *sabbatum* and *Dominica in albis*), the vernacular ‘white’ in English and Norwegian and Icelandic, undoubtedly derived from the baptismal custom, became confined to Whitsunday and Whit week.

Lund had 24 churches in the Middle Ages, including three monastic churches and two outside the walls (the cathedral had no parochial function). In ‘Kyrkodedikationer i Lund’ Dr Beskow studies their *patrocinia* with reference to their location and date (archaeology is indispensable), comparison with the dedications of churches in other Danish and Swedish townships (evidence of rural dedications is scanty) and due consideration of foreign influence, pilgrimage and the availability of relics. Much of interest emerges. The John the Baptist dedication of the cathedral crypt, with its natural well, may very likely be on the model of San Giovanni in Laterano, Rome’s prime baptismal church. Dedications to Stephen, Clement, Martin and Botulf, for example, are eleventh-

century in origin; the presence of Botulf is a well-known sign of English influence, of which there are few traces in Lund after about 1060. Following Erik Cinthio, Dr Beskow plausibly links the choice of Lawrence as patron of the cathedral church with Sven Estridsen's visit to Emperor Henry III in Merseburg in 1053; the cathedral there had been dedicated to Lawrence after Otto I's victory over the Magyars at Lechfeld on the saint's day in 955. In the dedication to *Drotten* Dr Beskow believes the appellation is to be equated with *Salvator*, a customary title in the missionary period for a first church on a central site in a settlement. He refers to the Lateran *Basilica Sancti Salvatoris*, and mentions Christ Church, Canterbury, among similar instances. Bede's full phrasing—he says that the church was dedicated by Augustine *in nomine sancti Salvatoris Dei et Domini nostri Iesu Christi (Historia ecclesiastica, lib. I, cap. xxxiii)*—may point up for us the way in which the term *Drotten, Dominus*, subsuming all Christ's attributes, came to have pre-eminent appeal in the North. In both his papers Beskow rightly emphasizes the 'Christomonism' of the missionary message: Christ is God, the Blessed Virgin is God's Mother, and so on, with no complication of the Persons. Erik Ejegod's pilgrimages around 1100, to Rome, Bari and Constantinople, and relics acquired by him must have had most influence on the choice of Nicholas and Holy Cross, while a dedication to St Godehard, unique in Denmark, can be confidently attributed to the interest of Eskil, archbishop of Lund from 1138 till his resignation in 1177. In his teens Eskil had studied at the cathedral school in Hildesheim, ten or fifteen years before Godehard, bishop there 1022–38, was enshrined in 1131. Olaf of Norway and Magnus of Orkney are represented, but not before the end of the twelfth century and perhaps rather later than that in the case of Magnus. There is much more to be learnt from Dr Beskow's research, and it is to be hoped that we shall soon have further studies, on the same intelligent lines, of other concentrations of church dedications in Scandinavia. They would do much to deepen and refine our perceptions of the process of *Nordens kristnande*.

PETER FOOTE

THE REIGN OF CNUt: KING OF ENGLAND, DENMARK AND NORWAY. Edited by ALEXANDER R. RUMBLE. *Studies in the Early History of Britain*. Leicester University Press. London, 1994. xviii + 341 pp.

1995 marks the (probable) millennium of the birth of Cnut and this may explain the recent flurry of interest in him. The first biography of Cnut, by Laurence M. Larson, was published in 1912, the second, by M. K. Lawson, only came eighty-one years later in 1993. Their very title-pages suggest a difference in approach. Larson's book, published in New York, was called *Canute the Great, 995(circ.)–1035, and the Rise of Danish Imperialism during the Viking Age*. The use of the epithet and the hint that Cnut's empire somehow survived, not only him, but also the Viking Age, sets up a Danish Empire as a

kind of Scandinavian precursor or even rival to the British Empire on which the sun was then just setting. Lawson, published in London, manages to suggest in his title (*Cnut: The Danes in England in the Early Eleventh Century*) that Cnut's reign was merely a blip in the otherwise orderly progress of English history, an intervention by a foreign tourist whose 'reign was characterized by a spirit of compromise and a conspicuous display of continuity with the immediate Anglo-Saxon past' (as Lesley Abrams put it in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 26 August 1994, p. 24). As a collection of essays, some of which started life at a conference in Manchester in 1990, the volume under review eschews such reductive positions and its carefully-balanced title manages to give Cnut his due without making overblown claims for his significance. Although reviewers sometimes complain that collections of essays, in their variety and inconsistency, lack the coherence of the well-rounded monograph, we are surely glad, after two well-rounded monographs on Cnut, to have this rougher-edged but more stimulating volume.

The editor introduces the book by setting 'Cnut in context', and many of the chapters tell us about some aspect of his reign, often in the form of 'Cnut's X'. Thus, we are told about his Scandinavian empire (Peter Sawyer, with an appendix by Birgit Sawyer on the evidence of runic inscriptions), his Danish kingdom (Niels Lund), his earls (Simon Keynes), his skalds (Roberta Frank), his archbishop (M. K. Lawson), his coinage (Kenneth Jonsson) and even his bones (John Crook). There is an outline of military developments in his reign (Nicholas Hooper). Two chapters raise questions (and answer them rather equivocally), 'Danish place-names and personal names in England: the influence of Cnut?' (Gillian Fellows-Jensen) and 'An urban policy for Cnut?' (David Hill). The last chapter reports at length on 'An iron reverse die of the reign of Cnut' found in London in 1991 (Michael O'Hara and others). Finally, in a 'Textual Appendix', Alexander Rumble provides an annotated edition and translation of Osbern's account of the translation of St Ælfheah's relics from London to Canterbury in 1023, mainly, it seems, because it is otherwise 'available in print only from editions of 1691 and 1701' (p. 2). The chapter on Cnut's bones and the numismatic contributions are fully illustrated, and there are a number of useful tables, particularly the 'Select list of political events, 1001–42' (Table 1.1) and the 'Attestations of earls in the charters of King Cnut' (Table 4.1). The Index is quite good on people, places and coins, more variable on texts, and the arrangement takes some getting used to. Thus, most Old Norse prose texts are listed under 'sagas', but *Ágrip* is distinguished by appearing under 'chronicles, annals and histories' along with *Historia Norwegiae*. Snorri Sturluson gets his own entry, as do chroniclers, but court poets are listed only under 'skaldic verse'. The reader has to work quite hard to follow up points raised by the contributors, as the footnotes in each chapter too often make use of short titles separated by an unknown number of pages and footnotes from the original reference which gave full details. A summary bibliography would have been a great help. However, despite the inevitable inconsistencies, there is a wealth of information and scholarship in this book to delight all Cnutophiles.

and stimulate them to the proverbial further research (some ‘areas of study’ are helpfully outlined by Rumble on p. 2). In particular, Simon Keynes’s chapter on the charter evidence for Cnut’s earls is exemplary in setting out some quite difficult material in a way that will be of both interest and use to specialists in other disciplines.

As the subtitle makes clear, the editor was concerned to give the Scandinavian dimension its due (though there is some scrappy proofreading of anything in a Scandinavian language in some of the chapters and in the Index). Gillian Fellows-Jensen turns in her usual polished performance, though the question mark in her title (see above) suggests that she doubts its real relevance to the theme of the volume. She continues the ancient English practice (first recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*) of using ‘Danish’ where ‘Scandinavian’ (or ‘Norse’) might occasionally be more judicious, or even more accurate. Roberta Frank is both scholarly and witty as usual, though her chapter should be read in conjunction with her contribution to the Jónas Kristjánsson *Festschrift* (‘When poets address princes’, in Gísli Sigurðsson *et al.*, eds, *Sagnaping helgað Jónasi Kristjánssyni* 1994, 189–95) for a fuller picture of Cnut in skaldic verse. Curiously, Frank adopts the rearrangement of the stanzas of Hallvarðr háreksblesi’s *Knútsdrápa* proposed in Bjarne Fidjestøl’s ‘Skjematisk oversyn over korpus’ (*Det norrøne fyrstediktet* 1982, 172), taking no notice of Finnur Jónsson’s reconstruction in *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning*. The latter (based on the content of the stanzas) seems quite logical to me and, in an uncharacteristic glitch, Fidjestøl elsewhere in his book (p. 125) describes this arrangement as ‘meir eller mindre sikker’ and fails to justify his own rearrangement of the stanzas. Frank’s bald statement (p. 119) that ‘the surviving stanzas have been reassembled as follows’ should thus have been glossed. Birgit Sawyer quite rightly stresses the importance of runic inscriptions for the study of the period, but the particular use she makes of them is not convincing. She simply restates the argument put forward by Peter Sawyer in *The Making of Sweden* (1989, 34–35, and repeated in the Swedish version, *När Sverige blev Sverige* 1991, 54) that Swedish runic inscriptions, particularly those containing the words *þaegrn* and *drengR*, provide evidence that ‘Drengs who fought for Swein or Cnut and survived may well have continued as thegns to accept him as their royal lord after returning home. It is indeed possible that they had some special status as royal agents’ (p. 25). The evidence will simply not bear the weight of this interpretation (as I try to show in ‘Skaldic and runic vocabulary and the Viking Age: A research project,’ in *Developments around the Baltic and the North Sea in the Viking Age*, ed. Björn Ambrosiani and Helen Clarke, 1994, 294–301) and constant repetition does not strengthen it.

There is no doubt that, from a historical point of view, skaldic verse and runic inscriptions are the most important Old Norse sources for the eleventh century. Yet the Cnutophile with an interest in Old Norse studies may still feel somewhat cheated; even given historians’ understandable nervousness about sagas, the absence of any sustained consideration of Old Norse prose literature in this volume is remarkable (there is even less mention of them in Lawson’s book).

You would have to read Roberta Frank's footnotes quite carefully to discover that her 'contemporary' poetry survives only in prose texts of the thirteenth century or later. Most of the index entries under 'sagas' refer, not to the chapters by the five Scandinavianists, but to Simon Keynes's chapter, in which he gives a brief summary of the sources for Cnut. Keynes is quite open (p. 48) about turning 'with some sense of relief' from considering saga sources to the Anglo-Saxon charters, in which he is a specialist. But surely he could have been spared the agony in the first place? It is extraordinary that no saga-specialist was invited to contribute to this volume. Like skaldic verse, the sagas may not be 'well suited to the mundane purposes of an Anglo-Saxon historian' (Keynes, p. 46), but they do have a contribution to make. Unlike the historian, who mines the sagas for nuggets of information and then worries about how 'genuine' those nuggets might be, the saga-specialist has an overview of all the relevant texts, their relationships (which are quite complicated for the Kings' Sagas), their sources, the extent to and ways in which they structure the evidence of their sources and so on. A saga-specialist could have pointed out that there are more versions of *Jómsvíkinga saga* than the one edited and translated by Norman Blake (pp. 12, 48). While Roberta Frank bemoans (p. 107) the 'scrappy and late preservation of the verse', a scholar considering this verse in its prose contexts would have asked why these particular stanzas were preserved and not others; was it chance, or did the twelfth- and thirteenth-century historians choose their evidence to match their theories? And, if so, what can we learn from that choice and those theories? However, it may not be entirely the historians' fault; most saga-specialists have long since turned from the historical bias of the old philology to the blandishments of literary theories, and the increasing emphasis on the Icelandicness of Old Norse texts devalues the real contribution those texts can also make to the study of Anglo-Scandinavian cultural and political connections, most of all perhaps for the eleventh century.

JUDITH JESCH

DICTIONARY OF NORTHERN MYTHOLOGY. By RUDOLF SIMEK. Translated by ANGELA HALL. D. S. Brewer. Cambridge, 1993. xiv + 424 pp.

This volume is an enlarged version, translated into English, of Rudolf Simek's *Lexikon der germanischen Mythologie*, published in 1984 by Alfred Kröner Verlag, Stuttgart. It gives an alphabetically-arranged set of short entries (maximum length is about six pages, minimum length a few lines) on a whole range of topics relevant to 'the mythology and religion of all Germanic tribes—Scandinavians as well as Goths or Angles and Saxons.' Its vast scope is a considerable achievement and it fills a gap in the English-language reference books available to students of Germanic mythology. It is thus to be welcomed. Given its range, it is not surprising that it does not altogether satisfy this reviewer as a scholarly reference tool in areas where she feels able to pass judgement.

As the Preface to the English edition asserts, the dictionary has been ‘updated, enlarged and indeed thoroughly revised by the author.’ In this reviewer’s estimation, that assertion is true in some senses but not in others. Many bibliographical references have been added, to cover the years between 1984 and 1992 and to inject more English-language secondary material into the Bibliography; some new entries have been written and there has been some updating of entries. However, the dictionary is not really up to date in its assimilation of the ideas about Northern (or Germanic) mythology which have become current in the last twenty-five years or so and projects a rather old-fashioned, positivist approach to its subject-matter. The authorial tone admits no room for doubt, even on rather controversial subjects. Sometimes, though, Simek actually espouses a particular point of view without revealing what it is, which may mislead the inexpert reader. An example is the apparently Dumézilian first line of the interpretive section of his entry on the god Loki, which states: ‘Loki is a god without a function’ (p. 193).

A few examples will give some idea of the dictionary’s positivist stance. Simek’s entry on the topic *hierós gámos* (p. 146) begins by stating: ‘The *hierós gámos* is the wedding between the god of heaven and the mother goddess of earth . . . Odin’s various love adventures . . . should be seen as reflections of a *hierós gámos*, even if Odin was not originally the Germanic god of heaven.’ Though he adds a reference to Gro Steinsland’s 1991 book on this subject (discussed by Rory McTurk in *Saga-Book* 24:1 (1994), 27–30), he gives no hint of its argument in his entry, nor does he reveal anything of the debate that has gone on in recent years about the applicability of the *hierós gámos* concept to Germanic myth and to Old Norse literature in particular. We see a similar lack of signposting to the give-and-take of contemporary research in his entry on ‘Sacred kingship’ (pp. 269–71) and here also, though the ‘hot’ topic of the Germanic kings’ descent from the gods is mentioned, there is inadequate bibliographical reference to recent and extensive writing on the subject, especially but not exclusively in English-language publications. Some of the entries that relate to the evidence of material culture for early Germanic beliefs and cults are rather sparse; those on ‘Runes’ and ‘Runic inscriptions’ (pp. 268–69) do not mention the Bryggen (Bergen) corpus, which has added considerably to our knowledge of Norse mythological texts.

One interesting and valuable feature of the German first edition was its inclusion of material in the form of short notes and bibliographical entries on the modern reception history of Germanic mythology, both in literature and art. Simek was here well abreast of the growing international interest in medievalism, so it is a great pity that the English version of the dictionary has not expanded these notes to include references to English-language translations of Germanic myths and to literature and art inspired by them, to add to the German and Scandinavian references already in the first edition.

An area of inconsistency, in terms of the scope of the dictionary, which Simek half acknowledges in the Introduction (p. ix), may give the seeker after knowledge some headaches. The general field of what has traditionally been called Germanic heroic literature is sometimes included, sometimes not. The

guiding principle seems to be whether or not the topic relates to heathen Germanic religion (pp. ix, xii), but the author's criteria for selection and his definition of the central subject are not clarified. There are entries on Skjoldr, Scyld Scefing and Scyldingas, but nothing on Hrólfr kraki, even though a number of medieval sources include him among the Scyldingas. There are short entries on Fafner and Fáfnir, but one searches in vain for Sigurðr/Siegfried.

The English translation, the work of Angela Hall, is in the main good and idiomatic, though it occasionally fails to convey the sense of Simek's German and to make much sense in English. The title itself could have done with an indefinite article: *A Dictionary of Northern Mythology* sounds more idiomatic to my ear than the book's actual title, and the justification for changing the reference from 'Germanic' to 'Northern' (p. vii) does not appear very convincing to me. The translation of the first of Walter Baetke's theories of sacral kingship as 'The king's fortune which is associated with his sacred position as a gift' (p. 270) fails to give the English-speaking reader the essential concepts conveyed by Simek's German 'Das Königsheil, das als Gabe mit seiner sakralen Stellung zusammenhängt.' And sometimes the translation is unidiomatic or stilted, as with the two negatives and superfluous definite articles in 'The *Hymiskviða*, which is not very much older than the *Snorra Edda*, is not the only other record for Snorri's text of Thor and the Midgard serpent' (p. 324), and the awkwardness of 'The meaningful names of the goats are surely a young invention' (p. 325).

There are also numerous typographical and other errors, which is unfortunate in a reference work. Without making an exhaustive check, I came upon such things as: 'He is the father of the god's [for gods'] enemies' (p. 193); 'the name of the divine ancestor of the kings could also be born [sic] as an honorary name' (p. 270); 'Odin Ho\*enir [sic] and Loðurr' (p. 21); 'Odin, Höni and Loðurr' (p. 17); 'Schjødt, Peter' [for Schjødt, Jens Peter] (p. 414); four bibliographical entries under 'Clunies-Ross, Margaret' on p. 386 and one other under 'Ross, Margaret Clunies' on p. 413. The entries on 'Odin's migration' and 'Odin's exile' are badly conflated on pp. 246–48, where 'Odin's migration' appears twice as a heading, though the first of the two entries is contaminated by the second part of 'Odin's exile', which is missing in the first section. There is an erratum slip and a replacement page 246 with some copies of the book (though not in mine), but the mistake remains an inconvenience.

*Dictionary of Northern Mythology* bears unfortunate marks of haste and carelessness, which is to be regretted, as it will doubtless be consulted by students and the general reader for some time to come. I hope it will soon be possible for Professor Simek to improve the accuracy of his valuable book so that the less expert reader can use it with confidence.

MARGARET CLUNIES ROSS

ALVÍSSMÁL: FORSCHUNGEN ZUR MITTELALTERLICHEN KULTUR SKANDINAVIENS. Edited by EDGAR HAIMERL, THOMAS KRÖMMELBEIN, DONALD TUCKWILLER and ANDREAS VOLLMER. Berlin, 1992–.

Despite the editors' gingerly justification of the appearance of 'alvíssmál', no reasonable Old Norse scholar will begrudge its existence. Containing articles and reviews (in German, English and the Scandinavian languages) devoted entirely to the Scandinavian Middle Ages and at a subscription price of around 30DM (\$20/£13) per volume, the four well-edited volumes that have appeared to date are good value indeed. Unusually, there is not a single article on the *Íslendingasögur*: instead, eddic poetry, myth, Snorri Sturluson, the contemporary sagas, skaldic poetry and other topics as well receive treatment. Longer articles (presumably those over ten pages) written in German and the Scandinavian languages are provided with an English summary.

Volume 1 contains four articles, six reviews and two conference reports. The first article (by Carolyne Larrington in English) examines the 'gaps and absences' in Skírnir's curse in *Skírnismál* and concludes that what women want is 'intimacy with a lover, social standing, autonomy, and choice'. The second article (by Heinz Klingenberg in German) is the first instalment of a three-part rehabilitation (in opposition to Heusler, Faulkes and, although not mentioned, von See) of the middle sections of the Prologue to the prose *Edda*. The third article (by Reidar Astås in Norwegian) discusses the sources and special character of *Stjórn IV*. In the fourth article (in German, translated from Russian) Elena A. Gurevič traces 'the development of the *pula* genre in its three main forms—the mythological, the heroic, and the skaldic *pula*—in the literature of medieval Scandinavia' (cf. p. 67). The two informative conference reports (on the Eighth International Saga Conference in Gothenburg, 1991, by Donald Tuckwiller and on the Snorri Symposium in Greifswald, 1991, by Donald Tuckwiller and Stefanie Würth) testify to the reporters' stamina at conferences. (The reviews in all four volumes will be dealt with later.)

Volume 2 contains three articles: (1) William Sayers's lively comparative examination ('Irish Perspectives on Heimdallr') of Irish legendary history to extend our knowledge of the god; (2) Klingenberg's continuing discussion of Snorri's 'learned prehistory'; (3) Edgar Haimerl's stimulating reading (in German) of Sigurd's development into a hero in the 'Young Sigurd Poems', *Reginsmál*, *Fáfnismál* and *Sigrdrífomál*. Six reviews and a report on the Viking exhibition in Berlin in the fall of 1992 complete the volume.

Volume 3 features five articles: (1) Rory McTurk's argument that the duped Gylfi tricks the Æsir by not believing them to be gods ('Fooling Gylfi: Who Tricks Who?') adds another dimension to a discussion of the Prologue's role; (2) the final instalment of Klingenberg's discussion of learned prehistory; (3) Anne Heinrichs ('The Search for Identity: A Problem after the Conversion') uses Freudian categories to speculate on 'personal and collective cultural identity in medieval Icelandic literature'; (4) Else Mundal argues (in Norwegian) that Ari fróði's *Íslendingabók* was the first attempt to write an *islandsk bispekrønike* and that Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae*

*pontificum* served as its literary model and inspirational source; (5) Reidar Astås examines (in Norwegian) the role played by the Bible references in *Porlåks saga byskups*. Eight reviews appear in Volume 3.

Three of the five essays in volume 4 deal with *Sturlunga saga*: (1) Richard Gaskins's balanced article outlines 'a comparative strategy' between what he terms the Hobbesian, Freudian and Parsonian Visions, on the one hand, and Sturla's vision (*Íslendinga saga*), on the other, in order that the decline of values might be approached; (2) Lois Bragg's elegant article ('Disfigurement, Disability, and Disintegration in *Sturlunga saga*') offers, among other things, the kind of interpretation of Porgils skarði that will, it may be hoped, provoke further discussion; (3) Thomas Krömmelbein (in German) suggests some of the implications of regarding *Geirmundar þátr heljarskinns*, together with *Sturlu þátr*, as a framing device for *Sturlunga saga*. In addition, John Lindow ('Bloodfeud in Scandinavian Mythology') imaginatively argues that 'the whole sweep of Scandinavian mythology . . . looks quite a lot like a feud' (p. 56). Finally, Judy Quinn traces 'the transformation of the oral art of skaldic composition into a literary *ars poetica*' from the mid-twelfth century to the mid-fourteenth century. Volume 4 also contains eight reviews and Margaret Clunies Ross's memorial tribute to Bjarne Fidjestøl.

Reviews give a journal its special character, for, unlike articles, they are chosen on the basis of their authors' track records. But horses, notoriously, do not always run true to form, so that we might wonder how the editors of a new journal reacted to the judgements of those (especially the large number of yearlings) whom they entered in the race. They would not have been surprised that Andersson (4 (1994)) liked McKinnell's book on heathenism, for few reviewers equal Andersson's generosity; nor that Heinrichs (2 (1993)) liked Whaley's book on *Heimskringla* (Andersson, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 92 (1993), 559–601, perhaps liked it even more). Nor would a feminist's praise of a book about women by a woman (Larrington, 1 (1992), on Jesch's *Women in the Viking Age*) have raised many eyebrows; moreover, this admirable book has been well received by Frankis, *Scandinavica* 32 (1993), 81–82, Jochens, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 92 (1993), 597–99, McTurk, *History* 78 (1993), 79–80, and Simek, *Skandinavistik* 22 (1992), 136–37. Nor, most likely, did Larrington's approval (3 (1994)) of Steinsland's book (*Det hellige bryllup og norrøn kongeideologi*) ring any alarm bells given the appreciative remarks by McTurk (*Saga-Book* 24:1 (1994), 27–30) and Motz (*Scandinavian Studies* 65 (1993), 443–45). The editors might even have welcomed the contrast to La Farge's negative response (*Skandinavistik* 24 (1994), 55–59) and the repeated citations of her review in *Skírnismál*, ed. Klaus von See *et al.* (Heidelberg, 1993). On the other hand, Harris's mild criticisms (4 (1994)), amidst general approval, of Larrington's *A Store of Common Sense* in contrast with Orchard's unreserved praise (*Medium Ævum* 63 (1994), 322–23) would not have seemed unusual. The editors might have thought—on the basis of Sørensen's mellow response in *Skandinavistik* 23 (1993), 141–42, to Strerath-Bolz's dissertation on the Prologue to Snorri's *Edda*—that perhaps Krömmelbein (1 (1992)) objects too much to what she did not write rather than to what she

did; they might also have been initially nervous (in the light of the positive reviews by Clover, *Speculum* 69 (1994), 571–72, Jochens, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 93 (1994), 84–86, and Clunies Ross, *Skandinavistik* 24 (1994), 59–60) that Taylor's reservations (2 (1993)) about Swenson's book on the *mannjafnaðr* and the *senna* would look like claim-staking had it not been for Sayers's comparable strictures (in *Scandinavian Studies* 65 (1993), 265–68) and Ober's even more stringent objections (*Scandinavica* 32 (1993), 82–83). And they must have been pleased that Kreis (like Andersson, *Medievalia et Humanistica* 19 (1992), 197–210, at 200–02; Krause, *Skandinavistik* 23 (1993), 58–60; and Whaley, *Saga-Book* 23:7 (1993), 506–10) gave Poole's book (*Viking Poems on War and Peace*) a hearty welcome (2 (1993)). They might also have been gratified to see that Weber's views (4 (1994)) on Bagge's examination of *Heimskringla* were in line with other positive appraisals (those of Andersson, *Medievalia et Humanistica* 19 (1992), 197–210, at 202–10, and Wolf, *Scandinavian Studies* 64 (1992), 473–75), especially considering Klaus von See's condescending review (*Skandinavistik* 24 (1994), 149–51), but then made uncertain by Ciklaminini's lack of enthusiasm (in *Speculum* 69 (1994), 413–15). They must have been pleased that Klingenberg's well-disposed review (1 (1992)) of Simek's *Altnordische Kosmographie* agreed with Kreutzer's remarks (*Skandinavistik* 22 (1992), 55–59) and took some of the sting out of Anthony Faulkes's harsh treatment (*Saga-Book* 23:5 (1992), 396–99). They might have been surprised that Heinrichs (3 (1994)) expressed little enthusiasm for Würth's book on the *þættir* in *Flateyjarbók* given Würth's laudatory review two years earlier (1 (1992)) of Heinrichs's book on *Óláfs þátr Geirstaðadilfs* (which Clunies Ross, *Skandinavistik* 21 (1991), 141–42, also liked); some of what Heinrichs disapproved of met with favour from Kellogg, *Scandinavian Studies* 65 (1993), 570–72, Kreutzer, *Skandinavistik* 23 (1993), 139–41, and Maack, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 92 (1993), 601–03. Finally, I cannot say what they thought of the reviews of the essay collections and editions too numerous and various to mention here, but I'll wager a tidy sum that no one was particularly happy with Gunnar Karlsson's treatment (4 (1994)) of Miller's magisterial *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking*, a review that simply fails to do justice to this book.

What does a review of reviews show? Unsurprisingly, that fish swim in schools, that language is not always a tie that binds and that even where never is heard a discouraging word, there are still plenty to be read. A great-aunt of mine used to say that if you don't have something nice to say about people, then become a reviewer, but her cynicism does not apply much to the contributors to *alvíssmál*, by and large a civil bunch. They are not people living in stone houses throwing glass. It is heartening to have so many books that many of us may never have time to read treated with genuine respect. Finally, I have it from one of the editors that the eccentric typographical style of 'alvíssmál' is designed as a pronunciation aid for librarians with no Icelandic. Hjálpsamt?

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# *DRÁPA AF MARIUGRÁT, THE JOYS AND SORROWS OF THE VIRGIN AND CHRIST, AND THE DOMINICAN ROSARY*

BY KELLINDE WRIGHTSON

ONE OF THE MOST popular Latin religious works of the Middle Ages was the *Liber de passione Christi et doloribus et planctus Matris eius* which was formerly attributed to Saint Bernard of Clairvaux but has lately been attributed to the Italian Cistercian abbot Ogerius de Locedio (1136–1214).<sup>1</sup> Thematically, the *Liber de passione Christi* is what is generally known as a *Planctus Mariae* ('The Laments of Mary'),<sup>2</sup> in which the Virgin tells of the passion of Christ (the *Passio*) and of her own affliction and sorrow at the crucifixion (the *Compassio*). Throughout most of Western Europe the *Liber de passione Christi* was translated, or adapted, into nearly every vernacular in both prose and verse. Rosemary Woolf has commented on the frequent appearance of this text in manuscripts in medieval England (1968, 247–48), for instance, and similarly John Secor noted its occurrence in medieval France (1985, 322). In Iceland there survives a vernacular prose version which appears at the end of *Mariú saga* with the Latin title *Planctus siue lamentacio beate Marie* (Unger 1871, 1003–12; see also Schottmann 1973, 504–05), and two poetic versions: a skaldic poem called *Drápa af Mariúgrát*, which is the subject of this examination, and an endrhyming poem called *Mariúgrátr*.<sup>3</sup>

Although it cannot be determined for certain that the *Liber de passione Christi* was the direct source of the Icelandic *Planctus siue lamentacio beate Marie*, or indeed of either of the two extant poetic versions, the latter three texts are certainly part of the vernacular tradition of the *Liber de passione Christi*. Ian Kirby cites the *Liber de passione Christi*

<sup>1</sup> See PL 182, 1133–42 for the text and a variant in Mushacke 1890, 41–53. On the author see Barré 1952 and Sticca 1988, 103–04.

<sup>2</sup> A detailed discussion of the *Planctus Mariae*, its origin and development, and its place in medieval spirituality is provided by Sticca 1988.

<sup>3</sup> For editions of *Drápa af Mariúgrát* see Kahle 1898, Sperber 1911, Finnur Jónsson 1912–15, Kock 1946–49 and my unpublished dissertation (Wrightson [1994]). For an edition of *Mariúgrátr* see Jón Helgason 1936–38, II 76–83. I have used my edition of *Drápa af Mariúgrát* for references and quotations, which for the most part correspond to the published editions.

as the closest parallel he can find to the *Planctus siue lamentacio beate Marie* (1976–80, II 77). Given the similarities between them, it is likely that the poet of *Drápa af Mariugrát* used a version of the *Planctus siue lamentacio beate Marie* as a source text and added various motifs and themes, some of which belong to the tradition of the *Planctus Mariae*. Simeon's prophecy that a sword will pierce Mary's heart or soul, which occurs in the poem but not in the prose narrative, for example, was a common motif in descriptions of the Virgin's sorrow at the foot of the cross.<sup>4</sup>

The religious and meditative poem, or lyrical composition,<sup>5</sup> *Drápa af Mariugrát* was probably composed sometime in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century.<sup>6</sup> As would be expected of a *Planctus Mariae*, the thematic structure of the poem centres on Mary's sorrow at Golgotha. Other prominent themes of interest to this examination of the structural and thematic contents of this *drápa* are various sorrowful events (besides the crucifixion) from the lives of Mary and Christ, the five joyful mysteries (or joys) of the Virgin, the dual theme of the *Passio* and the *Compassio*, and the theme of meditation. The themes of the joys and sorrows are dealt with in specific sections of the *drápa* in such a way that to some degree the structure relates to the thematic content.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, it can be shown that this poem structurally and thematically resembles the later Dominican Rosary<sup>8</sup> and can be read as an essentially meditative text in the style of the Rosary.

*Drápa af Mariugrát* consists of 52 stanzas which are divided into four sections: the *upphaf* (st. 1–15), two *stefjamál* each with its own refrain (st. 16–27 and 28–36), and the *slæmr* (st. 37–52), the first three

<sup>4</sup> The references to Simeon's prophecy in the poem are discussed below. The relationship between the poem and the *Planctus siue lamentacio beate Marie* is dealt with more fully in Wrightson [1994], 42–45.

<sup>5</sup> For a discussion of the definition of the lyric as a religious and meditative composition, see Woolf 1968, 1–15.

<sup>6</sup> The poem is preserved in the sixteenth-century vellum manuscript AM 713 4to. See KLMN 11, 379 and Kålund 1889–94, II 128–31 for a description of this manuscript. As to the date of composition of the poem, both Jón Þorkelsson (1888, 41) and Finnur Jónsson (1920–24, III 16) dated it to around 1400.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Lilja*, in which some of the *drápa* sections are devoted to specific themes or subject matter. For an edition see Finnur Jónsson 1912–15, B II 390–416, and for a brief discussion see Hallberg 1975, 179–80.

<sup>8</sup> By 'later Dominican Rosary' is meant the form of the Rosary which resembles the form it has today. The development of the Rosary is discussed briefly below.

sections being mainly devoted to various sorrows of the Virgin and Christ (see table on p. 291 below). Six sorrows from the life of Mary are referred to: ‘Simeon’s Prophecy’ (st. 6, 17 and 22), ‘The Flight into Egypt’ (st. 7), ‘The Meeting with Christ on the Way to Golgotha’ (st. 13), ‘The Saviour’s Death’ (st. 31), ‘The Descent from the Cross/The Deposition’ (st. 34) and ‘The Burial/The Entombment’ (st. 35).<sup>9</sup> And three sorrows from the life of Christ are referred to: ‘The Carrying of the Cross’ (st. 13), ‘The Crowning with Thorns’ (st. 21) and ‘The Crucifixion’ (st. 31).

Of these sorrows, ‘Simeon’s Prophecy’ is the only one which is treated differently from the others and as a result is given prominence over them. Furthermore, it can be shown that this particular sorrow forms an important part of the thematic and meditative structure of the poem. The prophecy, according to the gospel of Saint Luke (2: 34–35), the only account of it in the Bible, is as follows:

et benedixit illis symeon et dixit ad mariam matrem eius ecce positus est hic in ruinam et resurrectionem multorum in israhel et in signum cui contradicetur et tuam ipsius animam pertransibit gladius ut reuelentur ex multis cordibus cogitationes (Wordsworth and White 1889–1954, I 320).

The prophecy is not given in full in *Drápa af Mariúgrát* but is instead divided into two parts, which occur separately, the second part being repeated at a later point. It is first mentioned in the *upphaf* where the poet tells how Mary presented the child Jesus to the Lord in the temple when the days of her purification were over, and how the prophets Simeon and Anna declared Jesus to be the true God (st. 6). This reference constitutes the first part of the prophecy. In this introductory section of the *drápa*, the poet stops short of revealing the rest of the prophecy, that a sword will pierce Mary’s heart/soul, which is only implied here. It is not until approximately the middle of the poem that the remainder of the prophecy is referred to by the words of Mary herself:

því líkast var mjer sem mækir  
mundi bjartr í gegnum hjarta

<sup>9</sup> Six was not the usual number of sorrows of the Virgin. It was normally either five, seven or fifteen. The topic of the sorrows also varied in the Middle Ages. The six sorrows referred to in *Drápa af Mariúgrát* correspond to those listed by Hirn from the thirteenth century, according to which the sorrow missing from the poem is ‘The Search for Jesus in Jerusalem’ (1912, 381–82). See further Woolf 1968, 268–70, Hirn 1912, 381–404 and Graef 1985, 306–08.

standa mitt, er eg Jésú undir  
allar leit með benja sveita (17.5–8)

and

at sónnu er mjer sem stálit stinna  
standi bjart í gegnum hjarta (22.7–8).

These repeated references to the prophecy emphasise the dual theme of the *Compassio* and, by implication, the *Passio* since by the Middle Ages Simeon's prophecy had long been understood as referring to the Virgin's suffering at the foot of the cross, and the piercing of her heart/soul was made parallel to the piercing of Christ's side (Hirn 1912, 380–81). Any mention of the sword piercing Mary's heart/soul reinforces the image of the sorrowing mother, the *mater dolorosa*, which is central in the *Planctus Mariae* tradition. 'Simeon's Prophecy' also emphasises the meditative process in this poem. It not only refers to Mary's lamentation at Golgotha, the main scene of the *Planctus*, but also to all her other sorrows. As Yrjö Hirn suggested, the prophecy, being the first of the Virgin's sorrows, serves as an introduction to the general grief or affliction which she is to experience in her life; it encompasses all those sorrows which she experienced before, during and after the crucifixion (1912, 382). When the prophecy is referred to repeatedly in the meditative process, then, as in *Drápa af Mariugrát*, it functions as a constant reminder of all Mary's griefs.

Like the sorrows of the Virgin and Christ which occupy the first three sections of the poem, the subject of Mary's joys also occurs in specific parts. The first three sections of the poem, the *upphaf* and the two *stefjamál*, have references to the joys of 'The Resurrection' and/or 'The Assumption' at or near the end (st. 11, 27 and 36; see table below),<sup>10</sup> and the *slemr* begins with reference to both these joys and includes an enumeration of the full five joys: 'The Annunciation', 'The Nativity', 'The Resurrection', 'The Ascension' and 'The Assumption' (st. 38 and 43–46). The effect of having 'The Resurrection' and 'The Assumption' dispersed through the poem in this way is first that it creates a build-up to the formal enumeration of the five joys, and second, it reinforces the duality of the theme of the *Passio* and the *Compassio*, and the duality of the theme of devotion to and meditation on both Christ and His mother. The joys of 'The Resurrection' and 'The Assumption' are particularly apt for representing Christ and Mary respectively. Since

<sup>10</sup> Note that the Resurrection is also mentioned in stanza 18 in the first *stefjamál*.

'The Resurrection' is essentially Christocentric it can be used to remind the meditator of Christ, and since 'The Assumption' is the only one of the five joys which is not Christocentric (Woolf 1968, 140), it is perhaps the most suitable reminder of Mary. In the event of 'The Assumption' the Virgin is the central figure and accordingly the meditation on this event focuses on her and her joy; the meditator rejoices for her. In comparison, Christ is the central figure in the events of the other joys and the meditation is focused on Him. Mary rejoices for her Son in 'The Annunciation', 'The Nativity', 'The Resurrection' and 'The Ascension'. In turn the meditator shares in her rejoicing so that both the meditator and the Virgin are rejoicing for Christ.

Mary's joys are linked thematically to the sorrows by the theme of meditation which runs throughout this Old Icelandic *Planctus*, that is, both the joys and the sorrows are topics for contemplation on the Virgin and Christ. According to this reading of *Drápa af Mariúgrát* it is basically a meditative poem. Themes of praying, weeping and remembering occur frequently in the text and together they emphasise the meditative process (see especially st. 5, 24, 40, 42, 47–49 and 52). While the main topic for meditation is the scene of the Virgin's lamentation at the crucifixion, the inclusion of the joys as other topics is not completely out of place, especially if one considers the extra-liturgical meditative text, the Rosary.

This late fourteenth- or early fifteenth-century *drápa* is thematically and structurally similar to the later Dominican Rosary, the formation of which occurred over some five hundred years. It is generally agreed that the development of the Rosary into the form it has today (that is, its structure and the inclusion of the joys and sorrows) took place gradually from the twelfth to the end of the sixteenth century across Europe.<sup>11</sup> Given its combination of repeated prayers and meditation on the joyful, sorrowful and glorious mysteries in the lives of Mary and Christ, the Rosary is thematically similar to *Drápa af Mariúgrát* with its heavy emphasis on the joys, the sorrows, contemplation and prayer.

In addition, the refrains of the poem and the Hail Mary and the Our Father of the Rosary share certain themes and function in a similar way. Like the Our Father, the first set of refrains in *stefjamál* 1 honours God and His glory:

<sup>11</sup> See O'Carroll 1982, 313–14, the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* 1967–79, XII 667–70 under 'Rosary' and *KLMN* 14, 414–20. I am grateful to Gerry Turcotte at the University of Wollongong for his advice on the history of the Rosary.

Qllum hlutum er æðri og sælli  
eilífligastr skepnu deilir,  
honum sje dýrð á himni og jorðu,  
hann er hærri en gjorvalt annat.

(16.5–8, 20.5–8 and 24.5–8)

The second set of refrains mainly honours the Virgin, but does so in the context of her position as the mother of the Lord and her role as mediator,<sup>12</sup> as is the case with the Hail Mary:

Yfirþjóðkonungs allra jófra,  
ollu góðu í himna høllu,  
ræðr og stýrir, mær og móðir,  
Maria sæl, hjá dróttni várum.

(28.5–8, 32.5–8 and 36.5–8)

To a degree these refrains resemble prayers in their adoration of the Lord and His mother. One of the functions of these repetitive half-stanzas is to continue and to reinforce that veneration, which is also a way of understanding the Rosary prayers.

Structurally, the poem and the Rosary consist of divisions which are marked by prescribed and repeated verses or prayers. *Drápa af Maríugrát* can be divided into four sections (the *upphaf*, two *stefjamál* and the *slæmr*). These sections are marked by prescribed and repeated texts, the refrains, which not only distinguish the first and last parts from the middle, but also divide the middle section into the two *stefjamál*. This division is signalled by a change of refrain. Each *stefjamál* contains its own refrain which is repeated three times. The Rosary is also divided into specific sections which are marked by prescribed and repeated texts. It has five decades, each consisting mainly of the Hail Mary which is repeated ten times. A decade is distinguished not only by the number of Hail Marys in it, but also by the Our Father which begins it and the Glory Be to the Father which ends it.

Besides division, prescribed texts and repetition, the poem exhibits some numerical balance in the arrangement of its stanzas which is also like the structure of the Rosary. The first and final sections of the poem are almost identical in length, the *upphaf* having 15 stanzas and the *slæmr* having 16. While the numbers of stanzas in *stefjamál* 1 and 2 are not the same, there being twelve stanzas in the first and nine in the

<sup>12</sup> The depiction of Mary governing all that is good in heaven next to her Son implicitly refers to her status as a mediator between mankind and God.

second, there is numerical symmetry within the block of verse that constitutes the two *stefjamál*.<sup>13</sup> Together the two *stefjamál* make up 21 stanzas which can be divided into seven groups consisting of three stanzas each: three stanzas containing the first refrain (st. 16, 20 and 24), three stanzas containing the second refrain (st. 28, 32 and 36), and five groups each with three non-refrain stanzas (st. 17–19, 21–23, 25–27, 29–31 and 33–35; see table below). The balance of these divisions in the poem resembles that in the Rosary. Just as the Rosary has groupings of prayers into specific numerical lots (namely five lots of ten Hail Marys), so the *drápa* as a whole consists of groupings of stanzas into the almost evenly numbered *upphaf* and *slæmr*, and the consistent groupings of stanzas into lots of three in the two *stefjamál*.<sup>14</sup>

It thus appears that the structure of an Icelandic *drápa* is particularly suited to this type of Rosary-like meditation poem in which contemplation of a new topic is prompted periodically by the interruptions of the refrains. In contrast, Hans Schottmann views the structure of *Drápa af Mariúgrát* rather more negatively. He maintains that the structure of the *drápa* in this poem with its constant interruption of the Virgin's speech by the refrains and the use of kennings, which he claims reduces the narrative flow, is extremely unsuitable for portraying the emotion of the *Compassio* (1973, 507). Nonetheless, it is possible to read the poem's structure in a more positive way, especially if the theme of meditation is taken into account. As the table below shows, within the two *stefjamál* the text occurring between the refrains contains reference to one or more sorrows and/or joys. With the exception of 'Simeon's Prophecy', which is repeated at various points, a new sorrow is introduced between every two refrains except between st. 24 and 28 and each of these sorrows constitutes a fresh topic for meditation. At the

<sup>13</sup> Alternatively the two *stefjamál* can consist of nine stanzas each if the three stanzas which occur between the last refrain stanza of *stefjamál* 1 and the first refrain stanza of *stefjamál* 2 (i. e. st. 25–27) are separated into some kind of intermediary group on their own. Another possibility is to include stanzas 37–39 of the *slæmr* in *stefjamál* 2, making it 12 stanzas and, therefore, making it agree in length with *stefjamál* 1. This option is not adopted here, though, since stanza 37 clearly marks the beginning of the conclusion of the poem: *Veiti, hilmir vænnar stéttar, / viðrkvæmilig orð í slæminn, / . . . bjartrar sólar* (lines 1–2 and 3).

<sup>14</sup> Although any *drápa* with symmetry in its stanza arrangement can resemble the Rosary in structure, not every *drápa* has the additional thematic similarities which this poem displays.

same time the key joys of ‘The Resurrection’ and ‘The Assumption’ occur repeatedly in the two *stefjamál* as alternative topics for contemplation and as a constant build-up to the meditation on the five joys which follows in the *slæmr*. Apart from continuing and reinforcing veneration of our Lord and His mother, then, the refrains also function for the most part as introductions to meditation topics. By its very interruption of the narrative, each refrain acts rather like the Our Father and the Glory Be to the Father in the Rosary which signal the introduction of a joyful, sorrowful or glorious mystery.

Also worth noting is the occurrence of a marginal cross next to each refrain in AM 713 4to and what such markings may reveal about the uses, or intended uses, of this poem. One effect of markings like these is to allow easy access to specific sections of the text. In the case of *Drápa af Mariugrát*, the marginal crosses lend some support to the notion that the poem as it is preserved in this manuscript can be read as a meditative text, with most of the refrains and corresponding crosses acting as indicators for a change of topic. Given the references to audiences in the poem and its strong didactic theme (see, for example, st. 23, 31, 39, 42 and 50), it is likely that it was intended for the instruction perhaps of monks and/or clerics on devotional matters relating to the Virgin, in particular the recitation of the Hail Mary (see st. 42, 47 and 52) and meditation on the joys and sorrows. Such instruction may have been given by reading the poem in full or in part to a monastic community in the refectory, for example, and parts or all of it may have been used in the liturgy. In either of these scenarios marginal crosses would have been useful for locating certain themes and topics, as they would also have been if the poem was used for private devotional purposes.

As far as the similarities between the later Dominican Rosary and *Drápa af Mariugrát* are concerned, it is not known whether the former could have directly influenced the composition of the latter in Iceland at the end of the fourteenth or beginning of the fifteenth century. If it did not, the overall style of this poem, with its emphasis on both the joys and sorrows, meditation and prayer, especially the Hail Mary, and its structure, suggest that it not only bears a resemblance to the later Rosary, but also that it, generally speaking, anticipates this text. An interesting comparison is a Middle English text on the joys of the Virgin by the Yorkshire Cistercian Stephen of Salley (d. 1252) which is also very similar in style and content to the later Dominican Rosary (on this see further Graef 1985, I 264).

Without more detailed information of the development of the Rosary in Iceland, especially regarding the dates of the introduction of the various elements which make up the Dominican Rosary, definite conclusions cannot be drawn about the influence of one text on the other. At any rate *Drápa af Mariugrát* and the Rosary can be linked by their thematic and structural similarities. It is possible, though not certain, that some elements of the Rosary, such as the inclusion of the joys and sorrows which took place in Europe in the fourteenth century, could have influenced the composition of this Old Icelandic poetic *Planctus Mariae*.

DISTRIBUTION OF SORROWS AND JOYS IN *DRÁPA AF MARÍUGRÁT*  
 (The numbers in brackets refer to stanzas)

SORROWS	JOYS
<i>Upphof</i> (1–15)	
Simeon's Prophecy (6)	
The Flight into Egypt (7)	The Assumption (11)
The Carrying of the Cross (13)	
The Meeting with Christ on the Way to Golgotha (13)	
<i>Stefjamál</i> 1 (16–27)	
Refrain (16)	
Simeon's Prophecy (17)	The Resurrection (18)
Refrain (20)	
The Crowning with Thorns (21)	
Simeon's Prophecy (22)	
Refrain (24)	The Resurrection (27) The Assumption (27)
<i>Stefjamál</i> 2 (28–36)	
Refrain (28)	
The Saviour's Death/Crucifixion (31)	
Refrain (32)	
The Deposition (34)	
The Entombment (35)	The Resurrection (36)
Refrain (36)	
<i>Slæmr</i> (37–52)	
	The Resurrection (38)
	The Assumption (38)
	The Annunciation (43)
	The Nativity (44)
	The Resurrection (44)
	The Ascension (45)
	The Assumption (45–46)

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## A PROPHET WITHOUT HONOUR: THE BRIEF CAREER OF ERLENDUR ORMSSON

BY RUTH ELLISON

BISHOPS OF SKÁLHOLT in the seventeenth century could expect many and varied visitors with requests to make of them, from ambitious clergymen or representatives of the Danish powers to increasing numbers of beggars as the century advanced, but few guests or demands can have been odder than those Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson found confronting him in Holy Week 1656. The visitor was a middle-aged man of good family called Erlendur Ormsson, and he was demanding that the bishop authenticate his vocation as a prophet—not by any means a regular occurrence in an orthodox Lutheran setting.

Who was this eccentric person? According to Sighvatur Grímsson Borgfirðingur in his *Prestaæfir VIII* 619 (Reykjavík Lbs 2365 4to), he was the son of séra Ormur Narfason, priest from 1600 to 1620 in Ferjubakkaþing (the parish of Borg í Mýrum) and from 1620 to 1650, when he retired, at Breiðabólsstaður á Skógaströnd on Snæfellsnes. Both were regarded as desirable and prosperous livings, though séra Ormur's money ran out towards the end of his life (after establishing seven children), making it necessary for the bishop to contribute to his pension from central funds (Hannes Þorsteinsson, *Ævir lærðra manna* 48, 130<sup>r</sup>, Reykjavík Þjóðskjalasafn). Séra Ormur was the son and grandson of sheriffs, Narfi Ormsson and Ormur Jónsson, each in his turn *sýslumaður* of Kjósar- and Gullbringusýslur and resident in Reykjavík when it was only a single farm. Séra Ormur's mother was the daughter of a wealthy farmer from Eyjafjörður, and he married the daughter of a priest from Seltjarnarnes.

Erlendur Ormsson thus grew up in the west of Iceland in relative affluence and with the advantage of influential and educated family connections. What he did with these advantages before 1656 is not clear. His elder brother Jón became a priest in 1630 and was from 1644 to 1685 parish priest of Miðdalsþing in Dalasýsla. Erlendur, though clearly well versed in the Scriptures, did not follow his brother into the church; instead, like virtually every other man above servant status, he became a farmer, though not apparently a successful one.

Bishop Brynjólfur was indefatigable in visiting every parish in his huge see every few years, not only checking the church plate and accounts but, as the need arose, hearing cases which came under church law or holding impromptu local synods. In his *Visitaziubók* for the Southern Quarter and Snæfellsnes (Reykjavík Þjóðskjalasafn, Biskupasafn A II 9) there is a record of the bishop's visit to the peninsula in 1655. Séra Ormur was fit enough to attend the visitations both of his old parish at Breiðabólsstaður and of the neighbouring one of Narfeyri (where he was apparently living in retirement) and to set a sprawling but firm signature under the records (pp. 303 and 311). A couple of parishes further to the west, at Setberg, Bishop Brynjólfur had intended to have a general meeting with the parishioners, but the occasion turned into a hearing of the complicated matrimonial case of Vigdís Magnúsdóttir and Egill Egilsson, which eventually had to be referred to the next year's General Synod. (The case, because of misbinding, covers pp. 264–66 and 283, and is then followed by transcripts of relevant documents.) When the bishop tried to resume the intended general meeting (p. 293) there were only seven parishioners still present, who for their virtue are, most unusually, named in the record. They include 'Ellend' Ormsson frá Hómrum' (i. e. Hamrar í Grundarfirði), who was also one of three laymen to sign, with seven clergy, the record of the matrimonial hearing. His name there (p. 283) is spelt 'Erlendur'; it is assumed that the laymen will be *óskrifandi* (unable to write) and will 'handsala ad sijn nófn hier under skrifest' (authorise the writing of their names hereunder), but in fact all three sign 'm. e. h.' (*með eigin hendi*). Erlendur's signature is a laboriously printed 'ellendur ormson', strongly suggesting that he would have had great difficulty in writing anything other than his name, but there can be virtually no doubt that this is séra Ormur's son, since the name is a rare one and the time, area and status are all appropriate.

There is nothing here to explain why, some six months later, Erlendur should suddenly cast everything aside to become a wandering prophet, but there are some hints at least to be found. It is not certain when séra Ormur died; Sighvatur Grímsson's unspecified sources suggested 1651 (clearly too early, from the documents cited above) or 1656. At some time during the two years 1655–56 '.x. aura' were paid out 'wegna Sera Orms' (on behalf of séra Ormur), presumably for his pension, from the episcopal estates in the Heynes (Akranes) area (Reykjavík AM 270 fol., 86<sup>r</sup>), and in the 1659 'Reikningur biskupsens wid sera Þörd Jónsson i Hitardal umm skulldaskipte þeirra sem nu standa þau' (The bishop's

reckoning of his accounts with séra Þórður Jónsson of Hítardalur as they now stand; Reykjavík AM 272 fol., 108) this clause occurs: ‘Er svo räd fyrer giórt ad S. Asgeir Einarsson medtake ij eda iij kyr þar westra enn .x. aurar gialldest wegna S. Orms Narfasonar.’ (It is intended that séra Ásgeir Einarsson [séra Ormur’s successor] should receive two or three cows there in the west, but ten *aurar* be paid on behalf of séra Ormur Narfason.) This could mean that séra Ormur was still alive as late as 1659, but it more probably represents the final clearing up of an unsettled debt, namely the 1656 pension contribution, which must have been advanced by séra Þórður, or possibly séra Ásgeir.

One reason for supposing that séra Ormur had died in 1656 is that one of his younger sons, Narfi, who had contracted leprosy (endemic in Iceland at this time; séra Hallgrímur Pétursson is the most famous sufferer), was the subject of a court order on 17th May 1656, at Drangar á Skógarströnd, assigning him to the care of his maternal uncle, séra Stefán Hallkelsson of Seltjarnarnes (Reykjavík Þjóðskjalasafn, Skjalasöfn Sýslumanna Snæf. IV 1.a, previously Thott 2109 4to, 41<sup>v</sup>–42<sup>r</sup>). His father, subsisting on a slim pension, had been unable personally to care for him already in 1655, when a previous court meeting at the same place on 15th June agreed that Narfi had no kin locally ‘sem fie edur forlax Eyrer ætte’ (who had money or maintenance; 36<sup>v</sup>), but deferred any decision about who should pay for his support. An attempt was to be made to have Narfi admitted to the local leper hospital, but no suggestion was made then that he should be sent out of the area. When in the following May they again discussed ‘pann wanfæra weika og spillta mann Narffa ormsson’ (that poor, sick and leprous man Narfi Ormsson), they found ‘fyrer full sanindj ad einginn hier Nalægt er J Nejrni Wænd sagdann omaga ad annast’ (with full certainty that there is nobody in this neighbourhood with any hope of caring for the said pauper; 42<sup>r</sup>), and that his nearest solvent relative was now his uncle on Seltjarnarnes—not, curiously, his brother, séra Jón Ormsson in Dalasýsla. This is not proof of séra Ormur’s death but, even though the authorities could be brutal in getting paupers off their hands, they might be expected to show some respect for the sensibilities of their parish priest for the past thirty years if he were still living.

If Sighvatur Grímsson is correct in saying that Erlendur Ormsson was twice married, though without recorded offspring, he may well have been a widower in 1656. This, together with the death of his father, would explain to some extent his readiness to break away from the

normal constraints of *vistarböndin* (residence requirements), and if both bereavements were recent they, together with the deplorable state of his brother Narfi, could have turned his mind to the wrath of God. (It is probably unjustifiable to suggest that a desire to escape responsibility for his brother had anything to do with his leaving Snæfellsnes, since the court in 1655 had clearly recognised that Erlendur could not afford to support Narfi.)

Just to announce oneself to be a prophet, however, was neither simple nor, in the seventeenth century, safe, especially if one's prophecies took the form of actual predictions rather than inspired denunciations of the sins of the people. Anyone claiming to foretell the future was liable to fall foul of anti-witchcraft legislation, from *Jónsbók* (*Mannhelgi* 2) onwards, which saw *spáfarir* or *sortilegium* as a branch of black magic. In fact, although later writers (mainly genealogists) who refer to Erlendur regularly call him *spámaður*, it is never made clear in contemporary sources exactly what powers he was claiming, since his own approach to the bishop was made orally, and Bishop Brynjólfur writes only of his 'gift from the Holy Spirit'. Erlendur's evident need to dissociate himself from any hint of witchcraft could mean that prediction was part of his 'gift' but, as will be seen below, his chief patron, séra Jón Magnússon, was impressed mainly by his denunciatory eloquence and by his unexplained knowledge of séra Jón's own past. It is probable therefore that the specific gift Erlendur was claiming is what is called in 1 Corinthians 12: 8 'the word of knowledge', there regarded as distinct from prophecy, although some theologians identify it with the power by which Jesus knew of the Samaritan woman's five husbands, and there the woman responded by acknowledging him as a prophet (John 4: 17–19). The other biblical example usually cited is Peter's denunciation of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5: 1–11), which appears to depend on supernatural knowledge of their secret dealings (Davies 1996, 53–54). This gift has become fashionable in some modern charismatic circles and there have been cases in both Britain and America of claimants to the gift first persuading vulnerable people that, despite having no memory of it, they have been the victims of sexual or Satanic abuse, and then denouncing the 'perpetrators', often in circumstantial detail. In similar fashion Erlendur evidently saw the identification and denunciation of witchcraft as a major part of his mission.

There was a remarkably large number of people in seventeenth-century Iceland claiming second sight which, whatever may have been the case in the saga period, was now normally a matter of clairvoyance

rather than foreseeing and might therefore be thought comparable to Erlendur's 'word of knowledge'. It was a regularly accepted phenomenon and possession of it seems never to have been associated with witchcraft in any accusations, though witnesses frequently based their 'evidence' on second sight and courts sometimes, but not always, accepted this. Erlendur clearly regarded his prophetic ability as a divine gift quite separate from and superior to such a commonplace gift of nature; hence his determination to have it ratified by the bishop.

Bishop Brynjólfur was a rational and scholarly man, not given to extremes and unlikely, on the face of it, to encourage the exercise of the more spectacular charismatic gifts by the laity. His attitude to witchcraft was neutral, in that he never publicly questioned its seriousness or pleaded for mitigation of sentences, but he never initiated any prosecutions, and when two of his students at Skálholt were found in possession of a book of eighty spells in 1664, the bishop treated the matter as one of internal discipline and expelled the offenders rather than handing them over to the law (Reykjavík AM 275 fol., 311–23). He was therefore not going to be eager to endorse a witch-hunting self-proclaimed prophet, but he was also a tactful man, who rarely blundered in his dealings with individuals. He took Erlendur's request seriously, and settled down to a thorough examination of his theological position which must have taken some time. At the end of it he issued Erlendur with an open letter (Reykjavík AM 269 fol., 465–66, printed Brynjólfur Sveinsson 1942, 64–65), which is worth quoting in full.

#### Vitnisburdur Erlende Ormssyne vtgefenn af biskupenum

Ollum fromum monnum sem þessi ord sia edur heyra oskar vnderskrifadur nadar aff Gudi fodur fyrer Jesu Christi forþienstu j samverkan heilagz anda. Hier med auijsande, ad þessi frómur mann Erlendur Ormsson hefur fyrer mig komid og mig personulega vmbedit sig ad forheyra um syna tru og vidurkenning, sem hann j liosi latid hefur sínz christenndomz og þeirrar gafu sem hann af Gudz orda skilningi og heilagz anda gift medkennest, huad eg og j nockurn mata giort hefi, ad eg hefi hann forheirt, og hefi eg ei annarz kunnad a hónum ad merkia enn þess sem godu og gudhræddu Gudz barni hæfer af sier ad heyra láta, bædi uppa vidurkinningu Gudz almattugz, hannz veru og villa, almættiz og miskunar, Christi personu, embættiz og forþiennustu, sem og heilagz anda rykiz, ráda og stiornar j christiligi kyrkiu, manneskiunnar veikleika og ouerdugleika af naturunni, enn heilagz anda krafft j synum breyskum verkfærum af nadinni, effter þui sem hann uill sierhuorium synum gafumm utbijta. Sómuleidiz hefi eg hannz medkennung heyrt um skapadra anda edur eingla hug og hætti, bædi godra og vondra, sierhuorra j sinn mata, huar umm hann hefur ei annarz af sier heyra latid

enn opinnberad er j Gudz ordi, og þar a ofann af sagt ad hafa neinar meinigar þar umm af heidinna manna edur annara spekinga frædum eda frædabokum utdregnar, utann alleinasta eftir Gudz ordi og heilagri ritningu einfalldliga, sem christilig kyrkia hier kenner og helldur. Þar med hefur hann afsagt ei alleinasta brukun og tijdkun alla a runum, ristingum, særungum og odru kukli, helldur og allt nám, skin og vit sig nockurn tijma þar a hafft hafa, og frammeigiz fastmælum bundid þad alldrei vilia uita. Þui hefi eg ecki annarz af hönum merkia kunnad enn christenz manz ord og athæfi, þad framast eg hefi kunnad ad ad komast og askinia ad verda. Þui kann eg hann ad so stoddu ecki ad mizgruna umm neina oleifilega hluti ne kunnattu. Bidiandi ad heilagur andi drottenz stiorni oss ollumm, synu heilaga nafni til dyrdar enn oss til nytsemdar og sinni christilegri kyrkiu til eflingar, enn diofulsinz valldi og velum til eidingar fyrer vorn drottenn Jesum Christum. Amen.

Skalholtti 1656 5 Aprilis.

Testimonial issued by the bishop for Erlendur Ormsson

On all pious people who read or hear these words, the undersigned prays the grace of God the Father, for the merits of Jesus Christ in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit; making known herewith that this pious man, Erlendur Ormsson, has come before me and personally requested me to examine him as to his belief and the confession he has made of his Christian faith and concerning the spiritual gift which he through his understanding of God's word and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit recognises; which in some measure I have also done, in that I have examined him, and I have not been able to perceive in him anything that it does not befit a good and godfearing child of God to utter, both in his acknowledgement of Almighty God, His being and will, omnipotence and mercy; the person, role and merits of Christ; and also the power, rule and governance of the Holy Spirit in the Christian Church; the weakness and unworthiness of mankind by nature, and the power of the Holy Spirit, through grace, in His fallible agents, according as He wills to distribute His gifts to each. I have likewise heard his deposition concerning the character and customs of created spirits or angels, both good and evil, each in his own degree, of which he has said nothing contrary to what is revealed in God's word, and in addition he has disclaimed any opinions on the matter derived from the teachings or books of heathen men or other sages, believing solely and simply according to God's word and Holy Scripture, as the Christian Church here teaches and believes. Moreover he has not only disclaimed all use and practice of runes, carvings, curses and other magic, but has denied that he ever at any time had any learning, understanding or knowledge of these things, and he has given his solemn word that he never wishes to know anything of them in future. I have therefore been unable to perceive anything in him other than the words and behaviour of a Christian, so far as I have been able to investigate and observe. Therefore I cannot suspect him, as things stand, of

any forbidden practices or knowledge. Praying that the Holy Spirit of the Lord may guide us all, to the glory of His holy name and to our benefit and the strengthening of His Christian Church, but to the destruction of the power and devices of the devil, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, Amen.

Skálholt, 5th April 1656.

The general outline of the bishop's enquiry appears to have followed that of Martin Luther's *Lesser Catechism*, although he is unlikely to have been satisfied with a straightforward recitation. There was at this time no formal Confirmation in the Lutheran church in Iceland, and it was only in 1635 (when Erlendur was already adult) that it became a legal requirement for parish priests to teach children *i Lutheri Catechismo* before admitting them to communion, so a man of Erlendur's age would not necessarily have learned this *barnalaerdómur*, although in his case his father probably had seen properly to his religious education even if he had not, apparently, taught him to write.

The nature of angels and devils, which evidently so preoccupied both Erlendur and the bishop, is not something on which the Catechism has much to say, but it was being hotly discussed in Iceland at the time in the context of witchcraft. 'The teachings or books of heathen men' could refer to classical philosophers, but is far more likely to be a reference to the widely canvassed opinions of Jón Guðmundsson *lærði* ('the learned'; 1574–1658). This unschooled layman, despite several accusations and two sentences of exile for studying and teaching witchcraft (though not for any *maleficium*), continued to maintain that it was as proper a study as that of zoology—his remarkably accurately illustrated *Registur nockra Hvalfiska i Islands og Grænlands Hafi* survives in one autograph fragment and several manuscript copies. Jón's poem *Fjandafæla* was composed in 1611 as part of his supposedly successful undertaking to overcome the Snjáfjöll ghost, a poltergeist which had been causing havoc on Snæfjallaströnd in the Westfirths, and it had a considerable circulation both orally and in manuscript even before séra Guðmundur Einarsson wrote his *Lítill hugrás yfir svik og vélraeði djöfulsins* in 1627 to try to counter Jón's influence. In this poem Jón explains his version of the Fall of the Angels, in which one third fell into hell but the rest only as far as the earth and its surroundings, in which they swarm as thick as motes in a sunbeam. Three heavens between the moon and the earth are also full of *loptandar*, which are devils, as are trolls and *draugar*, which are devils inhabiting dead bodies whose souls are in hell (Ólafur Davíðsson 1940–43, 119). Jón also believed firmly in

elves, as children of Adam by Lilith (another of his works was an essay called ‘Aðlheimar eður Undirheimar’, copied in Reykjavík Lbs 1430a 4to), but other contemporaries thought that the elves also were fallen angels. White witchcraft was claimed to be the means of taming and controlling this mass of petty devils, through wisdom inherited from, among others, Solomon, Charlemagne and St Olaf. In the face of such current heresy, it is not surprising that Bishop Brynjólfur investigated Erlendur’s beliefs in ‘created spirits’ so carefully. The bishop was familiar with Jón *lærði* and his theories: Jón had dedicated to him his 1644 *Tijdfordrijf edur Lijtid Annals kuer*, which included a section on runes (Jón’s autograph manuscript is Reykjavík AM 727 4to II), and Bishop Brynjólfur may have copied some of Jón’s less contentious essays. (Cf. Páll E. Ólason 1918–37, II 633–34, no. 5619.)

The phrasing of Erlendur’s rejection of witchcraft has legal overtones; ‘brukun og tijdkun’ in particular echoes ‘ad tidka og bruka’ in the *Recess* of Christian IV published 27th February 1643, as it appears in the Icelandic translation inserted in Brynjólfur’s letter-book in connection with the case of the two students (Reykjavík AM 275 fol., 316). The specific repudiation of ‘runes, carvings and curses’ is reminiscent of the wording of oaths taken by defendants in witchcraft trials, for although the expression varies with each individual case, virtually every witchcraft case in Iceland turned on the possession and alleged use of ‘runes’. These were hardly ever the classical *fupark*, but covered a number of other forms, from the composite ‘bandrunes’ such as *Fjölnir*, to what were often called *charakteres*, sigils such as Solomon’s Seal (in a wide variety of forms) or Charlemagne’s Knot. These could be drawn or painted (as in the students’ book of spells) but often relied for their effectiveness on being carved, on anything from wood to fish-bone to a living calf’s skin.<sup>1</sup> *Særingar*, often in verse like Jón Guðmundsson’s *Fjandafæla*, could be curses against the devil or formulas for summoning him. The legalistic phrasing of this part of Erlendur’s *Vitnisburður* caused Hannes Þorsteinsson to surmise that he had ‘meðal annars verið borinn vantrú eða heiðinglegri villu og kukli’

<sup>1</sup> The younger Jón Jónsson of Kirkjuból confessed to having ‘*klippt*’ Solomon’s Seal on a calf’s hide to cure it when it was being plagued by the devil (Ellison 1993, 235), and spell 7 in the oldest surviving *galdrabók*, Stockholm MS ATA 21284, offers two forms of *Ægishjálmur* which one has ‘að klippa eður rista’ (to clip or scratch) on the shoulders of cattle to protect against sickness (Matthías Viðar Sæmundsson 1992, 284).

(been accused among other things of atheism or pagan heresy and witchcraft; *Ævir lærðra manna* 48, 131<sup>r</sup>, Reykjavík Þjóðskjalasafn) and had been summoned to clear himself, but there is no basis for this in the document, and it takes no account of Erlendur's desire to have his spiritual gift recognised.

It will not have escaped the careful reader of the *Vitnisburður* that the one thing Bishop Brynjólfur does not do is endorse Erlendur's claim. Nor indeed does he give him any licence to rove about the country, but Erlendur was evidently satisfied that he now had the bishop's backing as well as the Spirit's leading and could ignore the law with impunity. He probably stayed in Skálholt over Easter or longer, long enough at least to become acquainted with Gísli Einarsson, the senior master of the school. Gísli was the best mathematician in Iceland but, thanks to his alcoholism, notably incompetent in money matters. Erlendur either lent him a small sum of money (10 *aurar* = 60 ells or half a *hundrað*) or was commissioned by him to run some errand; in either case the money had eventually to be paid to Erlendur by the *umboðsmaður* at Heynes, who managed the Skálholt estates in the west of Iceland, and it was charged, like other debts he had incurred, against Gísli's salary for the financial year 1657–58 (Reykjavík AM 271 fol., 181). An errand is perhaps more likely than a loan, given Erlendur's poverty; collecting the money in Heynes would be convenient whether he were going home to Snæfellsnes or following the scent of witchcraft to the Westfirths, as proved to be the case.

It was inevitable that Erlendur should be drawn to the Westfirths, where witch-hunting in Iceland had finally got going, after a slow and reluctant start compared with other Scandinavian countries, with the burning of three men in Trékyllisvík in Strandarsýsla in September 1654. It may have been widely known in early 1656 that the phenomena which led to those burnings had not ended, perhaps also that Margrét Þórðardóttir, probably the daughter of one of the executed men, had been charged with witchcraft and had fled—she was to be declared Wanted at the Alþingi that summer. Certainly Erlendur will have known that two minor cases of witchcraft had been reported to the 1655 Alþingi from the neighbouring county of Ísafjarðarsýsla. Now, while still at Skálholt or on his way west, he heard of a new scandal, the burning in Easter week 1656 in Skutulsfjörður, Ísafjarðarsýsla, of the two Jón Jónssons, father and son, from Kirkjuból for witchcraft against their parish priest, séra Jón Magnússon (Ellison 1993). The lure was irresistible.

It is not clear how long it was before Erlendur reached Skutulsfjörður, some sixteen or seventeen *þingmannaleiðir* (day's rides) from Skálholt (Jón Helgason 1966, 157). The first definite date for his presence at either Kirkjuból or Eyri, the *prestssetur*, is 29th August 1656, but by that time he and séra Jón were firm friends and allies, and he had clearly been in the district for some while. The two made a perfect partnership; Erlendur was ready to lend a sympathetic ear to all the pastor's tales of continuing satanic attacks and séra Jón, who had believed and assiduously recorded every vision and even mere tingling sensation of his second-sighted parishioners, only to have such 'evidence' passed over in court, felt vindicated by the arrival of a guaranteed divinely inspired prophet whose word must be accepted even by cynical judges. Séra Jón himself 'undraðist yfir hans vitsmunum og þeirra hluta, sem mjer sagði um mína hagi og annarra manna, sem mjer barnkunnugir voru, hverju eg kunni ekki að neita' (marvelled at the intellect apparent in the things he told me about my own situation and that of other people whom I had known from childhood, which I could not deny; Jón Magnússon 1912–14, 150).<sup>2</sup> Modern psychiatrists who have read séra Jón's *Píslarsaga*, the story of his 'martyrdom' by conspiring witches and incompetent officials, have concluded that he was a paranoid schizophrenic; it is clear from his narrative that, though rational enough in some other respects, he was incapable of seeing the flaws in any piece of evidence which seemed to serve his purpose, and therefore of perceiving that Bishop Brynjólfur had not in fact endorsed Erlendur as a prophet.

Erlendur roamed around the region—séra Jón says that he 'var þriggja eða fjögra nátta fresti á mínu heimili, þegar hann hjer ferðaðist til og frá, náttstaddir' (spent three or four nights at my home while he was travelling to and fro around here; p. 150)—and it is perhaps reasonable to surmise that he was not at Eyri in Skutulsfjörður when the bishop came on visitation, 19th August 1656 (*Visitaziubók Brynjólfss biskups um Vestfirðingafjórðung 1639–71*, Reykjavík Þjóðskjalasafn, Biskupasafn A II 6, 259–60). The bishop held a special meeting with the parishioners before his usual check on church property, to see how they were recovering from the trauma of the burning of two churchwardens:

<sup>2</sup> The most accessible edition of séra Jón's apologia is *Píslarsaga síra Jóns Magnússonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, 1967, but this omits a number of postscripts to the manuscript (Copenhagen Ny kgl. sml. 1842 4to), some of which make reference to Erlendur. I am therefore taking all quotations from the edition of Sigfús Blöndal, Copenhagen 1912–14.

Visiteradur Sófnuduren*n* ad Eyre J Skutulsfirdi, hann yferheyrdur og effter  
ä ämintur ä Christeligann lifnad Jdran og yferböt, Jtem ä bænahalld og  
eindrægne J andanum möte djófulsens freistingum og äräsum sem nu geisa  
hier og annarstad<sup>r</sup> ä þessum Seinstu Häskalegu timum, hvad Gud  
nädarsamlega J Jesu nafne Älijte. Töku þui nälæger Söknarmenn vel og  
Gudlega.

The congregation at Eyri in Skutulsfjörður was visited, questioned and afterwards exhorted to Christian living, repentance and atonement, as also to prayer and unity in the Spirit against the temptations and assaults of the devil, which are now raging here and elsewhere in these last dangerous times, the which may God graciously regard in Jesus' name. The parishioners present took this well and piously.

Nobody mentioned to the bishop that witchcraft attacks on the pastor were continuing or that a cow in Hnífsdalur had been '*tröll dreppin*' (killed by magic), let alone that suspicion was focusing on Þuríður Jónsdóttir of Kirkjuból, daughter of the elder and sister of the younger Jón Jónsson executed at Easter. To me this argues the absence of the encouraging voice of Erlendur Ormsson, since it was only ten days later that he set out with séra Jón to Kirkjuból to confront Þuríður with her sins.

Usually séra Jón's narrative, however insane, strikes the reader as completely sincere; one of the few moments of disingenuousness is when he claims (p. 71) to have gone to Kirkjuból purely to discuss business with Sturli Bjarnason, one of the other farmers there, and 'því fjell mjer af hendingu til viðstöddum að vera við samræður Erlends og Þuríðar' (it chanced accidentally that I was present at the talk between Erlendur and Þuríður). (He introduces Erlendur's name without explanation, as if his identity must be familiar to any reader.) In fact it is plain that they had concerted their tactics as they rode together from Eyri. There was to be no formal, legal accusation of witchcraft, but Erlendur was to turn his prophetic eloquence on Þuríður, hoping for a spontaneous confession or other damaging utterance, while séra Jón hovered, nominally out of earshot but ready to pounce. The plan was thwarted by Þuríður, an intelligent and courageous girl (this was one of séra Jón's main pieces of 'evidence' against her, pp. 97–98), who had bitter experience of how rash words could be twisted in a witch-hunt, and therefore maintained a stubborn silence. Most of the people on the farm had evidently come out to greet their pastor, who had not been there since he was first struck down by witchcraft the previous October. While séra Jón went to the upper farmhouse to talk to Sturli Bjarnason, Erlendur launched straight into his harangue of Þuríður 'fyrst við kirkjugarðinn þar í viðurvist sinnar móður og nokkra annarra' (first by

the church-yard there, in the presence of her mother and several others), who included her younger siblings, the servants and the man she was engaged to marry, Örnólfur Jónsson (p. 72). What exactly Erlendur said in the ‘iðranaáminning . . . sem hann veitti Þuríði’ (the exhortation to repentance which he delivered to Puríður; p. 98) is not known; what is certain is that the heat of his denunciation so scared Örnólfur that he abandoned his intention of marrying her (p. 149; *Alpingisbók* 1658 Nr. XXIX 7). Puríður turned her back on Erlendur and stalked off to the kitchen to get on with her work, but he and his audience pursued her there and, since they were now out of his hearing, séra Jón was hastily summoned to listen. He was deeply impressed at ‘hversu líklega Erlendur við Puríði talaði’ (how convincingly Erlendur spoke to Puríður; p. 72), and baffled by her lack of response.

Next Puríður took refuge in the church, followed this time only by Erlendur and séra Jón. There her silence finally defeated Erlendur and he left her, not before staring closely at both her cheeks to see whether she had shed a tear (p. 73). (Séra Jón does not appear to be familiar with the idea that witches could not weep, but regards her tearlessness as a sign of ‘demantiskur hugur’ (adamantine spirit) in a ‘forhert og brjóstlaus manneskja’ (hardened and heartless person; p. 98).) Erlendur left the church and went off to persecute Puríður’s mother Guðrún Bjarnadóttir, an easier target. When the personal possessions of the two Jóns had been confiscated after their burning, Puríður had begged the sheriffs to allow her as a keepsake her father’s fur-trimmed silk cap, which she had later been seen wearing. Taking courage from this, Guðrún had then begged to keep her son’s cap, ‘flugelshúfu, silkisnúrum marglagða’ (a velvet cap, much ornamented with silk thread), and this Erlendur now proceeded to bully out of her, finally carrying it off in triumph (p. 98).

While he was so occupied, séra Jón was taking his turn at haranguing Puríður, or as he puts it he ‘talaði við Puríði heilræðum’ (gave Puríður some good advice), but with no more response than Erlendur had achieved. In his frustration he saw a black aura around Puríður, spreading out to engulf him, and regretted not having brought any witnesses with him (p. 73). When she suddenly knelt in silent and still tearless prayer, séra Jón was reminded of her brother similarly kneeling after his condemnation, and became convinced that she was muttering a spell against him (p. 102). He decided on a quick retreat, pausing only outside the farm to say goodbye to the rest of the household, with a short lecture for the younger children on their urgent need to hold firm

in the fear of God. Þuríður meanwhile had gone alone back to the kitchen. While séra Jón was speaking, Erlendur Ormsson flinched and cowered dramatically ('við brá og skaut sér undan í hnipri', p. 74), but the pastor was too keen to get away to investigate the reason. He more than two years later collected the testimonies of two of his regular second-sighted witnesses to the effect that they had seen strange flashing lights over the farm kitchen at that moment (p. 81), and assumed that Erlendur had seen something similar, but if so he had forgotten it when the time came to record his testimony.

This is not the place at which to pursue Þuríður's story in detail; she was too wise to wait for séra Jón to accuse her formally, and within three days she had left the district, though publicly and in good order, to seek the protection of the local *þrófastur* (rural dean), séra Jón Jónsson of Holt í Önundarfirði, and his redoubtable wife Halldóra Jónsdóttir. Séra Jón Magnússon took legal steps against Þuríður, and Erlendur undoubtedly remained in the district to be star witness against her when the court met at Eyri in late January 1657. That session was however cancelled on the grounds that the pass from Önundarfjörður was blocked by snow, so Erlendur would next have expected to testify at the regular court meeting on 7th April 1657, but this session too was cancelled. (Séra Jón had not realised that he needed to take out a new summons against Þuríður, and without it the sheriff would make no move in the case.) Of Erlendur's activities for the rest of that year we have only the curt comment of the immediately contemporary *Viðauki Vatnsfjarðarannáls* by séra Sigurður Jónsson of Ögur við Ísafjarðardjúp: 'Fór hér um Erlendur Ormsson með mikilli mælsku' (Erlendur Ormsson went around here with great loquacity; *Annálar 1400–1800* III, 84).

Erlendur had evidently outstayed his welcome in the Westfirths, other than with séra Jón Magnússon, and found the Spirit leading him further afield. Before he left in 1657 or 1658 he recorded and signed his testimony against Þuríður at Tunga í Skutulsfirði, in case it should ever be needed. Where he then went is unknown, though he may have visited Heynes for his ten *aurar* debt, if it had not been paid earlier. It is certain however that he was not still in the Westfirths when the case against Þuríður was eventually brought to the Alþingi in 1658.

Because the lay authorities had proved unwilling to move against her, séra Jón brought his case to the General Synod of the Skálholt see, which met at Þingvellir at the same time as the Alþingi. He and Þuríður were both there in person, but he brought only sworn testimonies, not Erlendur or any other witness. The Synod spent some time considering

the case, so it comes as something of a surprise that there is no mention of it in the records, though an examination of *Prestastefnubók Brynjólfss biskups Sveinssonar* (Reykjavík Þjóðskjalasafn, Biskupasafn A III 1) will explain this. In earlier years it is plain that minutes were taken during the Synod but written up later, being signed only by the bishop and one or two other witnesses, but by 1658 a much more efficient secretary was at work. He took very full minutes, often quoting oral evidence *verbatim*, and then wrote them up, incorporating written evidence, before the end of the Synod so as to get them signed by all the members of the panel chosen to hear the causes. In the case of séra Jón v. Þuríður the decision was made to pass the papers directly to the lay Alþingi, and they were evidently not returned to the secretary of the Synod. The *Alþingisbók* record is therefore unusually full, but gives only the detailed recommendations of the Synod as to what allegations should be further investigated, not the actual evidence laid before it. Séra Jón had intended to include a transcript of Erlendur's evidence in the papers he prepared for the next stage of the case, but found he had lost the relevant paper (p. 149).

It is possible to some extent to sort out what must have been in Erlendur's testimony by comparing the recorded allegations with those made by séra Jón at different places in his work. Séra Jón's mysterious illness will naturally have been the major part of his own evidence (this was not questioned, only the timing of the fits in relation to Þuríður's presence), and he was almost certainly responsible for the allegation that a school of witchcraft had been run at Kirkjuból with Þuríður as a pupil alongside her brother. The matter of the bewitched cow at Hnífsdalur could have been raised by either séra Jón or Erlendur; it is only certain that the accusation did not come from the cow's owner, who resisted all pressure to blame Þuríður although it was not disputed that she had stroked the beast some two months before it died.

Although he undoubtedly asserted that Þuríður was a witch, the main testimony from Erlendur was evidently not directly to acts of *maleficium*, but to unnatural and unchristian behaviour. Séra Jón had complained of the unnatural courage of a girl who did not break down when her father and brother were burned, and made much of her not only wanting her father's cap but wearing it herself 'á laugardaginn næstan eftir brunu þeirra feðga, eftir því sem mjer hefir hermt verið' (on the next Saturday after the burning of father and son, as I have been informed; p. 98). In Erlendur's testimony (*Alþingisbók* 1658 Nr. XXIX 4) this was evidently transformed into the accusation that, on the very day of the burning,

Þuríður sýnt hafi á sjer sjerdeilis gleðimót með leikaraskap og glens, dinglað fótum við stokka, leikið að skopparakringlu, með skemmtun og skrítilyrðum, sett upp flögelshúfu, þá hún vitað hafi föður sinn og bróður á einu báli brennda.

Þuríður had displayed a special gaiety with foolery and fun, had drummed her heels against planks, had played with a spinning-top with pleasure and joking words, and had put on a velvet cap, when she knew her father and brother had been burned on one fire.

On 5th April 1656 Erlendur Ormsson was in Skálholt getting his testimonial from the bishop. On the day of the burning, 10th April 1656, he cannot therefore have been anywhere near the Westfirths, so his ‘testimony’ must have been given as a prophet with a divinely inspired ‘word of knowledge’.

Séra Jón had also presented sworn evidence from Þuríður’s ex-fiancé Örnólfur Jónsson, apparently thinking that his rejection of her would be an impressive testimony against her. Naturally, however, Örnólfur deposed that he had never had cause to suspect Þuríður when he got engaged to her (probably, from the lack of mention of him earlier, after her father’s death), and he also said that it was the vehemence of Erlendur’s attack on her which had frightened him off. To the Synod, this weakened the case against Þuríður considerably; they still thought it needed careful investigation, but part of the enquiry should be into not only the substance of Erlendur’s accusations but his motive for attacking her so violently. Their ninth point was ‘að Erlendur Ormsson gjöri skil á þeim áburði, sem hann bar Þuríði fráverandi og hann hefur handskriftað í Tungu, hann annað hvort reki af sér eða straffist fyrir svoddan ofuryrði’ (that Erlendur Ormsson should render an account for the accusation which he brought against Þuríður in her absence and which he signed at Tunga; he should either clear himself or be punished for such exaggerated speech). One may suppose that in this context his fault was not just ‘exaggerated speech’ but the *hubris* or even blasphemy of laying claim to divine inspiration.

Together with the recommendations of the Synod, séra Jón and Þuríður came before the *lögréttu*, and she claimed the right to clear herself, as the law still was, by *tylftareiður* (an oath supported, in the seventeenth century, usually by twelve oath-witnesses rather than the earlier eleven; see Ellison 1993, 221). Séra Jón claims that there was uproar in court at the suggestion that she could swear herself innocent not only of bewitching him but of ever having practised witchcraft (p. 135), but in fact it is plain that Þuríður made a good impression on

both Synod and Alþingi. One unnamed member of one or other court nearly gave séra Jón apoplexy by commenting that she was far too pretty and intelligent to be a witch (p. 63). The Alþingi agreed to her request and prescribed the form of the oath she was to take, in séra Jón's presence, after the recommended investigations had been completed. 'En Erlend Ormsson dæmum vér skyldugan að gjöra skil á sínum orðum og áburði, áður en eiðurinn sé tekinn' (But we find Erlendur Ormsson bound to render an account for his words and accusation, before the oath is taken). If he could prove his allegations, Þuríður would be punished according to law, i. e. burned alive, but if not, and if she could find twelve women to support her oath, the whole case against her would collapse, regardless of anyone else's evidence. That Erlendur at this time had wandered further afield is shown by the final clause of the court's decision: 'En domur þessi sé auglýstur fyrir Erlendi svo tímanlega, að hann kunni auðveldlega vestur að komast til forsvars og bevísinga sinna orða, ef hann getur' (But this judgement is to be made known to Erlendur in such good time that he can easily come west to defend and prove his words, if he can do so; *Alþingisbók* 1658 Nr. XXX).

The official record of that next court hearing, back in the Westfirths at Mosvellir í Önundarfirði, is missing; séra Jón, who transcribed the records of the cases he won, did not care to record the one he lost, and we have only the list of points he intended to make (or perhaps wished he had made) to the court (pp. 151–52). He was shocked and baffled that Erlendur's evidence could have been called in question, since he still believed him a true prophet, inflamed with zeal against evil-doers and especially witches (p. 150). The court, however, thought otherwise. It must have been easy to find witnesses to disprove Erlendur's absurd claims about Þuríður's behaviour on the day of the burning, since she had been observed by such people as Sheriff Magnús Magnússon and Deputy Sheriff Gísli Jónsson, and with their evidence his entire claim to divine inspiration was torn to shreds. With the influential support of Halldóra Jónsdóttir, Þuríður had no difficulty in finding suitable oath-witnesses and was triumphantly cleared.

So what happened to Erlendur Ormsson? The Alþingi had not formally endorsed the Synod's recommendation that he should be punished if he were found to have borne false witness, but this would be expected. True, in some witchcraft cases the court ruled that witness had been given in good faith and should not be penalised, but in others specific and often heavy penalties were laid down. Some accusers,

persuaded they had been wrong, volunteered compensation, which could be very high. Erlendur, who made no such move, had laid himself open to prosecution under at least two laws. *Réttarbaetr Hákonar konungs* clause 8 on slander (*Jónsbók* 1908, 294–95) laid down that calling anyone ‘drottinsvikara, fordæðu, morðingja, þjóf . . . eða önnur jafnskemmileg orð’ (traitor, sorcerer, murderer, thief . . . or other equally damaging names) should incur a fine of four marks to the crown, and *fordæða* is usually translated, and would certainly include the meaning, ‘witch’. *Mannhelgi* 25 (*Jónsbók* 1908, 65) is more severe:

Svá er mælt um rógsmenn alla, at sá maðr er hann verðr kunnr ok sannr at því, at hann rœgir mann við konung eða biskup, jarl eða sýslumann, svari slíku fyrir sem sá ætti er rœgðr er, ef hann væri þess sannr.

Thus it is decreed of all slanderers, that any man of whom it is known and proved that he slanders anyone to the king or bishop, earl or sheriff, shall face the same penalty as the slander-victim would if he were guilty.

Nobody in fact would have suggested that Erlendur should have been burned alive, but a flogging would have seemed entirely appropriate, since that was usually the penalty for minor witchcraft offences (such as owning runes or *charakteres* but not using them). Compensation would also be appropriate, but Þuriður, who eventually sued séra Jón for compensation for slander and persecution, did not bother with Erlendur, perhaps because he was too poor, perhaps because she despised him as a mere tool. If he were too poor, he might also have to compound for the four mark fine at the standard *Stóri dómur* rate of two lashes to the mark (*Lovsamling for Island* I 1853, 87). Moreover, he could then also have been fined another four marks or eight lashes for unlawful *lausamennska* or breach of the residence laws, since a ruling of the Alþingi in 1638 (*Alþingisbók* 1638 Nr. XIV) had laid down that no one was entitled to roam around as Erlendur was doing unless he had ten full *hundruð* in disposable assets and no dependants.

It is uncertain in fact whether Erlendur paid any formal penalty. He had clearly not done so when séra Jón, still utterly convinced that Þuriður was a witch, wrote his *Píslarsaga* to prove it during the years 1658–59, but at the time the postscript called ‘Project eða Inntak’ (pp. 151–54) was written, the threat was still hanging over him. By then even séra Jón was beginning to have doubts of Erlendur, though sure that he must have acted from motives of compassion and conviction if he had invented his evidence, so that it would be unfair to punish him severely (p. 154). Perhaps Erlendur’s priestly connections or even the bishop’s testimonial had some effect in protecting him from the

severity of the law. Perhaps it was clear to the court that he had genuinely believed himself to be inspired and was shattered to recognise his delusion. It is equally possible that, knowing his evidence to be false, Erlendur had avoided the court altogether and could not be found for punishment. All one can say for certain is that he disappeared from the west of Iceland, and ‘Prophet’ Erlendur Ormsson was heard of no more.

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## ON GIZURR ÞORVALDSSON'S SPEAKING STYLE

By MARVIN TAYLOR

ONE STILL encounters the claim that the speech of saga characters is not differentiated stylistically.<sup>1</sup> Bouman, though, has observed that the length of sentences can vary in proportion to their 'weight' and the importance of the characters who speak them; this relationship holds in the *konungasögur*, where the king is allotted the longest sentences, and in certain *Íslendingasögur* (Bouman 1958, 66–67).<sup>2</sup> Hallberg, too, has shown that the speech of Njáll and Skarpheðinn in *Njáls saga* is consistently nuanced in characteristic ways (1966, 141–50). In fact, upon closer examination, it is possible to find a number of characters whose speech is distinguished by stylistic features of some kind. Elsewhere I have attempted a stylistic analysis of Atli's speech in *Egils saga* ch. 65 and suggested that he represents the caricature of a courtly aristocrat (Taylor 1992, 118–22). Here I should like to focus on Gizurr Þorvaldsson as he appears in *Íslendinga saga*.<sup>3</sup> My starting point, however, is Sighvatr Sturluson.

Sighvatr's sarcastic advice to his ambitious son Sturla in *Íslendinga saga* ch. 125 represents one of the saga's stylistic extremes. It is 1237, and Sturla has just won the battle of Bær and forced two of his opponents into exile.

Pá mælti Sighvatr: 'Bú muntu nú ætla at efna, frændi, er mér er sagt, at þú hafir af höndum látit Reykjaholt. Sér þú nú ok ofsjónum yfir flestum bústöðum,—eða hvar skal staðfestu fá, þá er þér þykkir sæmiliq?'

'Þík læt ek nú allt at gera,' segir Sturla.

<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey denied that 'peculiarities in the use of speech of the different characters' exist (1934, 53, cited in Bürling 1983, 12 n. 5), and Bürling, while arguing that there are psychological differences, agrees with her that there are no linguistic ones (1983, 200–03). Lie held the same opinion (1937, 123–24).

<sup>2</sup> Comparable conclusions were reached for Old English poetry in Perelman 1980, 24–46, and Bjork 1985; cf. Meissner 1924. Hunt has observed (1985, 187–88) that the concentration of 'learned style' features in the *biskupasögur* seems to vary with the 'sanctity' of the subject.

<sup>3</sup> The present essay has been revised from a paper given at the Ninth International Saga Conference in Akureyri in August 1994, which in turn followed Taylor 1992, 108–18.

‘Ekki er um fleiri at láta en tvá,’ segir Sighvatr, ‘þegar frá eru teknir biskupsstólarnir. Er þar annarr Oddastaðr, en annarr Möðruvellir í Hörgárdal. Þar eru bústaðir beztir ok munu þér þykkja einskis til miklir.’

‘Pessir líka mér báðir vel,’ segir Sturla, ‘en eigi ætla ek þá lausa liggja fyrir.’

‘Margs þarf búit við, frændi,’ segir Sighvatr. ‘Ráðamann þyrftir þú ok ráðakonu. Pessir menn skyldi vel birgir ok kunna góða fjárhagi. Pessa menn sé ek gerla. Þat er Hálfdan, mágr þinn, á Keldum ok Steinvör, systir þín. Pessi starfi er þeim fallinn í bezta lagi.’

Þá svarar Sturla: ‘Pessa er víst vel til fengit.’

‘Þá þarfstu, frændi, smalamann at ráða í fyrra lagi,’ segir Sighvatr. ‘Hann skyldi vera líttill ok léttir á baki, kvensmr ok liggja löngum á kvíagarði. Þann mann sé ek gerla. Þat er Björn Sæmundarson. En fylgðarmenn skal ek fá þér, þá er gangi út ok inn eftir þér. Þat skulu vera bræðr þínir, Þórðr krókr ok Markús.’

Sturla kvað bræðrum sínum þat vel mundu fara.

‘Margs þarf búit við, frændi,’ segir Sighvatr. ‘Þá menn þyrftir þú ok, sem hefði veiðifarir ok væri banghagir nökkut, kynni at gera at skipum ok því öðru, er búit þarf. Pessa menn sé ek gerla. Þar eru þeir frændr þínir, Staðar-Böðvarr ok Þorleifr í Görðum.’

Sturla lét sér þá fátt um finnast ok lézt þó ætla, at þeir væri báðir vel hagir.

‘Svá er ok, frændi,’ segir Sighvatr,—‘þá menn þarfstu, er vel kunnu hrossa at geyma ok hafa ætlan á, hvat í hverja ferð skal hafa. Pessa menn sé ek gerla. Þat er Loftr biskupsson ok Böðvarr í Bæ.’

‘Engi ván er mér þess,’ segir Sturla, ‘at allir menn þjóni til míni, ok er slíkt þarflausatal.’

‘Nú er ok fátt mannskipanar eftir, þat er þykkir allmikla nauðsyn til bera,’ sagði Sighvatr, ‘en þá menn þarfstu, er hafi atdráttu ok fari í kaupstefnur ok til skipa, skilvíska ok skjóta í viðbragði ok kunni vel fyrir mönnum at sjá ok til ferða at skipa. Pessa menn sé ek gerla. Þat er Gizurr Þorvaldsson ok Kolbeinn ungi.’

Þá spratt Sturla upp ok gekk út.

En er hann kom inn, brá Sighvatr á gaman við Sturlu,—ok tóku þá annat tal.

The passage is remarkable both for its cleverly incremented humorous and ironic tension and its controlled, sustained, elevated style.<sup>4</sup> Among the most obvious stylistic devices are hypotaxis, including in some instances the separation of a relative clause from its antecedent

<sup>4</sup> Structurally, the episode is not far removed from the ancient comic tale of the fool counting his chickens before they are hatched (or the profits from the sale of a pot of meal, etc.) and imagining his wealth increasing exponentially, until in his excitement he drops the eggs (upsets the pot, etc.). This is Thompson’s motif J2061, which is represented in thirteenth-century Europe in the exempla of Jacobus de Vitriaco (Jacques de Vitry) and Joannes de Capua. The saga passage is a *fremtidsfantasi* of this kind (Christensen’s term for the motif (1939, 253)) in dialogue form. Cf. the psychological analysis in Müller (1939, 52–53).

(*Pá menn . . . sem hefði veiðifarir*, etc.), repetition (*Margs þarf búit við*, *Pessa menn sé ek gerla*), vocative and apposition (*fraendi*, *mágr þinn*, etc.), clause parallelism, and the tight logical progression of the whole. Although the amount of dialogue attributed to Sighvatr elsewhere is too small for conclusive statistical comparison, it is obvious that the language attributed to him here is not intended to represent his normal speaking style. It is a parody of a particular kind of style.

I am not aware of a source or precise analogue of Sighvatr's speech (*Konungs skuggsjá*, for example, contains no comparable section), but a number of its stylistic features are duplicated in a speech delivered by Gizurr Þorvaldsson in ch. 155.

Gizurr is unique as a character in *Íslendinga saga* in that he delivers three relatively long, structured speeches of the classical type, two in military contexts (chs 137, 155) and one at the wedding at Flugumýri (ch. 170); as oratory, only documents such as Archbishop Þórir's letter in *Íslendinga saga* ch. 26 are comparable. Gizurr's other speeches in *Íslendinga saga*, too, whether in oratio recta or oratio obliqua, display relative uniformity of situation and style. (An appendix to this paper lists the places where speech by Gizurr may be found.) A large proportion occur in situations in which he is commanding or even intimidating others: e.g. chs 129, 138, 152, 156–57, 166, 176, 178, 195, 199, 200; cf. also the Reykjarfjarðarbók variant to ch. 195 (*Sturlunga saga* 1946, II 279–80) and *Porgils saga skarða* ch. 1. Other types of verbal aggression represented include challenges, resolves, warnings, rebukes, refusals, accusations and criticism, a curse, and unspecified expressions of displeasure. There is virtually nothing in what might seem to be informal or colloquial style: few emphatic words and constructions and virtually no humour or colourful metaphor.<sup>5</sup> (Sturla Sighvatsson's speech, in contrast, is full of these features. Sighvatr cannot have been parodying his son's speaking style.) Indeed, both the typical discourse situations and the style and structure of Gizurr's speeches suggest comparison with the language of the rulers and courtiers in the *konungasögur*.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Very dry humour can perhaps be detected in Gizurr's speeches in *Íslendinga saga* chs 129 (*Pá mun ek norrænan eið vinna*), 156 (*Langt hafa slíkir til sótt*), 157 (*bað Gizurr þann aldri þrifast, er eigi væri hjá öðrum mönnum*), and 200 (*Þórðr mælti þá: 'Pess vil ek biðja þik, Gizurr jarl, at þú fyrirgefir mér . . .' Gizurr jarl svarar: 'Pat vil ek gera, þegar þú ert dauðr')*, and *Árna saga biskups* ch. 6 (*Pess vænte eg frænde ad flestum munur þu verda ecke fyrerlat samur . . . þar sem þu liest ecke fyrer mier*).

<sup>6</sup> Such a comparison is beyond the scope of this paper; I must be content with mentioning the possibility and referring to Lie 1937 and Knirk 1981. For the

Gizurr's oration before the battle of Ørlygsstaðir even contains a narrative exemplum (ch. 137):

Gizurr talaði þá fyrir liðinu ok eggjaði menn til framgöngu. 'Vil ek eigi,' sagði hann, 'at þér hafið mik á spjótsoddum fyrir yðr, sem Skagfirðingar höfðu Kolbein Tumason, frænda minn, þá er hann fell í Viðinesi, en runnu sjálfir þegar í fyrstu svá hræddir, at þeir vissu eigi, er þeir runnu yfir Jökulsá, ok þar er þeir þóttust skjöldu bera á baki sér, þar báru þeir söðla sína. Leitið yðr nú heldr vaskra manna dæma, þeira er vel fylgðu Sverri konungi eða öðrum höfðingjum, þá er æ uppi þeira frægð ok góðr röskleikr. Efizt ok ekki í því, at ek skal yðr eigi fjarri staddir, ef þér dugið vel, sem ek vænti góðs af öllum yðr. Er þat ok satt at segja, at sá maðr má aldregi röskr heita, er eigi rekr þessa óaldarflokka af sér.—Gæti vár allra guð,' sagði Gizurr.

Allir rómuðu þetta erindi vel.

True or not (the account of Kolbeinn's fall in ch. 21 is not as specific), this insulting story about the Skagfirðingar's panicked flight through the river Jökulsá belongs to an international anecdote type with numerous representatives in historiography, epic and fabliau. In its best-known form, a flax field is taken for a body of water which must be swum,<sup>7</sup> but there are also instances—as in Gizurr's speech—of panic or delusion in connection with a real river.<sup>8</sup>

purposes of the present investigation, I deliberately avoid the term 'courtly style.' While this concept has a firm place in medieval Scandinavian literary history (the necessary bibliography may be found in Astås 1993), it refers to a particular global stylistic profile of a text and does not necessarily characterise the speech of rulers and courtiers. To use it in the latter sense here would be misleading.

<sup>7</sup> 'Swimming in the flax field' is folktale type (AT) 1290 and motif type (Thompson) J1821 (cf. D2031, imaginary river). The locus classicus is Paulus Diaconus's report of the Erulians' flight from the Lombards, *Hist. Langob.* 1.20; as here, panic is caused by the fall of the leader. In a widespread variant, the water is a sorcerer's illusion: this is represented in Icelandic in *Mágus saga jarls* (22–23) and elsewhere (e. g. a Sèra Eiríkr tale collected by Maurer (1860, 162–63); one is reminded also of Pórr's encounter with Geirrøðr's daughter).

<sup>8</sup> An early example—though only remotely related—is 2 Kings 3: 22–23, in which the red light of dawn on the water is taken by the Moabites for the blood of their enemies; there is no swimming here, only the fatal rush of the Moabites into the hands of the Jewish army. Closer early medieval analogues of Gizurr's exemplum are Bede, *Hist. Eccl.* 1.20, in which the Saxons and Picts take the Britons' war cry for the noise of the sky falling, throw away their weapons, and drown in panicked flight through a river (similarly Livy 40.58, though without a river), and perhaps the ninth-century poet Ermoldus Nigellus's description of the Orléanais' mocking travellers who swim the Loire: *Aurelianenses illos*

It is not uncommon for saga characters and narrators to mock others' confusion or flight. Agneta Loth (1960) noticed a motif of this general type in parallel passages in *Hákonar saga Ívarssonar* 40, *Morkinskinna* 229–30, and *Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar* ch. 72 (in *Heimskringla*; a horse starts at the enemy's battle cry, its tether flies up and strikes the rider, who believes he has been shot and flees), with which one may compare the story in *Íslendinga saga* ch. 156 of the confusion wrought by the battle cry of Gizurr's forces (Órækja's men begin to attack each other). I have elsewhere collected instances of related motifs in *Íslendinga saga*: coordination problems (falling), confusion, physical symptoms of fear, irresoluteness (beating about the bush, cowering, wavering, etc.), hiding, and flight (Taylor 1992, 198, 200–01, 211–12), but I have no example of a speaker embedding such a report in a formal oration as Gizurr does. In the closest parallel I have found, Flosi's warning to his men that whoever delays will be *svá hræddr, at eigi mun vita, hvert hlaupa skal* (*Njáls saga* ch. 130), the motif is presented as hypothetical result, not as history to be learned from.<sup>9</sup>

Gizurr's oration in ch. 155, in which he and his men are at Skálholt, preparing for Órækja's attack, is typical, in respect of both style and discourse situation, of the speech attributed to him:

Allir skutu nú til sjálfs hans órskurðar, hvers hann væri fúsastr.

Gizurr svarar: 'Þrjú lílast mér ráð til. Þat er eitt at fara í nött ofan í Flóa í móti liði váru ok spara eigi, at þeir rekist eftir oss um hrið, er áðr eru farmóðir, ok vita, ef vér mættim ráða stund ok stað, hvar vér finnumst. Þat er annat ráð at fara ofan um is hjá Iðu,' —þar var mjó spöng yfir, en þítt var at tveim megin—, 'ok vaka ísinn ok vita, ef vér fáim varit spöngina. Priðja ráð er þat at bíða hér, sem nú höfum vér um búizt, ok senda einhvern góðan mann í móti liði váru, þann er bæði kunni at skunda ok skipa reiðinni sem helzt gegnir ráði.'

It is of particular interest, however, due to its various points of agreement with Sighvatr's speech in ch. 125: hypotaxis, including in some instances the separation of a relative clause from its antecedent (*þeir . . . er áðr eru farmóðir; einhvern góðan mann . . . þann er . . .*), alliterative word pairs (*stund ok stað, skunda ok skipa*), repetition (*ráð, vita*), the listing structure, and, from the point of view of content, the

*risere natantes; / turre vocant summa: 'Litus amate, viri'* ('In honorem Hludowici,' lines 133–34; cited by Curtius as an example of epic comedy (Exkurs IV.5; 1948, 430)). This motif-complex will be addressed in more detail in a separate essay.

<sup>9</sup> Þórhallur Vilmundarson observes that Gizurr's *eggjunarræða* may have been the model for those spoken against the Hólmerjar in *Harðar saga* (ÍF XIII, lx); the latter are more fragmentary, though, and contain no exemplum.

search for the ‘good man’ with the qualifications for a particular job. To be sure, parallels can be found in other saga texts as well. Hrafn and Már in *Porgils saga ok Hafliða* ch. 6, for example, discuss personal qualifications in similar phrases,<sup>10</sup> as do Eysteinn and Sigurðr Magnússynir in their famous dispute in *Magnússonar saga* ch. 21 (in *Heimskringla*).<sup>11</sup> In *Njáls saga* ch. 29, Gunnarr and his Norwegian benefactors conduct a structured question-and-answer discussion as to what help Gunnarr will receive, how the ships he is given will be staffed, and so on. Sighvatr’s phrase *sé ek gerla* is used by Egill in an argument with royal messengers in *Egils saga* ch. 70 and by Flosi in a long deliberative speech in *Njáls saga* ch. 117. (Indeed, *Njáls saga* contains a number of long, logically structured speeches of the same general type as those of Sighvatr and Gizurr: see chs 7, 22, 64, 65, 67. Additional examples of structured argument may be found in Taylor 1992, 306–07, and Örnólfur Thorsson 1994, 912–13.) Potential rivals are listed and evaluated in *Valla-Ljóts saga* ch. 2 (with *sé ek þar fjóra menn*) and *Gunnlaugs saga* ch. 2 (in less detail). The conversation between Sturla and Sighvatr in *Íslendinga saga* ch. 128 in connection with Sturla’s attempt to dispossess Kolr inn auðgi contains stylistic reminiscences of the passage in ch. 125, though here it is Sturla who takes the *sé ek* role:

‘Par er þat fé, er margr mun stórt illt af hljóta, því at illa er fengit.’  
 Þá svarar Sturla: ‘Sé ek þat fé, er ek ætla, at eigi muni betra af hljótast.’  
 ‘Hvert er þat?’ segir Sighvatr.  
 ‘Þat er fé Snorra, bróður þíns,’ segir Sturla.

The ‘regal’ family setting and, to a certain extent, the content of Sighvatr’s advice speeches are duplicated in *Óláfs saga helga* ch. 76 (in *Heimskringla*) in the well-known scene in which the king, visiting his mother, questions his small brothers, who are playing outdoors with toy models, about their ambitions for their future estates. As in the scene between Sighvatr and Sturla, the speeches follow a structured progression: the first brother’s desire is to possess a fleet, the second brother as much farmland as ten farms, the third so many cows that they would encircle a lake when they came to drink, and the fourth brother so many

<sup>10</sup> ‘Þat væri mér skapfældast at vera með þeim mönnum, er ódælir væri ok kynstórir, ok veita þeim eftirgöngu.’ Már mælti: ‘Slíkir menn væri mér vel hentir, sem þú ert.’

<sup>11</sup> The closest parallel stylistically is this statement of Sigurðr’s: *Þess þykkir mikill munr, at þat er höfðingligr, at sá, er yfirmaðr skal vera annarra manna, sé mikill í flokki, sterkr ok vápnfærr betr en aðrir menn ok auðsær ok auðkenndr, þá er flestir eru saman.*

household staff members that they would consume the third brother's cows at one meal. At this Óláfr pronounces the fourth brother a future king.<sup>12</sup> The differences between the *Óláfs saga* scene and Sighvatr's speech are obvious: in the former, the king-as-child motif is taken seriously and the ambition of founding a powerful estate is praised, while in the latter the motif is parodied and the ambition mocked.<sup>13</sup> Still, the similarity is clear and shows that *Íslendinga saga* ch. 125 must be considered in the context of medieval Scandinavian literary conventions and ideas concerning monarchy and power. A further link between the *Óláfs saga* scene and *Íslendinga saga* is suggested by the fact that the former is immediately preceded by a scene in which, on Óláfr's arrival, he and the boys regard each other critically and the verb *yggla* 'scowl' is used; in *Íslendinga saga* ch. 50, when Gizurr's father presents his various children to Sighvatr Sturluson for his critical appraisement, Sighvatr criticises only the boy Gizurr, whose *ygglibrún* displeases him. But none of these parallels is as close in both style and content to *Íslendinga saga* ch. 125 as Gizurr's deliberative speech in ch. 155 is, so it makes sense to look more closely at the relationship between the two passages within *Íslendinga saga* as a whole. Can the similarity be coincidental?

The goal of Sighvatr's mockery is to criticise his son Sturla for wanting to be in some respects too much like a king, and the vehicle of the mockery is a pseudocourtly style, delivered as if Sighvatr were advising a young monarch. As monarchy and courtly life were institutions that for Icelanders were associated primarily with Norway, the charge of acting like a king can in some cases have amounted to the charge of bearing Norwegian sympathies. By the thirteenth century, the rivalry between Icelanders and Norwegians had become considerable indeed.<sup>14</sup> In fact, many years ago, Ker observed that this rivalry is the

<sup>12</sup> A comparable test of three ostensible king's sons by means of fantasy questions—what bird, fish and tree they would like to be—is Gering's *æventyri* no. 79, summarised in Kalinke 1990, 168. The *Óláfs saga* scene and its variants are discussed with reference to Gizurr in Heinrichs 1995, 21–23 (with references), and from a folkloristic point of view in Almqvist 1994.

<sup>13</sup> In folklore, however, not only the motif of building castles in the air, as in the *Íslendinga saga* scene (see note 4), but also air-castle competitions, as in the *Óláfs saga* scene, are typically associated with fools. The latter is Thompson's motif J2060.1; specimens involving a hypothetical herd of livestock are retold by Thompson (under J2062.1) and Christensen (1939, 35).

<sup>14</sup> See *Ljósvetninga saga* ch. 19 and Björn Sigfússon's note there (with reference to *Vöðu-Brands þátr*, *Víga-Glúms saga* chs 2–3, etc.); further Andersson

basis for a stylistic caricature in the account of the priest Ingimundr Porgeirsson's shipwreck in *Prestssaga Guðmundar góða* ch. 6:

One may remark, by the way, that there is something more than history in it, a comic or satiric motive, springing from the old humorous difference between Icelanders and Norwegians. The Norwegians were sometimes rude to the Icelanders: they called them 'tallow-sausages,' with other similar names. Here the Icelandic author takes revenge in a genial way, by merely recording the rather helpless and flurried talk of the Norwegian shipmen. (Ker 1906–07, 100)

(The Icelander Ingimundr, by contrast, remains cool-headed and authoritative.)

In addition to the political threat increasingly posed to Iceland by the centralised Norwegian crown, there is ample evidence in the sagas of a cultural tension between the traditional lifestyle of the Icelanders and the new, continental trends followed at the Norwegian courts and in the Norwegian towns. We may note the implicit criticism directed by the writer at Snorri and his retinue's shields on their return from Norway in *Íslendinga saga* ch. 38: *höfðu meir en tólf skjalda ok alla mjök vandaða ok létu allvænt yfir sér*. In fact, a group of Snorri's countrymen mock and confront him on this occasion and soon afterwards demonstrate their hostility again in the form of parodies of the effusive encomium Snorri had composed on his Norwegian patron Skúli (chs 38–39). Snorri's enemies' objections to the poem, as to the shields, must have been to a large extent political,<sup>15</sup> but they also had aesthetic grounds: one of the parodies refers to Snorri as a poetaster of the worst sort, and the parodists focus on Snorri's line *harðmúlaðr vas Skúli*, which must have struck them as an overwrought and inadvertently comical metaphor. So it is possible that the report of Snorri's poem and its parodies is meant to suggest that his vanity had a stylistic dimension

1991, 77–79, and Kreutzer 1996. Meulengracht Sørensen has analysed the literary image of Norwegian-Icelandic relations in sociological terms (1987; 1993, especially 120–23), and William Sayers (1995) has addressed the sexual dimension of the conflict.

<sup>15</sup> This particular group of Sunnlendingar was interested in compensation for the death of their relative, Ormr Jónsson, who had been killed by Norwegians. They suspect that Snorri had been sent from Norway 'to prevent them from prosecuting their case,' and Bjørn Þorvaldsson even makes this accusation to his face. Meulengracht Sørensen, on the other hand, stresses the cultural aspect of the conflict: 'Bjørn og hans ledsagere gör nar af Snorri og hans følge, sikkert på grund af deres ridderlige fremtoning, der har forekommet udenlandsk og uislandske helte' (1993, 122; cf. 258: Óláfr pái and Kjartan are 'i grunden uislandske helte').

as well.<sup>16</sup> This negative view of Norwegian courtly culture seems to apply also to the flashy but poorly made axe that King Eiríkr blóðøx gives to Skalla-Grímr in *Egils saga* ch. 38; the writer describes in detail the scorn with which Grímr, a smith, treats the gift, and eventually it is simply thrown away into the sea.<sup>17</sup>

Political tension is evident also in the attitudes toward monarchy displayed in the *Íslendingasögur* and *Sturlunga*. Although courtly culture and the political idea of monarchy itself held a strong attraction for many Icelanders, as Ármann Jakobsson has emphasised (1994), the reception of these ideas was not unanimously enthusiastic. The cowardly, hypocritical king (or earl) is a recurring feature in *Egils saga*, *Jómsvíkinga saga* and other texts (see Ólafur Halldórsson 1969, 20, 52–54), and the accusation of ‘wanting to be king’ seems to have been almost a standard criticism or insult directed at Icelanders either by Norwegians or by their own countrymen.<sup>18</sup> In *Egils saga* ch. 12, Þórólfr Kveld-Úlfsson is slandered with the charge of plotting to usurp the Norwegian throne and of being so vain that he would have burnt the king, his guest, to death if that had not meant the loss of his own new, ornate hall—a false charge, as Þórólfr is absolutely loyal (to a fault, actually).<sup>19</sup> In *Íslendinga saga* ch. 35, the Oddaveri Páll Sæmundarson is mockingly accused in Bergen of wanting, on the basis of his royal ancestry, to exact oaths of allegiance and mount a claim to the Norwegian throne.<sup>20</sup> This is the kind of insult referred to in *Njáls saga* ch. 116,

<sup>16</sup> Snorri seems to boast of his own poetical achievement at the end of *Háttatal*, as Faulkes has noted (1991, xxiii).

<sup>17</sup> Nationalistic *ressentiment* of this type, though from a Danish perspective, has been identified by Andersson (1991, 76–77) in Saxo’s criticism of the twelfth-century King Svend’s love for Saxon fashion, food and customs (Saxo 14.9.1–4, pp. 387–88; cf. also the account of Svend’s visit to Merseburg: 14.8.2, pp. 386–87). One might also point to the passages in *Kirialax saga* 9, *Piðriks saga* ch. 262 and *Flóres saga* ch. 4 cited by Kalinke (1990, 43–44) as examples of at least ostensible ‘xenophobia.’

<sup>18</sup> One may debate, of course, whether such examples indicate rejection of monarchy as a principle or only dissatisfaction with its realisation. The distinction is immaterial for the present argument, however.

<sup>19</sup> The same slander story appears, *mutatis mutandis*, in *Njáls saga* ch. 109, where the motivation for the alleged disloyalty (among friends) is expressed by the slanderer in terms of a power struggle for *goðorð* (Kersbergen 1927, 74; cf. Bjarni Einarsson 1975, 123–55).

<sup>20</sup> According to Ólafur Halldórsson, *Jómsvíkinga saga* may have been conceived as a satire on the genealogical pretensions of the Oddaverjar (1969, 53;

in which Hildigunnr's first ploy in inciting her guest Flosi to vengeance is to flatter him by offering him a specially raised seat of honour. He casts it aside, saying, *Hvárki em ek konungr né jarl, ok þarf ekki at gera hásæti undir mér, ok þarf ekki at spotta mik.* In *Bandamanna saga* ch. 10, the word *konungr* functions as a mocking term of abuse: during a jury selection, one candidate is criticised as arrogant, since at the *þing* he had had a banner carried before him *sem fyrir konungum*, and another is confronted with the rumour that he had been characterised by King Haraldr harðráði as the Icelander most suited to be king, and both are dismissed with the remark, 'you shall not be king over this case.'<sup>21</sup>

The same political and cultural tensions are embodied in Gizurr Þorvaldsson, one of the most controversial figures in Icelandic history. Although the image of Gizurr in *Íslendinga saga*, our principal source of information, is by no means uniformly negative, it is dominated by his unscrupulous rise to virtually absolute power which, once attained, he turned over to Norway (while retaining the office of *jarl*), and for this reason many Icelanders have viewed Gizurr as more of a traitor than a hero. Nevertheless, he has had defenders,<sup>22</sup> and scholars have been divided as to how fairly he is treated in *Íslendinga saga* and the other parts of *Sturlunga*. Björn Magnússon Ólsen found in *Íslendinga saga* a mixture of negative and positive images of Gizurr, which he attributed to Sturla Þórðarson's original and to interpolations from a lost \**Gizurar saga*, respectively (1897, 310–59; cf. Sigurður Nordal 1942, 347; Úlfar Bragason 1986, 25); Pétur Sigurðsson responded by defending Sturla's impartiality with respect to Gizurr (1933–35, 14–20). Guðrún Ingólfssdóttir (1994) has argued that *Haukdæla þáttr*, in which Gizurr's parents Þóra Guðmundardóttir (yngri) and Þorvaldr

cited in Ármann Jakobsson 1994, 37 n. 30). One might compare the rebuke Snorri Sturluson receives in *Íslendinga saga* ch. 64 after boasting of the power he has gained through strategic marriage ties: in a *vísá*, one of his own men ironically compares him to the legendary Danish king Hrólfr kraki, who was killed in battle against his brother-in-law, and adds, *ójafnaðr gefsk jafnan illa*.

<sup>21</sup> The latter remark is applied to both candidates in Möðruvallabók (*skaltu eigi konungr yfir þessu málí vera . . . Yfir oðru skaltu konungr en þessu málí*); in the Konungsbók manuscript it appears only in connection with the second (*eigi skaltu konungr yfir þessu málí*). On Icelandic attitudes toward monarchy see also Hermann Pálsson 1990, 125–30, and Ármann Jakobsson 1994 and 1995; further Þórhallur Vilmundarson's discussion of Sturla Sighvatsson's apparently real desire to be king—or at least to have the trappings of one, such as fortified castles (*ÍF XIII*, lii–lvii).

<sup>22</sup> See the references and eloquent argument in Nedrelið 1994.

Gizurarson become engaged, may be regarded as a kind of prelude to *Íslendinga saga* that implicitly attributes conflicting elements of Gizurr's personality to his ancestry. Anne Heinrichs goes further, considering also the scene in *Íslendinga saga* ch. 22 in which Þorvaldr rejects the suggestion that he name his newborn son after Kolbeinn Tumason. Arguing that Póra yngri must have been named after her great-grandmother, a daughter of King Magnús berfœttr of Norway, and noting that Gizurr is later referred to as *frændi* of King Hákon, whose service he enters (*Íslendinga saga* ch. 121), Heinrichs interprets Þorvaldr's unwillingness to identify his son with Kolbeinn, whose name would have represented 'die isländische Sache,' and his choice of the name Gizurr instead, as an affirmation of 'das norwegische Prinzip' in the family (Heinrichs 1995, 9, 17).

The information we have from *Íslendinga saga* itself about Sturla Þórðarson's relationship with Gizurr indicates a certain ambivalence. Though not himself a major figure in the power struggles of the time, Sturla was usually a member of the faction opposing Gizurr, and in 1242 was tricked and taken hostage by him at a negotiation meeting (ch. 157). For some years, though, perhaps in part as a result of his association with Gizurr as hostage, Sturla seems to have been on excellent terms with him: he marries off his daughters into Gizurr's family, becomes his *lendr maðr*, and privately, as well, they are described as friendly with each other (ch. 195). But in 1261, just before the final loss of independence, Sturla breaks with Gizurr when he fails to make good his promise to grant Sturla Borgarfjörður as a fief (ch. 197). Sturla's judgment of Gizurr seems to have been coloured by this break from then on, and although it is not known when Sturla began to write *Íslendinga saga*, it is likely that even the portions covering earlier years were written or rewritten from the post-break point of view (cf. Ármann Jakobsson 1995, 175). It is clear that Sturla repudiates what he perceives to be Gizurr's opportunism and regards the loss of Icelandic independence as a tragedy, even though he himself, ironically, had been willing to receive Borgarfjörður as a fief from Gizurr's hand.

These circumstances suggest that Sturla and other Icelandic contemporaries (the Sturlungar, at least) could well have associated Gizurr in a negative way with Norwegian politics and culture. Little is told directly in *Íslendinga saga* of Gizurr's stays in Norway (1229–31, 1242–44, 1246–52, 1254–58), but what there is, is punctuated by two unflattering reports: as a young steward in Bergen, the drunken Gizurr one night held an Icelandic relative, Jón Snorrason murti, under the

blows of a servant, from which Jón died (ch. 79); and in ch. 192 it is suggested that Gizurr was able to grow in esteem at court only through the death of another Icelandic courtier, Pórðr kakali, his chief rival for favour with the Norwegian king. It is true that the oracular dream-woman in *Íslendinga saga* ch. 190 is ‘well disposed’ toward Gizurr and designates not him, but Þorgils skarði as a ‘bird that fouls its nest,’ i. e. a traitor,<sup>23</sup> but this passage, along with certain others, is thought to be an interpolation by the compiler of *Sturlunga saga*, whose judgment of Gizurr seems to have been more favourable than Sturla’s (Úlfar Bragason 1986, 170–78).

Especially in the light of the circumstantial evidence, then, the similarity between the sarcastically ‘regal’ speech in ch. 125 and the style associated with Gizurr later in *Íslendinga saga* suggests that the writer may have intended a kind of subtle criticism of Gizurr through a style elevated—beyond the demands of naturalism in the presentation of dialogue—into the realm of caricature. If so, the figure of Gizurr in *Íslendinga saga* would be linked with the type of the xenophile who scorns both homeland and native speech, such as the prodigal son Helmbrecht in the Middle High German *Meier Helmbrecht* of Wernher der Gartenære, a work contemporary with *Íslendinga saga*, or several figures in Holberg’s plays. The type is represented also in the writings of Baldwin Einarsson, one of the founding fathers of the modern Icelandic republic (Árni Böðvarsson 1964, 198).<sup>24</sup>

This interpretation of the style of Gizurr’s speeches is supported by an event early in Gizurr’s career reported in *Íslendinga saga* ch. 129, when Gizurr is temporarily defeated by his rival Sturla Sighvatsson and must promise to go into exile in Norway: he tells Sturla, when asked, that he would prefer to swear the required oath in its Norwegian rather than Icelandic form. (The distinction is evidently one of diction, not dialect.) The preference has been interpreted as a mocking allusion on Gizurr’s part to Sturla’s ties to the Norwegian crown (Úlfar Bragason

<sup>23</sup> ‘Er þér vel til hans [Gizurar]?’ segir mærin. ‘Harla vel,’ segir hon . . . ‘Hvernig er þér til Þorgils skarða?’ segir mærin. ‘Illir þykkir mér allir þeir fuglar, er í sitt hreiðr skita.’

<sup>24</sup> In *Konráðs saga keisarasonar ok Róðberts svikara*, the outwardly courteous, eloquent polyglot Róðbert uses his knowledge of foreign languages to betray his monoglot foster-brother Konráðr (discussion in Kalinke 1983, 859–61; 1990, 157–66; Kastner 1978). To be sure, the moral of the saga is evidently that one must learn foreign languages in order to avoid being taken advantage of, but at the same time the example of Róðbert is a signal that eager assimilation to foreign influence should be treated with suspicion.

1986, 111), but the passage can also be read as the writer Sturla Þórðarson's implicit indictment (in hindsight) of *Gizurr's* Norwegian ties. Sturla Sighvatsson had, indeed, spent time in Norway (1233–35) and received orders to bring Iceland under his control (*Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* ch. 180; cf. *Íslendinga saga* ch. 92), but it must be remembered that Snorri Sturluson, Þórðr Sighvatsson kakali, Þorgils Bœðvarsson skarði and Gizurr himself received such orders, too. Snorri defied his, and Sturla's power never became firm enough to allow him to carry such orders out; Þórðr kakali was distrusted and relieved of his authority by the king and his zealous agent Bishop Heinrekr in 1249, and Þorgils skarði was killed in a smaller-scale power struggle in 1258. Gizurr, on the other hand, as we know, defeated and killed Sturla and his father Sighvatr in 1238, and afterwards, acting on direct orders from Norway, assassinated Snorri in 1241, had himself sent to Iceland as royal agent in place of Þórðr in 1252, accepted the title of *jarl* and large parts of Iceland as fief from the Norwegian crown, set up his own court with *handgengnir menn* and arranged eventually for Iceland to surrender its sovereignty. To be sure, the account in *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* indicates that Gizurr was acting under pressure from the king and Bishop Heinrekr, who suspected Gizurr of stalling on his promise to win Iceland for the crown (chs 276 and 300). But this account is otherwise no more positive than the others, since it emphasises that Gizurr won political support by obscuring the real nature of his mission (chs 297, 311).

Moreover, *Íslendinga saga* makes the contrast in character between Sturla Sighvatsson and Gizurr clear: both were ambitious, but Sturla appears impetuous and naive, Gizurr cool and calculating. It is difficult to imagine the ingenuous Sturla as the agent of a foreign king, but Gizurr's adroitness in political sleight of hand, reported in *Íslendinga saga* again and again,<sup>25</sup> together with his mannered, cosmopolitan speaking style, which is explicitly praised several times,<sup>26</sup> make him the sort of international figure who would be at home in any medieval European chronicle. If any Icelander in *Íslendinga saga* is associated with Norway, it is Gizurr. Even if it is true that Gizurr is (intended by the writer to be) making a veiled criticism of Sturla Sighvatsson's links

<sup>25</sup> *Íslendinga saga* chs 129, 151, 154, 157, 176–77, 178, 197, 199, 200. Cf. Þórhallur Vilmundarson, *ÍF XIII*, lxii–lxiii; Taylor 1992, 222–25, 242–43, 329.

<sup>26</sup> *Íslendinga saga* chs 121, 137, 170, *Þórðar saga kakala* ch. 45; cf. also *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* ch. 311 (= *Íslendinga saga* ch. 198 in Króksfjarðarbók, see *Sturlunga saga* 1946, II 281): *bað þá til góðum orðum* . . .

to Norway by offering to swear a Norwegian oath to him, the irony of the criticism cannot have been lost on the writer, who must have seen the passage, on one level at least, as an indictment of Gizurr's own ties to that country.

For the sake of argument, let us ask whether Gizurr's stylistic profile, like that of a king in a king's saga, might not simply be a function of his social status or *kurteisi*. In other words, how can we be sure that a negative stylistic colouring was applied to Gizurr's speeches? Perhaps the colouring was positive, an expression of respect for his status, or perhaps there was no deliberate colouring involved one way or the other. Perhaps the style is merely a function of the speech situations allotted to him in the text—situations which call for a certain degree of formality and authority that takes priority over the narrator's desire for individual characterisation. After all, a character's speaking style can rise to the discourse situation, as we know from the example of famous last words (such as Árni beiskr's in *Íslendinga saga* ch. 173, with *sé ek*, litotes and triple clause subordination with a relative clause separated from its antecedent). The style of Gizurr's speeches, however, together with the repertoire of discourse situations reproduced, is so uniform that it cannot be the result of random, objective reporting, nor can the correspondence between Gizurr's style and the parodic speech in *Íslendinga saga* ch. 125 have escaped the saga-writer's notice. Moreover, it is impossible to overlook the evidence of resentment towards Gizurr on the part of Sturla Þórðarson and others.

My thesis is based on the premise that the writer was able to stylise the speech of a certain character in a relatively uniform way. Obviously, this does not preclude the possibility that the actual speech of the real Gizurr Þorvaldsson distinguished itself in more or less this way from that of other Icelanders of his time. Several considerations make this likely, in fact. For one, the writer Sturla was a contemporary and an erstwhile associate of Gizurr's and thus able to draw from life. Also, Gizurr was by all accounts a man of culture and achievement with a strong sense of his own importance, and it is only natural that he would have chosen his speaking style carefully. He was probably educated enough and familiar enough with the European tradition of political and military leadership to have delivered formal, rhetorical speeches of the type transmitted in *Íslendinga saga*.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, he prose-

<sup>27</sup> On the question whether military leaders actually gave or could have given the speeches attributed to them in classical historiography, see Norden 1958, 87 n. 1; the answer seems to be yes.

cuted his first legal case at the age of twelve (*Íslendinga saga* ch. 39).

As for Sighvatr, perhaps he really did at one point give his son Sturla the sarcastic advice in pseudocourtly style as reported for the year 1237. If so, whom or what he was parodying? Where did he get his idea of this style? Could the source have been *Konungs skuggsjá* or *riddara-sögur*, personal contact with foreign courts or people who had spent time at them? Was Sighvatr parodying the style of a particular person he knew? To sum up: Sturla had returned from the Norwegian court two years earlier, and his reckless ambition clearly incurred his father's disfavour, but there is no indication that Sturla's speech habits can have been the stylistic source of Sighvatr's parody. Gizurr's speeches, on the other hand, provide the closest parallel to it in *Íslendinga saga*. By 1237, the twenty-eight-year-old Gizurr already had sixteen years of political experience (minus two years on the Continent); the Sturlungar would have known him well enough to be able to parody him. As we have seen, Sighvatr's antipathy toward Gizurr is signalled already in the latter's childhood.

In any event, the actual speech of real medieval people is beyond reconstruction. We can reconstruct, to a certain extent, typical vocabulary, phraseology, syntactical and stylistic patterns of the spoken languages, but we can only rarely be certain that a given speech transmitted in a text was actually spoken by the person it is attributed to, or by anyone else for that matter. The fact that any writing, even copying or compiling, necessarily involves some degree of editing and stylisation in the broad sense (at least the choice of what to copy and what to omit) means, of course, that we must treat a text primarily as an artifact, not as fossilised speech. In the case of the present investigation, this means that when we notice a unique similarity between Sighvatr's mockery in ch. 125 and Gizurr's address in ch. 155, we are justified in looking for a connection within the framework of the text as a whole. Regardless of whether Sighvatr the character or Sighvatr the real person intended to parody Gizurr specifically, it is evident, when we take stock of the style attributed to the different characters in the text, that the speech in ch. 125 mimics a stylistic type that the writer consciously associated with him.

*Appendix: Texts containing speech by Gizurr Þorvaldsson  
(or indicating his participation in speech situations)*

Chapters containing oratio recta: *Íslendinga saga* chs 129, 132, 137, 138, 155, 156, 170, 174, 175, 176, 195, 199, 200; *Porgils saga skarða* ch. 1; *Árna saga biskups* ch. 6.

Chapters containing only oratio obliqua: *Íslendinga saga* chs 149, 151, 152, 154, 157, 166, 172, 177, 178; ‘Samsteypucafli’ (*Sturlunga saga* 1946, II 280–81); *Pórðar saga kakala* chs 36, 45; *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* chs 257, 297, 300, 311.

Chapters mentioning only that a conversation took place, or noting that Gizurr expressed a favourable or unfavourable disposition, without details: *Íslendinga saga* chs 39, 82, 99, 127, 140, 148, 164, 167, 168, 179, 194; *Pórðar saga kakala* chs 34, 44, 47; *Porgils saga skarða* chs 7, 33, 79.

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## THE GERMANIC THUNDERWEAPON

By LOTTE MOTZ

THE NORTH-GERMANIC PEOPLE looked to Pórr more than to any other divinity to keep them safe from danger and destruction. Striding through the landscape, fording rivers and traversing forests, he was always watchful for any threat to gods and men. And the enemies of cosmic order were well acquainted with his doughty weapon, for many a giant's skull was smashed by his hammer, and many a giantess lay dead after an encounter with the deity. The weapon carried by the god must therefore be considered the most vital of all instruments in the battle for survival.

The weapon is invariably designated by the noun *hamarr*, English 'hammer', in the Old Norse texts, and consequently we visualise it in the form of this tool. A close look at the texts reveals, however, some ambiguity in the nature of the implement. Sometimes it is hurled like a missile and sometimes it is brandished like a battleaxe. We may also wonder why a being who is not a craftsman is so consistently pictured with a craftsman's tool. Let us now consider the texts for a clearer image of the instrument.

### *Pórr's weapon in the Old Icelandic texts*

Pórr's weapon was forged for him in the smithy of some dwarfs to serve as a missile and as a weapon of close attack (*Skáldskaparmál* ch. 35). It would never fail, no matter how hard the blow, and it would return to the owner of its own accord when it was cast. Pórr indeed threw the hammer in his duel with the giant Hrungnir, and he broke the giant's head into small bits: *hann . . . reiddi hamarinn ok kastaði um langa leið at Hrungni* (he . . . swung his hammer and threw it from a great distance at Hrungnir; *Skáldskaparmál* ch. 17). He flung his weapon also at the Midgard snake, as he was fishing in the ocean, and it is said that the monster's head was struck from the body: *Pórr kastaði hamrinum eptir honum, ok segja menn at hann lysti af honum hofuðit vid grunninum* (Pórr threw his hammer after it, and they say that he struck off its head by the sea-bed; *Gylfaginning* ch. 48). In the Eddic poem which relates the same event, the head was merely battered by the tool before the fishing line was cut (*Hymisqviða* st. 23; *Edda* 1983, 92):

Hamri kníði háfiall scarar,  
ofliótt, ofan úlfs hnitbróður.

With his hammer he struck down upon the most ugly head (hair's high mountain) of the wolf's inseparable (or battle-) brother.

A skaldic poem, Úlfr Uggason's *Húsdrápa*, also tells the story; here the head, hewn from the body, was sent into the sea:

Víðgymnir laust Vimrar  
vaðs af fránum naðri  
hlusta grunn við hrönum.

Víðgymnir of Vimur's ford struck the head (ear-bed) from the shining snake by the waves (*Skáldskaparmál* ch. 4).

And with his hammer Þórr smote and shattered the skull of the giant mason: *ok laust þat hit fyrsta hogg er haussinn brotnaði í smán mola* (and struck the first blow so that his skull was shattered into fragments; *Gylfaginning* ch. 42).

In his journey to Útgard-Loki Þórr struck a sleeping giant with such force that the edge of the tool, the *hamarsmuðr*, sank deeply into the giant's skull: *hann . . . reiðir hamarinn tít ok hart ok lýstr ofan . . . hann kennir, at hamars muðrinn sokkr djúpt í hofuðit* (he swings the hammer quickly and hard and strikes down . . . he feels that the edge of the hammer sinks deep into the head; *Gylfaginning* ch. 45). Three blows were dealt by Þórr, who held the handle with both hands, and he created three large valleys through his deed (*Gylfaginning* chs 45, 47). In a verbal battle with the crafty Loki Þórr threatened to sever Loki's head from the neck with his hammer: *herða klett dreip ec þér hálsi af* (I shall strike the head (rock of shoulders) off your neck; *Locasenna* st. 57, *Edda* 1983, 108). A skaldic poet (Bragi gamli) calls Þórr *Þrívalda . . . sundrkljúfr níu hofða* (cleaver apart of Þrívaldi's nine heads; *Skáldskaparmál* ch. 4). If we consider the verbs describing the action of the *hamarr* we find that *kljúfa* has an unequivocal sense of 'to cleave'; we also find *drepa af*, *knýja ofan*, *ljósta af*, *ljósta ofan*; the words *af* and *ofan* add to the basic sense of 'strike' a sense of removal, of putting into another place; *drepa hofuð af* is the term for 'beheading' in *Gulapingslög* no. 259 (*NGL I* 84–85; cf. no. 241, *NGL I* 80). We thus find the sense of 'severing', an action accomplished by an axe. The phrase *hogg hamars* is also found (*Prymsqviða* st. 32; *Edda* 1983, 115); the noun *hogg* often denotes an act of hewing; axes and swords are denoted as *hoggvápni* by Snorri (*Skáldskaparmál* ch. 49).

The instances in which a head is severed from the shoulders, or severing is threatened (*Húsdrápa*, *Locasenna* st. 57, *Gylfaginning* ch. 48),

indicate the performance of an axe. The ‘cleaving’ of the heads of Þrívaldi, in its turn, points to the employment of an axe. The noun *muðr* designates in Old Icelandic the steel edge of an axe (*RGA* 1973– I, 536); it is the *muðr* of Þórr’s weapon which penetrates deeply into a giant’s skull (*Gylfaginning* ch. 45). This *muðr* creates the indentations of three valleys; again the employment of an axe is suggested by this action.<sup>1</sup> The shattering of the head of the giant mason (*Gylfaginning* ch. 42), conversely, suggests the action of a hammer. Þórr’s tool does not produce the sounds which are linked with iron hammers.

The ambiguous use of Þórr’s instrument, as hammer, missile or axe, has not been given much attention in Germanic scholarship. Sometimes the weapons are equated. The archaeologist Peter Paulsen includes, without explanation, a chapter on ‘Þórr’s hammer’ in his book on axes (Paulsen 1956, 205–21). Þórr’s hammer is related to or equated with cultic axes of prehistoric times, such as those in rock drawings from the Bronze Age.<sup>2</sup> Jan de Vries declares that axes and hammers represent the same instrument (de Vries 1956–57, II 125).

Others, however, have taken account of the discrepancy. In the earlier edition of his book, de Vries (1935–37, II 213) assumes that Þórr’s hammer had originated in an axe of stone. Hilda Ellis Davidson suggests that the hammer was substituted for an earlier axe when men became impressed by the fires of the blacksmith’s forge (Gelling and Davidson 1969, 145–46). Oscar Montelius believes that a hammer replaced the earlier tool when the original meaning of the word *hamarr* had been forgotten (Montelius 1910, 69; cf. Simpson 1979).

Through my own examination I have reached the conclusion that Þórr’s weapon was originally a stone or a tool of stone and that it was later visualised in many forms: as a wedge, chisel, bolt, or spear, as a stone or club, as a hammer or an axe. The image of an axe was prominent because of its high social and religious significance. Let us now consider the various aspects of Þórr’s implement.

<sup>1</sup> The valleys are ‘four-sided’; yet the edge of the tool, the *hamars muðr* (i. e. peen), could not have created a square indentation. Since we are told that the instrument sank in ‘up to the handle’ we may assume that it was the square back of the tool which left the imprint.

<sup>2</sup> Marold 1974, 209–11, seems to equate the axes on rock drawings with hammers. She declares, 218–19: ‘Axt und Hammer sind nichts Neues in Skandinavien, seit der Steinzeit finden wir dort Kultäxte und Amulettäxte . . . Dennoch erlebt der Hammer, resp. die Axt im 10. und 11. Jahrhundert eine Art Renaissance.’

### *The significance of hammers*

In our time the instrument denoted as a hammer consists of a shaft of wood and a head of iron. The head ends in one or two flat surfaces, set parallel to the direction of the shaft. The iron part may also end in one sharpened edge set at right angles to this direction. The tool is employed for crushing or for driving.

Hammers are not easily discovered in the finds of prehistoric times. It appears that in archaic times the act of hammering was performed with a stone, a club, or the blunt end of an axe. The specialised tool, designed for beating or driving, belongs to the iron worker's craft. Iron hammers did not appear in the Germanic area until the beginning of the Christian era (*RGA* 1911–19, II 372–73 under *Hammer*). The hammer of the Germanic blacksmith was made in various forms. A square head might have its shaft-hole placed in the centre or close to the butt. The head might end in a rounded surface and also possess a sharpened edge, set at right angles to the direction of the shaft (fig. 1, p. 349 below).

Frequently the tools have been discovered in the graves of artisans (Müller-Wille 1977, 149–51). Sometimes an artisan's utensils were also found in combination with grave gifts of a different sort. A burial place in Vestly, Rogaland (sixth century) contains a sword, arrowheads, knives, jewels, and a hammer as well as other smith's tools (Müller-Wille 1977, 166–67). We may deduce that some men, engaged in various pursuits, might also practice the blacksmith's craft. The richest find of ironworkers' utensils was discovered in Mästermyr on Gotland in a wooden box which might have been lost by accident (Müller-Wille 1977, 190–92).

In the Eddas, hammers are presented (except for Þórr's hammer) in relation to the smithy and the blacksmith's work. In the dawn of time the gods created hammer and tongs and anvil, and thereafter all other tools (*Gylfaginning* ch. 14). The master smith Volundr crafted with his hammer precious objects for his royal captor (*Volundarqviða* st. 20; *Edda* 1983, 120). His tale of insult and revenge found pictorial expression: the craftsman and his tools, anvil, tongs and hammers are shown on the well-known Franks Casket (about AD 700); the picture stone of Ardre VIII of Gotland (ninth century) displays the smith's tongs and hammers and the victims of his vengeance (Müller-Wille 1977, 132, fig. 1).

Reginn, who forged a precious sword for his fosterling Sigurðr, is another famous smith of Germanic literature. The adventures of Sigurðr were frequently depicted in the Middle Ages, engraved on memorial stones, stone crosses, baptismal fonts, or even the portal of a church

(Müller-Wille 1977, 130–31, 134). In one of the scenes the smith Reginn, slain by Sigurðr for his treachery, lies amidst his tools, his hammers, tongs, anvil and bellows (rock drawing in Södermanland in Sweden). In another the living craftsman creates the weapon with his utensils: hammer, tongs and anvil (church portal in Hylestad, Setesdal; Müller-Wille 1977, 133, fig. 2). The images of tongs and hammers are also carved on the burial stones of human artisans (in Denmark).<sup>3</sup>

The assembled evidence shows clearly that the hammer was one of the most important of the blacksmith's implements, present in pictorial and textual references to his calling, and in the assemblages of his tools, laid beside the craftsman in his burial place, symbolising his life's work on his stone.

No evidence, however, indicates that the employment or the symbolism of the hammer transcended the narrow boundary of the blacksmith's craft. Neither archaeology nor texts point to the use of hammers in warfare or to any status in the ritual of religious or public life. Serving exclusively as craftsmen's tools, they are not listed by Snorri Sturluson among the arms of combat, such as axes, lances, swords, or arrows (*Edda Snorra Sturlusonar* 1848–87, I 563–71). They are not listed by archaeologists among the ordinary tools of a farmer's household but only, with other instruments, among the implements of skilled artisans. Hammers were not crafted for a symbolic purpose, nor employed in ceremonial, nor enriched with decorations or shaped into elaborate forms. Though in the course of the centuries beliefs and superstitions might become attached to the blacksmith and his hammer, the tool was in Germanic times symbolic only of the iron worker's trade. (Certain amulets will be discussed later.)

#### *Pórr and his implement*

Not a single act of craftsmanship is ascribed to Pórr. He is not a craftsman but a fighter. An artisan's implement is not a fitting attribute for a person whose life's work is battle. Pórr's instrument is never shown with other craftsman's tools, and it does not produce the sound of a hammer. Pórr, as an armed weather god, has counterparts in other Indo-European mythologies, e. g., the Roman Jupiter, Indian Indra, Greek Zeus, Slavic Perun, Celtic Taranis, Latvian Pērkons. We cannot doubt that the figure of Pórr reaches back into Indo-European times. In the age of Indo-European unity, which preceded the Iron Age, this god

<sup>3</sup> Müller-Wille 1977, 135–37; the images belong to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

could not have held an iron worker's hammer. Indeed, the gods are pictured with various arms: bolts, axes, clubs, or arrows. If Pórr later wields an iron hammer it must have supplanted the earlier thunder-weapon, as has been suggested by some scholars.

There is no evidence, however, to show that hammers supplanted earlier aggressive arms. Hammers have not been recovered from hoards of Viking treasure and thus could not have held much practical or symbolic significance.<sup>4</sup> The most exalted place in weaponry was in medieval times accorded to the sword. One hundred and thirty-three sword names are listed in the *þulur* (name lists in *Snorra Edda*) and not a single hammer name. Mysterious powers were attributed to some swords, as to that of Freyr which fights by itself when wielded by a doughty warrior (*For Scírnis* st. 8–9; *Edda* 1983, 71). Swords were forged for young warriors by master craftsmen, such as the sword Gramr for Sigurðr or the sword Nálhringr for Þiðrekr. If an older weapon of high religious status, a guarantor of life and its continuation, were to be replaced by a weapon of the Iron Age it would naturally have been supplanted by a sword.

Pórr's weapon is often a shafted instrument, whether a hammer or an axe. Let us see whether the older tool, the axe, was ever superseded by a hammer. In contrast to hammers, axes appear frequently in archaeological finds in the Germanic area, onwards from the Neolithic Age.<sup>5</sup> Crafted in flint and later in bronze and iron, they retained importance and significance and became the favourite weapon of the Viking raiders.<sup>6</sup> From the earliest times onwards axes were imbued with religious value; cultic axes are seen among the rock drawings of the Bronze Age and were graven on memorial stones.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> In his listing of Viking artifacts Graham-Campbell (1980) lists about 45 hammers among 540 items. And these hammers are not part of household equipment, but part of specialised craftsmen's possessions; Graham-Campbell 1980, 279, pl. 415 b, f; and 131, no. 449.

<sup>5</sup> The neolithic graves of Gotland contain as the most important grave goods axes, harpoons, and arrowheads (Stenberger 1977, 90). In votive deposits, especially in the Neolithic Age, one may encounter flint and stone axes, flint chisels and blades, clay vessels as well as jewellery (Stenberger 1977, 103).

<sup>6</sup> In the Bronze Age the blade received new and graceful forms, and often bore elaborate decorations (*RGA* 1973–, I 541–44). The axe of the Norsemen, the *hache noresche*, was known in terror throughout Europe (Paulsen 1956, 16).

<sup>7</sup> Axes of clay, covered with a thin sheet of bronze, were discovered in Brøndsted Skov in Denmark and in Skogstorp in Sweden (*RGA* 1973–, I 563);

Miniature axes have been found that were intended to be worn as amulets or for adornment in a tradition which extended in certain areas from the Stone Age to the time of the Viking incursions (Paulsen 1956, 190–221; de Vries 1956–57, I 116).<sup>8</sup> Throughout the northern and north-western parts of Europe we come upon especially precious and richly decorated blades. These must have served as a sign of rank for warriors of high station.<sup>9</sup> To substantiate this assumption we may point to an illustration by Matthew Paris in a manuscript of the second quarter of the thirteenth century depicting the battle of Stamford Bridge; here King Harald harðráði alone holds an axe while his followers wield various other weapons.<sup>10</sup>

From the thirteenth century onwards a crowned lion, clasping an axe, is depicted on the royal seal of Norway (Paulsen 1956, 262). Thus we do not find that the hammer has replaced the axe in warfare or in heraldry. When Christianity and Christian imagery came to the North of Europe the cross was shown on certain axes, as on the axe of Sibirsk (Paulsen 1956, 138), indicating their unbroken sanctity. Christian imagery did not find expression on workmen's hammers, and in St Olaf's axe the tool retained its religious significance into Christian times.

Axes, furthermore, were not supplanted by hammers in folk traditions. Axes are cast on the eve of the Thursday (Pórr's day) before Easter onto the sprouting fields to promote the growth of fruit (de Vries 1956–57, II 122). Axes still function in the marriage customs of modern times; they may be placed beneath the bridal bed or on the threshhold which the bride must cross.<sup>11</sup> Axes are employed against the ravages of storm and wind. In Slesvig-Holstein an axe is thrust into a door-post in the course of a thunderstorm. It may also be laid on the table to keep lightning from the dwelling (Schwantes 1939, I 273). Axes and not

there is a figure holding an axe in its hand from a burial-find in Grevensvænge in Zealand; two drawings made before 1780 show that the figure was one of a pair when found (see *RGA* 1973–, I 564).

<sup>8</sup> Miniature axe blades of gold and silver, worn as amulets in the early Christian era, have also been discovered in German graves (*RGA* 1973–, I 565).

<sup>9</sup> Paulsen 1956, 101; among the images are birds, snakes, spirals, plants, crosses, triangles, beasts of fantasy and of reality.

<sup>10</sup> Reproduced in Paulsen 1956, 258.

<sup>11</sup> Bächtold-Stäubli 1927–42, I 743–48 under *Axt*. It must be noted, however, that in one small area near Skåne, it is a hammer which is laid beneath the bed of the bride (see Elgquist 1934).

hammers are thrown by the sprites of German folklore to cause pain in back or legs (Bächtold-Stäubli 1927–42, I 743–48 under *Axt*). And the shafted instrument in the god's hand would in all likelihood be an axe, paralleling the axe of the Viking raider.

We may conclude that hammers did not replace earlier implements in folk belief, heraldry, ceremonial, or human warfare. This finding is not surprising, for the blacksmith did not rise above other classes in the Germanic Middle Ages, and the highest office of the land was held by a warrior king. The two important smiths of Germanic literature, Reginn and Völundr, are shown in humiliation and defeat. It is true that Pórr appears at times in humble form with the features of a peasant lad, but he was never redrawn as a blacksmith.

It might be argued that in his form as a folktale hero the god might do battle with an ordinary household tool. But in Viking times hammers were not common household equipment. They are not listed in the inventories of Viking artifacts among household tools, such as knives, scythes, sickles or axes, but only among the special equipment of skilled artisans. The very rarity of hammer finds also shows that they were not common in a household (cf. note 4 above). Moreover, the Norse farmers accomplished their bloody deeds with spears, axes, pikes or swords, and even a servant might wield a spear (*Ynglinga saga* ch. 48, *ÍF XXVI* 80), whereas hammers are never named. Even the craftsmen of the texts, Reginn, Völundr, and the skilful dwarfs, did not employ their craftsmen's tools in battle, for these creatures fight their enemies by magic means (Motz 1983, 90–115). I venture to assert that no episode of the Icelandic texts shows the killing of a man with a craftsman's hammer. Pórr's deeds thus would have no model in the literature, myth, folklore or social reality of Norse tradition.

It is true that in one humorous poem Pórr is cast in the role of a blacksmith (Pjóðólfr Arnórsson, 11th century; *ÍF IX* 267–68). In this poem the noun *hamarr* does not appear; the man is named in mockery the Sigurðr of the sledgehammer (*Sigurðr sleggju*), the king of the tongs (*konungr tangar*) and the Pórr of the bellows (*Pórr smiðbelgja*). The poem testifies, incidentally, to the low esteem accorded to the craftsman by the warrior. The poem does not point to any special relationship between the god and the craftsman's hammer.

If the hammer did not replace other instruments in heraldry, ceremonial, human warfare, and especially in folk belief, why should it replace the Stone Age instrument in the hand of Pórr? Yet the noun *hamarr* consistently designates the weapon in the texts. We may wonder if the

noun has a less specific meaning, denoting simply the mighty object in Þórr's hand. Let us now consider how the instrument was visualised in various sources.

### *The visualisation of Þórr's weapon*

We find Þórr's weapon visualised as various objects and a hammer is not prominent. On a picture stone from Altuna, Uppland (eleventh century) the god holds a shafted instrument which might indeed be a hammer; it might also be a double axe, such as those of the rock drawings of the Bronze Age (fig. 2, p. 349 below). On the Gosforth Stone (tenth or eleventh century) the shafted object holds a greater resemblance to an axe than to a hammer. On a stone of Ardre (ninth century) a spear is wielded against a water monster.<sup>12</sup> On Thorvaldr's Cross Slab (Isle of Man, tenth century) a male figure carries fish, dangling from a cross, and he holds a square object, a stone or a book, ready to be hurled, in his right hand (Gschwantler 1968, 166).

In describing Þórr's statue in the temple of Uppsala, Adam of Bremen (IV 26; 1961, 470) mentions a sceptre as Þórr's attribute, and this information is repeated by Olaus Magnus (1555, 100), where Þórr is depicted with a sceptre in a woodcut. It is true that Saxo Grammaticus mentions 'Jove's hammers', *malleos quos Ioviales vocabant*, in his *Gesta Danorum* (1931–57, I 350); these are, however, not the weapons of the god, but cultic instruments which might imitate the sound of thunder. Þórr's weapon, on the other hand, is a club, *clava*, in his account (Saxo Grammaticus 1979–80, I 72; 1931–57, I 66). Saxo thus clearly distinguishes between the hammer, a cultic tool, and the *clava*, the mighty weapon. And the giant Geruthus is slain by a sword, *chalybs* (Saxo Grammaticus 1931–57, I 242). In one of the Anglo-Saxon dialogues *Solomon and Saturn*, thunder swings a fiery axe (Menner 1941, 169).

According to the folklore of Värend in Småland thunder is a stone, thrown by Þórr or Gofar, still often found in places which were struck by thunder; such a stone is designated as *thorenvigg*, 'Þórr's wedge' (Hyltén-Cavallius 1863–68, II 222). A modern farmer of this area told that he had seen the god riding in his carriage; he has also been seen carrying a bolt of stone in his hand (Montelius 1910, 77). The Swedish names *thornkile*, 'Þórr's wedge', *thorensten*, 'Þórr's stone', the Norwegian *torelod*, 'Þórr's ball', indicate that the instrument was viewed as a stone, a ball or a wedge. The Greek noun *keraunos*, 'thunderbolt', was

<sup>12</sup> The stones are reproduced in Meulengracht Sørensen 1986.

routinely translated as *thorvigge* in Danish medieval texts (Blinkenberg 1911a, 69).

A kenning in a skaldic poem, descriptive of Pórr's weapon, evokes the image of a battle-axe (*Þjóðólfr hvíverski, Haustlög* st. 17; *Skáldskaparmál* ch. 17). Here Pórr is named the 'friend of the troll of the snout', *rúni trolls trjónu*; *trjóna* 'snout' is a variant of *muðr* 'mouth' which also designates the cutting edge of an axe; battleaxes are traditionally referred to as troll-women. Pórr is thus the 'friend of the edged battleaxe'.

We thus find the following objects in Pórr's hand: a bolt, a stone, an axe, possibly a hammer, a wedge, a spear, a ball, a sceptre or a club, while in the Icelandic texts one noun only is employed.<sup>13</sup> We may also observe that the noun *sleggja* 'sledge-hammer' is never used for Pórr's implement. It has been claimed that the hammer was engraved on memorial stones of medieval times. What was engraved, however, is the image of certain amulets which may bear a resemblance to a hammer in some of their stylisations. These will now be discussed.

### *The amulets*

Small artifacts that could be fastened to a chain or a ring, made of iron, but also of more precious metals, plain or elaborately decorated, have been discovered in areas of Scandinavia.<sup>14</sup> They are ascribed to the tenth century AD. Since a vertical part, resembling a shaft, extends from a horizontal part, resembling a hammer's head, the relics are interpreted as replicas of the hammer swung by Pórr, and the name 'Pórr's hammer' has been applied. They are said to indicate a rise of fervour of pagan faith in the face of triumphant Christianity.

<sup>13</sup> A statuette of bronze from Eyrarland in Iceland is traditionally believed to represent the god Pórr with his hammer. An unprejudiced look at the object in the man's clasp shows that this has small resemblance to a hammer. Its shaft is split in the middle, terminates in three knobs, rests on the man's knees, and issues from beneath his mouth. It is held in a way in which no hammer is ever held. When the picture of the statuette was shown by me to persons unacquainted with Norse scholarship, the object was never recognised as a hammer. If it was identified at all it was identified as a musical instrument (cf. Motz 1992). In the present article the object on the man's knees is not counted among the forms in which Pórr's weapon was conceived.

<sup>14</sup> Paulsen 1956, 205–15; while the artifacts of precious metal were worn singly, those of iron, which show no decoration, appear in numbers on rings. These are found mainly in Swedish areas and are from the tenth and the beginning of the eleventh century.

The interpretation of these objects as ‘hammers’ may be questioned. They are flat, sometimes elaborately decorated and fashioned of precious metals, of minute size, and they were worn as jewels or as amulets. The blacksmith’s hammer is invariably bulky and consists of wood and iron. In most examples of the amulets there is no separation between ‘shaft’ and ‘head’; sometimes the decoration proceeds unbroken from the horizontal to the vertical section. A hammer’s head is always bulkier than the shaft; in the ornaments the thinnest part is at the bottom of the vertical section, and never at the top. The artifacts thus would represent a very stylised version of the craftsman’s tool. Hammers were, however, never manufactured in stylised form; they were not produced in miniature or in precious metal; they were never decorated and were never worn as amulets. Hammers, it was noted earlier, are not listed among the artifacts of Viking treasure.

Some of the amulets resemble the blade of an axe. We may recall that axe blades are flat and may be fashioned in precious metal; they are seen in very stylised form and are often adorned with elaborate decorations (sometimes the decoration of an amulet is the same as that incised on certain axes; Paulsen 1956, 208). The thickening of the horizontal section recalls the thickening of an axe-blade towards the shaft. The pointed excrescence at the end recalls the curve of the edge. Axe blades were produced in miniature through the ages. The custom was indeed very popular at the time of the Viking raids (*RGA* 1973–, I 566). Miniature blades of silver, named St Olaf’s Axe, are sold to the present day (figs. 3, 4, 5, pp. 349–50 below).

On the basis of the evidence I suggest that the so-called ‘Pórr’s hammer’ represents yet another form of the axe-blade pendants of archaic tradition. It is true that some amulets resemble hammers and some even bear resemblance to the Christian cross. We know that the Christian cross exerted great influence on the pagan symbol; and some images show its transformation into a cross (Paulsen 1956, 217). Paulsen also points out (1956, 205) that stylistically the forms of miniature axes, miniature hammers and miniature crosses flow into one another.<sup>15</sup> I suggest that the object known as ‘Pórr’s hammer’ represents a middle

<sup>15</sup> Paulsen further states that some ‘hammers’ resemble amber crosses worn as amulets. Amulets in the form of crosses are reproduced in Paulsen 1956, 200, figs e, f. Among the charms which dangle from an archaic Greek necklace is one identical in shape to one of the Germanic ‘hammer’ amulets. It surely did not reproduce Pórr’s hammer (Cook 1914–40, II, fig. 633 on p. 700).

stage between the axe blade and the cross. Paulsen observes with regard to axes (1956, 233): 'In the Viking Age we recognise the axe . . . as the symbol of battle, of power, of dignity, of legality, ownership, and salvation' (my translation).

I suggest that it was the axe blade and not the hammer which symbolised loyalty to the pagan faith. The hammer, therefore, did not replace the ancient image of the axe blade in the jewellery.

It has been claimed that the custom of wearing amulets was stimulated by the Christian custom of wearing the Christian cross. The wearing of amulets, was, however, an established tradition among the Germanic peoples. Hundreds of golden bracteates, showing scenes of cultic significance, for instance, which testify to the popularity of the practice, have been discovered and ascribed to the Migratory period.<sup>16</sup>

### *The magic sign*

A sign, actually named *Pórshamarr*, does, in fact, exist in Norse tradition; it resembles a swastika. Such signs are found on archaic artifacts, on boundary markers, on runic stones, and on the bracteates of the Middle Ages. The sign occurs in many regions of the world, and does not seem to have originated in the North of Europe. We may assume that here an important sign became attached to an important god (de Vries 1956–57, II 127). It has no relation to a hammer and here we find an example of an object, designated by the noun *hamarr*, which has no link with the craftsman's tool.

### *The noun hamarr*

If we assume that Pórr's weapon was visualised in many forms we may wonder why one noun was so consistently and unvaryingly applied. We

<sup>16</sup> Hilda Ellis Davidson (1965, 13) asserts that the image of Pórr's hammer appears on runic stones which also show an inscription to the god. This claim cannot be substantiated: what appears is the image of the amulet, as can clearly be noted in some instances by the presence of the loop. And these stones do not coincide with the stones bearing inscriptions to Pórr. The latter are seen on the stones of Glavendrup in Fyn, Virring in North Jutland, Sønderkirkeby on Falster, all in Denmark, and Velanda Skattegården in Västergötland, Sweden (Marold 1974, 195–96). The 'hammer' sign appears on stones in Læborg, Spentrup, Hanninge in Jutland, and Schonen, Åby in Västermo, Stenkvista Kirka in Södermanland, Karlevi in Öland, Gårdstanga in Skåne; enumerated in Paulsen 1956, 216, and in Marold, 1974, 196. On such a stone the amulet may turn into a cross (Paulsen 1956, 217).

may also search for the underlying reason. My investigation of the noun *hamarr* has led me to the following conclusion: the noun has another meaning, ‘stone’; Pórr’s weapon was originally a stone or a tool of stone; the old name was kept when his emblem was conceived in various ways.

The Old Icelandic *hamarr* is possibly traceable to an Indo-European root *\*(a)kam-* with the meaning ‘pointed’, ‘sharp’, ‘stone’. We thus find Sanskrit *áśman-* ‘stone, rock’, Lithuanian *akmuō* ‘stone’, Greek *ákmōn* ‘anvil’, Old Slavonic *kamy* ‘stone weapon’, Avestan *asman-* ‘stone, heaven’, Old High German *hamar* ‘hammer’, ‘hammer used as a weapon’, Old Icelandic *hamarr* ‘crag, rock, cliff’ (de Vries 1962, 207; Asgeir Blöndal Magnússon 1989, 303).

The meanings indicate that the craftsman’s tool, the ‘hammer’, was originally a stone. This indication is verified by archaeology. Flattened stones without handles have been excavated in Denmark near places where iron smelting took place as late as the last centuries before the Christian era, together with stone anvils to work the iron which was gained from swamps (fig. 6 on p. 350 below; Brøndsted 1957–60, III 113). Germanic speech thus retained the name of the simpler tool after it had been replaced by the shafted instrument of wood and iron.

If we apply the sense of ‘stone’ to the noun *hamarr* and remember that the god’s name corresponds to English ‘thunder’, we may understand the phrase ‘Pórr’s hammer’ to be the linguistic counterpart to English ‘thunderstone’, German *Donnerstein*, Dutch *dondersteen*, Danish *tordensten*, Norwegian *torestein*. These names are given to certain Stone Age relics through which in folk belief thunder was created, and they may lead us to trace a connection between Pórr’s weapon and the ancient concept of the thunderstone.

### *The thunderstone*

The belief that thunder and lightning are caused by a stone which falls to earth from heaven is apparent in a great number of traditions. The agent is identified with prehistoric artifacts of stone, stone chisels and stone axes, and also fossils which are encountered in the fields.

The belief has kept its vitality in the Germanic area into modern times. It is thought that in its fall the object becomes deeply embedded in the earth and that it will slowly rise to the surface. Wonderful qualities are attributed to such a stone. It is treasured, put in a special place within the house, hung up near the chimney or beneath the roof, or set on the shelf for storing milk. Above all, it will protect the house

against lightning, but it may also guard the health of cattle, or keep the trolls from harming men.<sup>17</sup>

We have noted that the concrete form of the talisman is identified with prehistoric artifacts of stone. It is only natural that many names should be recorded for a significant element of folk belief, and some of these will be cited here.

We find Danish *tordenbolt*, *tordenkile*, *tordenkølle*, *dönnesten*, *tordensten*, *Sebedeje*, Swedish *thorvigge*, *thorenvigg*, *godboggen*, *thornkilen*, *thornskil*, *gomorsten*, *thorensten*, *askvig*, *oskpil*, Norwegian *torestein*, *torelod*, *dynestein*, *toreblyg*, Dutch *donderbeitel*, *donderkeil*, *dondersteen*, German *Schurstein*, *Donneraxt*, *Donnerkeil*, *Donnerhammer*, English *thunderbolt*, *thunderaxe*, *thunderhammer*, *thunderstone*, *thunderfcone*.<sup>18</sup> Some of the names that have archaic forms have an archaic sense, and we cannot be completely sure of their meaning. We have some certainty, however, that the weapon was visualised as a stone, an axe, an arrow (English *bolt*, Danish *bolt*, Swedish *pil*), as a wedge (German *Keil*, Danish *kile*, Norwegian *blyg*, Dutch *keil*), a club (Danish *kølle*), a chisel (Dutch *beitel*), or a round ball (Norwegian *lod*).

We may observe that Iceland, alone in the Germanic area, does not evince a belief in thunderstones (though one instance has been recorded). Notions concerning the concept are also rare in northern Norway. Thunderstorms are infrequent in northern Norway and are exceptional in Iceland. The tradition might have been forgotten or might never have developed (cf. Blinkenberg 1911b, 93). The objects encountered in these places are all of stone, and they represent, as a wedge, a bolt, a knife or a chisel, the kind of utensil which had originated in pre-metal times.

#### *The thunderstone in non-Germanic tradition*

The wide diffusion of the belief in thunderstones is indeed surprising. The traditions from outside the Germanic area exhibit strong resemblances to the Germanic pattern. It is thought that the stone has dropped from heaven, that it is embodied in stone artifacts of prehistoric times,

<sup>17</sup> Blinkenberg 1911b, 69 (chimney), 70 (beneath the roof), 74 (milk shelf). Used as an amulet such a stone may protect from illness (Blinkenberg 1911b, 90); on p. 121 Blinkenberg lists references to the stone being said to rise to the surface of the earth.

<sup>18</sup> Dictionaries consulted: Alexander Jóhannesson 1956; Beets and Müller 1890; Cleasby and Vigfusson 1874; Dahlerup 1919–54; Fritzner 1886–96; *OED*; Schade 1872–82; de Vries 1962; also Blinkenberg 1911b.

axes, knives and arrowheads of flint, that it is embedded in the earth and will slowly rise to the surface, that it has protective qualities, especially that of shielding men from lightning. It is sometimes worn as an amulet to guard its owner against danger.<sup>19</sup>

Evidence of these beliefs has come from Hungary, Lithuania, Belgium, France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Greece, Asia Minor, Assam, Burma, Cambodia, China, Japan, the Guinea Coast, and the Sudan (Blinkenberg 1911b, 98–120). We find the semantic equivalent of the Germanic name ‘thunderstone’ in the Lithuanian *Perkuno akmuō* (*Perkun* is the god of thunder), Moravian *kámen hromovi*, French *pierre de tonnerre*, Spanish *piedra de rayo*, Portuguese *pedra de raio*, Italian *pietra de truono*, ancient Greek *keraunía líthos*.

As in the Germanic area, the name may indicate that the lethal missile was envisaged as a Stone Age tool, as in Greek *astropoléki*, ‘sky-axe’, or as a weapon, as in Hungarian *Isten mjila*, ‘god’s arrow’ (Blinkenberg 1911b, 99 (wrongly printed *Iften*), 107).

### *The name Mjöllnir*

The name of Pórr’s weapon, Mjöllnir, has been connected with Icelandic *mjöll*, a word for fresh snow, with reference to its shining or flashing, and to *mala* and *mølva* ‘to grind’ (de Vries 1962, 390; cf. Alexander Jóhannesson 1956, 677). It is also plausible to relate the name to Slavic and Baltic cognates: Old Slavonic *mlěnūji*, Russian *molnija*, ‘lightning’, and Latvian *milna* for Pērkons’s weapon (see Ásgeir Blöndal Magnússon 1989, 627). It is noteworthy that in Slavic and Baltic the thunderstone is designated by a noun that is cognate with Icelandic *hamarr*: Lithuanian *Perkuno akmuō*, and Moravian *kámen hromovi*. These facts suggest that the Slavic, Baltic, and Germanic peoples, who were neighbours, had at one time formed a cultural subgroup among the Indo-European nations.

### *The thunderstone and the god Pórr*

Hyltén-Cavallius (1863–68, II 222; quoted in Blinkenberg 1911b, 87) reports that lightning is believed to be a ‘wedge of stone thrown by Thorr or Gofar, and is still often found in the places where the thunder has struck’. This object is called *thorenvigg*, ‘Pórr’s wedge’. That Pórr was brought into relation with the thunderstone is shown by the names

<sup>19</sup> Andree 1889, 30–31; as in Lausitz or in parts of France, Blinkenberg 1911b, 100, 103–4.

*thorvigge, thornkile, thorenvigg, thornskil, thorensten* (Swedish), *taarenstien* (Danish), *torestein, torelod, toreblyg* (Norwegian). We may understand that folk belief had placed the agent of the thunder clap into the hands of the mighty god. A modern account, cited earlier (p. 337), actually notes that Pórr carried a ‘thunderbolt of stone’. The attachment of the phenomenon to a god is also evident in non-Germanic traditions in such names as *Perkuno akmuō*, and in Latin *Jovis tela*, ‘Jupiter’s arrows’.

We may assume that two different beliefs existed side by side: that the stone fell of its own volition and that it was hurled by a god. It is surely a mark of faith in human achievement and in humanist values when the destructive power of the thunderstorm is controlled by a god in human form who is also the ‘friend of men’. In tracing Pórr’s weapon to the thunderstone we may understand why it was sometimes cast, for it retained the ancient image of the fall from heaven. The return of Pórr’s weapon of its own accord parallels the rising of the thunderstone from its embedding in the earth. We also understand why it retained its ancient name. But we must not forget that in later times it was also seen in various other forms.

#### *The thunderweapon in non-Germanic mythologies*

The awe and terror caused by thunder and the lightning stroke clearly left their mark on folk belief throughout the world. They also left their imprint on sophisticated mythologies. In the traditions of the Ancient Middle East the rule of the pantheon is accorded to the weather god who wields the weapon of the thunderstorm. And he is almost always pictured with his sign of sovereignty. In Syrian iconography he is shown with a club as he strides across the mountains (Helck 1971, 170), and the weather god carved into the rock Yazilikaya of Anatolia holds a spear (von Schuler 1965, 212). In north-Syrian images of the first millennium BC the axe is the most common of his attributes.

The Mesopotamian god of arms, Ningirsu, is in possession of a seven-headed mace (Jacobsen 1947, 394). Zeus triumphs over Typhoaeus with a bolt, but he is also shown with a double axe, a spear, and even with a sword (Cook 1914–40, II 559, 704, 712, 722, fig. 669 and plate XXX). The battles of the gods are of vital significance, for through them the order of the cosmos is created and upheld. We may observe that the instrument used for fighting the divine battle shows some resemblance to the fighting tool of folk belief, envisaged as a stone, a

mace, a club or an arrow. The archaic object has assumed various forms in the myths. From a missile it has turned, in many cases, into an instrument of close attack. In the instances in which the weapon is hurled, the ancient image of the fall from heaven has been retained.

### *The god Pórr*

We cannot doubt that Pórr belongs in kind with the strong god of storms through whom the cosmos is upheld. He possesses the ancient thunderweapon, and, like that of Zeus, it has retained its name. It is clear that the medieval Norsemen no longer remembered the derivation of the instrument or the archaic meaning of its name. When it was associated with Pórr, the noun *hamarr* did not relate to a well-defined entity of men's surroundings; it had received a meaning of its own as an object of sacred and mysterious significance. Thus no synonym is ever used for Pórr's attribute.

If we examine the figure of the god in the Germanic context we still find him as the champion of cosmic order, and he is depicted, above all, in his relentless fight against the giants. He has acquired the features of a folktale hero who achieves his triumphs through his strength of muscle rather than his sovereignty over the elements of nature. In the Icelandic texts he has all but lost his relation to the thunderstorm. While his ride in a goat-drawn carriage may cause the fires of the earth to blaze and the mountains to burst asunder, it does not create the destruction of the thunderstorm.

His *hamarr*, in turn, is bereft of meteorological significance. By the time of our sources it has become above all Pórr's invincible weapon. What was retained was the ancient name, its occasional use as a missile, its voluntary return, and its deadly impact on the enemy. The Slavonic *kámen hromovi*, the Lithuanian *Perkuno akmuō*, as names for the thunderweapon, using nouns which are cognate to Germanic *hamarr*, indicate that the designation had already existed in Indo-European times. It is only natural that a name meaning 'stone' should be given to an instrument of stone.

If the name *hamarr* was given to the thunderstone, as argued in this article, the meaning 'stone' was subsequently lost in the Scandinavian languages except for Icelandic natural features, where the word is used to mean rock, crag or cliff. The name has remained, however, in the West Germanic languages in isolated instances, e. g. English *thunder-hammer*, German *Donnerhammer*. In a Middle High German curse,

cited by Grimm, *donerstein* actually interchanges with *hamer*: *sô slahē mich ein donerstein* (let me be slain by a *donerstein*), and *dat di de hamer sla* (may you be struck by a *hamer*).<sup>20</sup>

### *Summary*

Pórr's weapon has traditionally been held to be a hammer, but in this article I have questioned this assumption. Pórr's use of this weapon is ambiguous and it is visualised in various forms. The worship of the god predates the use of iron hammers. A hammer did not replace an earlier implement in Germanic folk belief, imagery, ceremonial or warfare. The noun *hamarr* has the meaning of 'stone', 'rock'. The belief in thunderstones was widespread in the Germanic area. The thunderstone was often believed to be Pórr's weapon. A similar process took place in ancient mythologies. Pórr's earliest weapon was a stone which later was also seen in other forms: among these the axe is prominent. His weapon did not receive its name or nature from the ironworker's tool but from the ancient concept of the thunderstone. The noun *hamarr* was retained after it had acquired a new meaning. It denotes the variety of forms in which the thunderweapon is envisaged. Not only the instrument, but also its name existed in Indo-European times.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Grimm 1875–78, I 149, 151. The archaic sense of *hammer* as 'stone' is retained in a few instances in West Germanic speech. The name of the Highland game of 'throwing the hammer' has a counterpart in the Middle High German name *steinstosson*, also used of a game. The German *Hammerwurf*, denoting a short distance, parallels the English 'stone's throw'. In Dutch both compounds are preserved: *steenworp* and *hamerworp*.

<sup>21</sup> I am indebted to Jacqueline Simpson, Einar Lundeby, Elsa Mundal, Oddvar Nes and Anthony Faulkes for comments, suggestions and corrections in this article.

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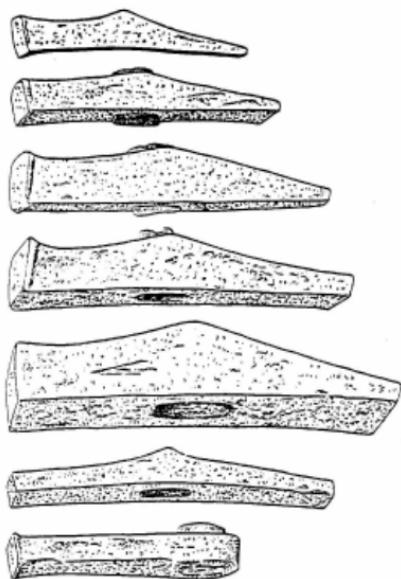


Fig. 1



Fig. 2

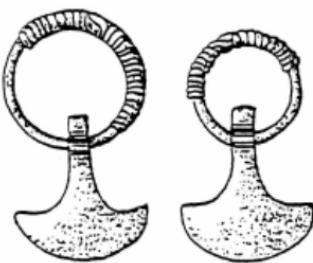


Fig. 3

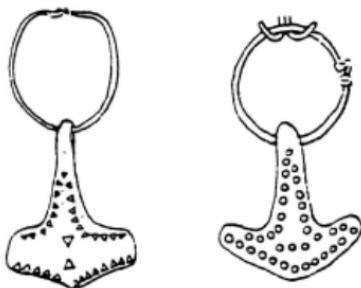


Fig. 4

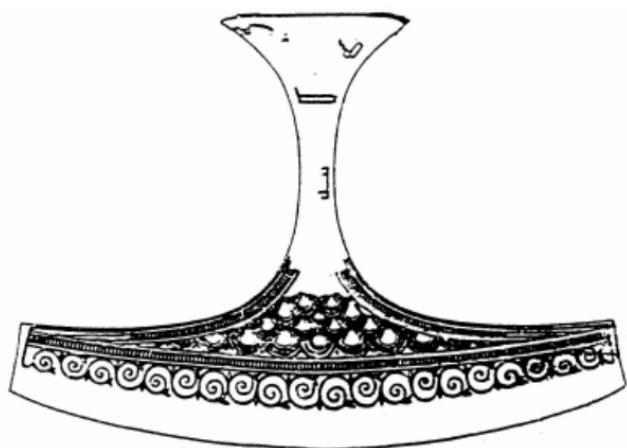


Fig. 5



Fig. 6

## NOTES

### JOHN BUCHAN'S *THE ISLAND OF SHEEP AND FÆREYINGA SAGA*

BY JOHN GORNALL

Buchan's last Hannay novel (1936) 'is about the sharp eyes and general knowledgability [*sic*] of children' and 'the middle-aged keeping—or recovering—their zest for life' (Adam Smith 1965, 263). As the reader will recall, this keeping or recovering arises from the obligation to fulfil an oath made in youth to a latter-day, land-operating Danish 'viking' called Haraldsen. In pursuit of the money for 'a sort of Northern Renaissance of which he was to be the leader' (Buchan 1956, 38), Haraldsen has fallen foul of a gang of villains and believes in the probability of a continuing blood-feud that will pursue his son. The fulfilment of the oath takes place many years later in 'the Island of Sheep', part of 'the Norlands'. There the younger Haraldsen, a mild recluse who ultimately reveals his innate Nordic character, turns berserk and, with the help of the islanders, equally berserk as a result of the arrival of the *grind*, confounds his enemies.

This histrionic Northern material incorporates fragments of myth. Thus, we read of 'Nanna, who was Balder's wife', 'the maidens in the *Edda*', and 'Fenris-Wolf' (Buchan 1956, 147). Comments such as Sandy's 'he took a fancy to me, for I knew all about his blessed Sagas' (39), Hannay's 'there's a good deal of lunacy in the Northern races' (71), and the narrator's (Hannay's) '[he] quoted something from the *Hava-mal* (whatever that may be)' (153) are patronising or even dismissive. The detailed saga references, however, are coherent with the story and respectful of the source material. One, for example, illustrates the younger Haraldsen's morbid character: 'Read in the Sagas, and you will see how relentless is the wheel. Hrut slays Hrap, and Atli slays Hrut, and Gisli slays Atli, and Kari slays Gisli' (148). Another explains his recovery of nerve at the sight of an old sheep-dog turning on its younger attackers: 'It is a message to me . . . That dog is like Samr, who died with Gunnar of Lithend. He reminds me of what I had forgotten' (152). This note, however, is about a different and perhaps more intriguing type of debt to a saga that is less obviously present than Dasent 1866 or 1861, presumably Buchan's sources for the above.

'The Norlands' are of course the Faroes. Thus, the skipper taking on an unexpected passenger to them in the northern Orkneys explains that 'He will have to pay the whole fare between Leith and Reykjavik'

(Buchan 1956, 171). But the neatest confirmation is that Haraldsen ‘was full of the islands’ history, from the famous old saga of Trond of Gate, which is the Norland epic, to the later days’ (182). The reference is undoubtedly to Powell 1896, which identifies Trond (there Thrond) as the hero of the Saga of the Faroe Islanders.<sup>1</sup>

As to the name of the particular island, a likely source is indicated in Buchan’s symposium, also called *The Island of Sheep* (1919).<sup>2</sup> ‘A number of characters . . . meet in a shooting-lodge on a Scottish island to discuss the post-war world’ (Adam Smith 1965, 300). ‘Do you know,’ explains one of the participants,

that St Brendan came here on his great voyage? It is his Island of Sheep, where he found the lamb for the Paschal sacrifice . . . He sailed . . . out of tempestuous seas and came suddenly to a green isle of peace with sheep feeding among the meadows. And long after him the monks had their cells on the west shore looking out to the sunset. (Adam Smith 1965, 186)

The island of the novel also has a Scottish connection and is equally idyllic: ‘It reminded me [Hannay] of Colonsay, a low, green place cradled deep in the sea, where one would live as in a ship with the sound of waves always in the ear’ (Buchan 1956, 173).

But although a *locus amoenus*, a place as much of the imagination as of geography, the Island of Sheep is also set firmly within the archipelago, from which, on another level, it may equally well have derived its name (Faroes = ‘Islands of Sheep’). It might be seen as occupying roughly the same space as present-day Skúvoy:

We came to the little port of Hjalmarskavn [= Tórshavn], the capital of the Norlands . . . We . . . rounded the south end of the main island, skirted its west side, and threaded our way through an archipelago of skerries till we were abreast of Halder [= Sandoy?], the second biggest of the group . . . Presently on our port appeared a low coast-line, which from the map I saw was the Island of Sheep. It was separated from Halder by a channel perhaps two miles wide (172–73).

Skúvoy is the Skúvey of Powell 1896, in which it is the site of an attack and a siege. I hope to show that both may be reflected in the setting and action of Buchan’s novel.

The island is ‘shapen so from its height that there is the best of vantage ground there. There is but one path up it’ (Powell 1896, 30).

<sup>1</sup> Powell’s title ‘reflects the house style of the Northern Library series: sagas are about heroes, and it is the name of the hero who had to take pride of place on the title page’ (Wawn in Powell 1995, iv).

<sup>2</sup> Adam Smith’s claim that ‘the Island of Sheep . . . is a name for the Faeroes’ (1965, 263) is inexact.

Ossur is attacked there by Sigmund at a time when no watchman is on the path. Ossur 'had an earthwork cast up round the homestead in Skufey' (30), but it fails to protect him. 'Now Sigmund spied a place where the wall of the work had tumbled down a little, and it was somewhat easier to win in there than in another place' (33). Sigmund kills Ossur but the other defenders surrender after the threat that 'he should cut them off from food in the work or burn them therein' (33–34).

There are points of resemblance, despite the dislocation, between the above and, in the earlier part of the novel, the attack on the elder Haraldsen and his companions at Mafudi's kraal in southern Africa. 'The Hill of the Blue Leopard' is approachable only 'up a narrow bush road' (Buchan 1956, 59). 'The only danger-point was the gate' (59). And the attackers intend to burn them out. Although this scene and that on Skúfey perhaps both belong to the same traditional type, the three correspondences are, in the context of the novel, at least suggestive.

In the siege, the similarity between saga and novel is more compelling. This time it is Sigmund himself, the hero of the first part of the saga, who is on the defensive. He is besieged in the homestead at the top of the island by Thrond, in reality the villain of the piece rather than the hero. 'Then Thrond went up and they all, and came to the homestead and made a ring round it' (Powell 1896, 49). When the besiegers have been attacking for some time, Sigmund's wife calls to them:

'How long are you going to fight with headless men, Thrond?' said she. Thrond answered, 'As true as day,' said he, 'Sigmund must have got away'. Then he went round the house . . . till he came to the mouth of an earth-house a little way off the homestead. (50)

In the elliptical manner of the sagas this is as much as to say that Sigmund has escaped from the homestead by means of an underground chamber (*jarðhús* in Powell's original). The besiegers, searching for him, come to a rift that runs across the island. 'It was then as dark as it could be. Soon after this a man leapt over the rift to where Thrond and his men were . . . It was Sigmund' (50). Having killed one of the besiegers, Sigmund leaps back over the rift and escapes by jumping from 'a rock that jutted over the sea' (50).

The younger Haraldsen's house on the Island of Sheep is also on a vantage point, being 'built on high land above a little voe ['inlet']' (Buchan 1956, 173). What is more, it has an out-building (perhaps owing something to the monks' cells on St Brendan's Island of Sheep): 'It [the House] was all new except at one end, where stood a queer little stone cell or chapel, with walls about five feet thick. This, according to

the tale, had been the home of an Irish hermit . . . in the dark ages' (175). It is in the House that the 'neurotic Viking' (110), Hannay, and the others are besieged.

As the circle tightens, it is decided that Haraldsen, whose capture is the main objective of the besiegers, 'must be got out of the House into hiding' (222). A method presents itself: 'I have mentioned that to the north of the House, at the end of a kind of covered arcade used for pot-plants, stood the little stone cell of an Irish hermit who had brought Christianity to the Norlands . . . In the floor of the cell . . . [were] steps which led downward to the sea, ending in a cave in the cliffs' (222). Haraldsen is advised 'not to try to get out at the sea end . . . but to stay tight in [significantly] the passage' (222). Once the besiegers' quarry is thus in hiding, Hannay is able to tell them that 'Mr Haraldsen is not at home. He has left the island.' Eventually, Haraldsen, now berserk, rushes from the cell, seizes the chief of his enemies, and taking 'great leaps among the haggs [hollows] and boulders' (236) reaches a cliff-edge from which he hurls him into the sea.

The correspondences between saga and novel are this time surely striking. In both, the siege is of a house on a hill on an island. The house has in both an out-building and/or an underground passage. Again in both, it is into this construction that the human objective of the siege escapes, thus enabling the besieged to announce his absence to the besiegers. And in both, finally, we have a sudden, unexpected attack by the escaper from outside the siege, his leaps over the terrain, and a cliff-top finale.

I suggest that Buchan's most compelling debt in *The Island of Sheep* to Old Norse literature is not his plot of blood-feud and berserks, his references to Northern mythology, or even his skilful use of the sagas of Gísli and Njáll. It is his silent appropriation of one, and possibly two, graphic settings and actions from the only saga that he names, 'the famous old saga of Trond of Gate'.

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## FOUR PHILOLOGICAL NOTES

By †D. A. H. EVANS

### 1. *margir hváirtveggju*

In ch. 51 of *Egils saga* (ed. Sigurður Nordal, *ÍF* II (1933) 129) we read that

á Norðimbralandi váru þeir einir menn, ef nökkut var til, at danska ætt átti at faðerni eða móðerni, en margir hváirtveggju.

The most recent English rendering of these words of which I know is that of R. I. Page in *Peritia* 1 (1982) 346:

in Northumbria the only men who amounted to anything were of Danish parentage on father's or mother's side, and *many on both*. [Italics added]

This understanding of the passage and (what particularly interests me) of its last two words, is found in all five published English translations of *Egils saga*, from the Rev. W. C. Green in 1893 ('nearly all the inhabitants were Danish by the father's or mother's side, and many by both,' p. 91) to E. R. Eddison in 1930 ('many by both the one and the other,' p. 99), Gwyn Jones in 1960 ('many of them by both,' p. 121), Christine Fell in 1975 ('many of them were both,' p. 75) and Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards in 1976 ('in many cases on both,' p. 117). Nor are English translators alone in this: the Latin rendering by Guðmundur Magnússon in *Egils-saga sive Egilli Skallagrimii vita . . . cum interpretatione latina* (Havniæ, 1809) is in effect identical (though it fails to render *margir*):

nam hi soli erant incolae Northumbriae, si modo ulli erant, qui paternum maternumve genus, aut etiam utrumque a Danis haberent.

Similarly N. M. Petersen's Danish translation (4th edition (1923) 152):

I Northumberland var det nemlig saa godt som ingen Indbyggere, der jo enten paa fædrene eller mødrene Side var af dansk Æt, og mange var det paa begge Sider.

So also in German: Felix Niedner in 1911 (here cited from *Germanische Welt vor tausend Jahren*, ed. K. Reichardt (1936), 98) has 'von Vater oder Mutter oder auch von beiden Seiten' (he too omits *margir*) and Kurt Schier in 1978, p. 134, has 'von der Vaterseite oder der Mutterseite, viele aber von beiden'.

It may well seem rash to query so formidable a consensus, especially as the sense allotted to *margir hváirtveggju* appears so natural in itself, but I cannot see how such a sense can be extracted from these Icelandic words. The morphology of *hvár(r)tveggi/hvár(r)tveggja* exhibits much

variety, but there is no doubt about the meaning: in the singular it means ‘each of two (individuals or things)’, and in the plural ‘each of two (groups)’; to quote Leiv Heggstad, *Gamalnorsk Ordbok med nynorsk tyding* (2nd ed., 1930) ‘pl. hváirtveggja um two flokkar: góðir menn eru þér til hugganar, illir til frama, hváirtveggju til bata.’ (The quotation is normalised from *Heilagra manna sögur*, ed. C. R. Unger (1877), I 459.) The words in *Egils saga* can only mean ‘and each of these two groups (i. e. those who were Danish on the father’s side and those who were Danish on the mother’s side) was numerous’; no mention is made of those who were Danish on both sides, even though such persons must certainly have existed.

Nordal provides no note on the phrase, but two other Icelandic editors who have annotated it interpret it this way. Finnur Jónsson, editing *Egils saga* as vol. 3 of the *Altnordische Saga-Bibliothek* in 1894, writes (p. 146):

margir hváirtveggju, ‘multi utrique’, von beiden (d. h. den von mütterlicher oder väterlicher Seite von dän. Herkunft) gab es viele.

Óskar Halldórsson, in his modern spelling edition (1967), p. 162, has the following note on the words:

þ. e. hvorir tveggja (þeir, sem áttu danskan föður, og þeir, sem áttu danska móður) voru margir.

## 2. *mjøðrekka*

This weak feminine noun appears, on the face of it, to be a compound of *mjøð-* ‘mead’ and the root conveying the concept of drinking; since the contexts show that the word is not an abstract but refers to a material object, the Cleasby–Vigfusson dictionary of 1874 glosses it ‘mead-cask’ and Fritzner’s *Ordbog* (2nd ed.) II (1891): ‘Drikkekar hvoraf man drikker Mjød.’ However, in *Maal og Minne* (1919), 79–80 Kristian Kålund pointed out that in none of the three instances cited by these dictionaries is any connection with mead or drinking evident. In *Laxdæla saga* ch. 43 (*ÍF V*, 131) Ingibjørg, sister of Óláfr Tryggvason, uses a *mjøðrekka* as a kind of hatbox from which she takes out a *motr hvítan, gullofinn* to present to Kjartan; in *Egils saga* ch. 46 (*ÍF II*, 117) Egill, leading a plundering band in Kúrland, seizes *mjøðrekku eina vel mikla* from a farmer’s treasure-house, which is later found to be *full af silfri*; and in *Piðreks saga af Bern* ch. 160 (ed. Guðni Jónsson (1954), I 229 = p. 164 in C. R. Unger’s edition of 1853) Sigmundr’s queen, pregnant

with Sigurðr, gives birth to him in a remote forest valley and, taking from her *mjøðdrekka*, which she has with her, a glass jar, she wraps the baby up and places it in the jar.

In view of these passages (the only occurrences of the word known to him) Kålund proposed that *mjøðdrekka* had nothing to do with drinking mead but was a loan word (subsequently modified by popular etymology) from Old English *mydrece* (*myderce, mederce*); the etymology of this word is not clear, but its meaning is certainly ‘casket, chest’, as in *mydrece oððe cyst* glossing *loculus* (see *Ælfrics Grammatik und Glossar*, ed. J. Zupitza (1880), 313) and Ælfric’s *to þinum mydercum* for *arcariis gazae tuae* in Esther 3: 9 (*Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben*, ed. B. Assman (1889), 96, line 156).

Kålund’s suggestion is clearly highly plausible. Though it is not noticed in the supplement which Sir William Craigie added to the reissue of the Cleasby–Vigfusson dictionary in 1957, and was evidently unknown both to Anatoly Liberman, who calls *mjøðdrekka* ‘a transparently Icelandic word’ (*JEGP* 82 (1983), 401) and to R. M. Wilson, who seems to have thought Egill’s discovery of silver in a mead-cask was meant to be funny (*Medieval Literature and Civilization, studies in memory of G. N. Garmonsway*, ed. D. A. Pearsall and R. A. Waldron (1969), 122), it has been accepted by Finn Hødnebø in the supplementary fourth volume of ‘Rettelser og tillegg’ he added to Fritzner’s *Ordbog* in 1972 and by the authors of the standard etymological dictionaries, F. Holthausen (1948), Alexander Jóhannesson (1956, see p. 1090), Jan de Vries (1961), and Ásgeir Blöndal Magnússon (1989). (The reference to *mjøðdrekka* as an *Irish* loanword in Sigrid Valfells and James E. Cathey, *Old Icelandic, An Introductory Course* (1981), 239 is evidently a slip of the pen.)

Nevertheless, as it stands Kålund’s proposal remains a conjecture only, albeit an attractive one; a mead-cask *might*, after all be used for the purposes the three texts describe, much as simple folk are sometimes said to keep their life savings in a teapot. It is therefore worth while to draw attention to two further occurrences of *mjøðdrekka* (or variants *mjøðdrekka, mjøðdrykkja*) which transform Kålund’s conjecture into a certainty.

First: in *Tristrams saga ok Ísondar* (ed. E. Kölbing, 1878), an object which appears on p. 37 as a *kistill* (‘little chest, casket’) reappears on p. 53 as a *mjødrykkja*. In ch. 29, when Tristram has slain Mórhold in combat, a portion of Tristram’s sword is left embedded in his skull; this is then removed with tongs and presented to his grieving sister Ísodd:

Lét hun þegar þvá af heilann ok blóðit ok lagði í kistil sínn, at þat skyldi vera til áminningar harms óllum, þvíat með því var hann dreppinn.

Subsequently, in ch. 43, Ísodd examines Tristram's damaged sword:

Ok sá hun þegar skarðit, er görðist, þegar Tristram drap Mórhold . . . ok gekk hun þá til mjöðdrykkju sínnar ok tók sverðsbrotit, þat er hun hafði hirt, ok lagði í skarðit, ok fell samfældliga í sverðit, sem þat hafði ur stokkit.

This saga was also edited by Gísli Brynjólfsson (1878) and by Bjarni Vilhjálmsson in *Riddara sögur* I (1949); Bjarni's text is mainly based on that of Gísli but with occasional readings from two seventeenth-century manuscripts in Landsbókasafn, and here the two crucial phrases appear respectively as *í kistil sinn* (p. 73) and *til mjöðdrekku sinnar* (p. 111).

Second: in *Elis saga ok Rósamundu*, edited by E. Kölbing in 1881 from the Uppsala manuscript De la Gardie 4–7 fol. of c.1250, we read at p. 75:

Siðan toc mærin or mioðreckiu sinni IIII gros sua kroftug, at alldregi scapaðe guð þat kuikuende ne mann, er abergði þæma grosum, sua at þau niðr kœmi um halsinn i briostíð, at æigi væri þegar sua hæill sem fiskr i vatni.

For *mioðreckiu* Cod. Holm. Perg. 6, 4<sup>o</sup> (c.1400) has *mioddrykciu*. Kölbing also prints, at the foot of the page, the somewhat revised text from Cod. Holm. Perg. 7, fol. (late 15th century), where this passage reads:

Sydan toc mærin einn smyslabudzk; hon tok þar up ur graus sokroptug, at alldri skop gud þat kvikindi hier a jardriki, ef abrygdi þeim grosum, so huerr sem því rendi nidr i briostit þat var þegar heillt.

That is, the *mjoðrekka* or *mjoðdrykkja* of the older manuscripts has been interpreted as a *smyrslabuðkr* 'box for ointments'.

This saga is based on the French poem *Elie de Saint Gille*, edited by G. Reynaud in 1879 (a work seldom read, at least in Oxford; the Bodleian copy was uncut in 1996). At p. 48 we find the lines (1445–48) on which this passage depends:

Rosamonde s'en torne et son ecrin deferme:  
A ses mains qu'el ot blances en a traite[s] .II. herbes  
Que Dieus ot sou ses piés, le glorieus chelestre,  
Quant en crois le leverent la pute gent averse.

We see here that *mjoðrekka* and its variants is a rendering of *écrin* 'little box, casket.'

### 3. *Víga-Glúms saga, ch. 1*

At the end of the first chapter of *Víga-Glúms saga* Eyjólfur, the son of Ingjaldur Helgason at Þverá, asks his father for leave to accompany to Norway the Norwegian captain Hreiðarr, who has been lodging with them over the winter. Ingjaldur has never cared for merchants, but is prepared to make an exception for Hreiðarr. In the edition of G. Turville-Petre (second edition (1960), 2), normalised and with modern punctuation, the final sentence of the chapter runs thus:

Ingjaldur segir, at fáir drengir munu slíkir sem Hreiðarr: ‘ok með þessi þinni meðferð ok at reyndum [hans] drengskap leyfi ek þér ferðina, ok þykkja betr, at þú farir með honum en með qðrum.’

(The editor supplies *hans* from the late paper manuscripts; it is not in Möðruvallabók.) The sentence appears identically (in effect) in Jónas Kristjánsson, *Eyfirðinga sogur*, ÍF IX (1956), 5.

The meaning is obvious, but what is the syntax of *þykkja*? It is clearly not 1st sg. pres. subj. nor 3rd pl. pres. indic., so it must be the infinitive; but (though the editors have no comment) one would surely expect *mér þykkir*. Unless one is prepared to emend so as to read that, all I can suggest is that the writer momentarily reverted to indirect speech, so that one should punctuate as follows:

Ingjaldur segir, at fáir drengir munu slíkir sem Hreiðarr: ‘ok með þessi þinni meðferð ok at reyndum [hans] drengskap leyfi ek þér ferðina,’ ok þykkja betr, ‘at þú farir með honum en með qðrum.’

### 4. *marsala*

Readers of Sir John Betjeman's autobiographical poem *Summoned by Bells* will recall his description of the absurd 'Colonel' Kolkhorst's regular Sunday-morning 'rout', frequented by undergraduates (of the better sort), and a memorable feature of the Oxford of the nineteen-twenties:

D'ye ken Kolkhorst in his artful parlour,  
Handing out the drink at his Sunday morning gala?  
Some get sherry and some Marsala—

the latter being those temporarily out of favour with the Colonel; as Thackeray put it in 1848 in his *Book of Snobs*, ch. 25, 'I prefer sherry to marsala when I can get it'. Marsala is an inferior sherry-like wine, nowadays mainly used in cooking, and named from the Sicilian town where it originated.

As I have not seen it noticed, it might be of interest to draw attention to an amusing error in Halldór Halldórsson, *Old Icelandic ‘heiti’ in Modern Icelandic* (1975), a work which principally consists of alphabetised instances in post-1540 Icelandic (whether as simplexes or as elements of compounds) of words which belong wholly or mainly to the Old Icelandic poetic vocabulary. One of these words is *marr* ‘sea’, where Halldór adduces (for example) *mararbotn* ‘the bottom of the sea’, *marglytti* ‘jelly-fish’, *marhálmur* ‘sea-grass’, and many other such compounds. One of these is *marsala*, where Halldór states (p. 56), ‘probably the word means “sale at sea, i. e., at ship’s side”’. He has taken this word (via the files of *Orðabók Háskólans*) from an advertisement in an 1899 issue of the Reykjavík newspaper *Fjallkonan*, which Halldór quotes in an abbreviated form as *Nýkomið með, Laurà [a ship] ... Vínföng ... Marsala*. Of course, the reference is to the Sicilian wine.

## REVIEWS

TÚLKUN HEIÐARVÍGASÖGU. By BJARNI GUÐNASON. *Studia Islandica* 50. Bókmenntafraeðistofnun Háskóla Íslands. Reykjavík, 1993. 287 pp.

Bjarni Guðnason has made himself something of a specialist in works that no longer exist. What is perhaps his earliest publication, ‘Um Brávallaþulu’ (*Skírnir*, 132 (1958)), was on the lost poem thought to lie behind the accounts of the legendary battle at ‘Brávellir’ in Saxo and in *Sögubrot affornkonungum*. His doctoral dissertation, *Um Skjöldunga sögu* (1963) tackled another lost work, and in 1978 he published *Fyrsta sagan*, a study of the lost *Hryggjarstykki*. This latest monograph almost conforms to this pattern; true, *Heiðarvíga saga* (*Hvs.*) is not actually lost, but it came as close to being so as any work that exists at all can have done. The beginning of the sole manuscript that seems to have survived into the seventeenth century had already lost its opening leaves, and one leaf towards the end of the saga, when it was sent to Sweden in 1683. In 1725 Árni Magnússon arranged for it to be lent to him in Copenhagen, but by a fortunate error only the first twelve leaves were sent—fortunate because, after Árni’s scribe Jón Ólafsson frá Grunnavík had copied these, both the leaves themselves and Jón’s copy were destroyed in the fire of 1728. Jón thereupon reconstructed their contents as best he could from memory, and it is this reconstruction, with a certain sprinkling of eighteenth-century phrasing, which constitutes the first half (roughly) of the saga in modern printed editions. And then, in 1951, the missing leaf near the end came to light, in poor condition, in the National Library of Iceland, among a number of vellum pieces that had come to the Library from Öxnadalur in 1910. This was too late for its contents (so far as they were legible) to appear when Sigurður Nordal and Guðni Jónsson edited the saga in volume III of the *Íslenzk fornrit* series (*Borgfirðinga sögur*, 1938), but they have been inserted into the 1956 reprint. (This necessitated some adjustment of the pagination from p. 314 on, and it is a minor vexation of Bjarni’s monograph that he has, most of the time, used the old page-numbering.)

This unhappy history hardly provides a promising start for any *tulkun*, or interpretation, of the saga, and its style and narrative content might well appear to make matters worse. ‘It seems in various ways to be imperfect and primitive—and, as far as that goes, archaic. The writing is stiff, often downright clumsy, repetitious and ponderous. The sequence of events is very complicated, and people crop up in the story without any word as to their origin or connection with the action.’ That is Jónas Kristjánsson (*Eddas and Sagas* (1988), 224), but he is doing no more than expressing the consensus; the usual view, indeed, is that this is the very oldest of the Family Sagas, so primitive, so unpractised, does the style appear. Nor does Bjarni, for all the radicalism of his approach, dissent entirely from such judgements; he admits the exposition is in parts involved, the mode of narration awkward (*framvinda . . . á köflum snúin, frásagnahátturinn óþjáll*, p. 25), the plot is hard to remember (p. 22) and the

style is in places ‘at once uneven and unpolished, sentence connectives are clumsy, and at times words and phrases are repeated unnecessarily’ (*í senn ójafn og óheflaður, setningatengsl eru óliðleg og orð og orðasambönd eru stundum endurtekin að nauðsynjalausu*, p. 194), though Bjarni also holds (surprisingly, some may think) that it is not possible to doubt the author’s skill in telling a story (*EKKI verður efast um snilld höfundar til að segja sögu*, p. 25).

Bjarni’s essential thesis can be stated quite simply. *Hvs.* is not, as hitherto believed, an *erindislaus athafnasaga hefnda og víga* (‘a tale of events, of reprisals and killings, with no message,’ p. 21); true, *Hún snýst frá upphafi til enda um hefndir og gagnhefndir* (‘From beginning to end it turns on deeds of revenge and counter-revenge,’ p. 30), but there is more to it than meets the eye (*ekki öll, þar sem hún var séð*, p. 27), it contains ‘hidden judgements’ (*leynda dóma*, p. 20, *hulda dóma*, p. 254); under the surface it is an attack on the endless killings which characterised the period when the Old Icelandic Republic was disintegrating (*undir niðri atlaga á stanslausum mannvígum, sem tiðkuðust á upplausnartímum þjoðveldisins*, p. 27). There is probably not a great deal of genuine history in the narrative; rather, it is a *skáldsaga andlegrar merkingar* (‘a work of fiction with a spiritual meaning,’ p. 234), in which Víga-Styrr, the *ofssamaðr* who dominates the first half of the saga, and who kills repeatedly for the most trivial of reasons, is *hin dökka mynd Sturlungaaldar* (‘the dark image of the Sturlung age,’ p. 234), symbolising the violent and revengeful values of heathenism as against the ever-forgiving Gestr Pórhallason: *Með Víga-Styr og Gesti er höfundur að lýsa átökum heiðni og kristni* (‘In Víga-Styrr and Gestr the author is illustrating the clash of paganism and Christianity,’ p. 258). As well as Styrr, Barði and his mother Þuriðr, votaries of bloodshed and revenge, stand for the old pagan values of *forneskja*, which Óláfr helgi gives as his reason for refusing to admit Barði to his court, and which here means (Bjarni argues at length, pp. 45–65) not ‘magic’ (which Barði is not said to have engaged in) but ‘heathen ways, unchristian acts, killing the innocent.’ And on the other side, alongside Gestr, we have Guðlaugr, who refuses to join the revenge expedition of his father Snorri goði (and who later became a monk in England) and Eiðr, who speaks for reconciliation at the *Alþingi*, for all that he has lost two sons in the killings on the heath, having vainly tried to dissuade them from riding forth to the fight. ‘The author explains the curse of his own age as remnants of Old Norse ideas about the duty of revenge, which was still governing men’s acts,’ Bjarni sums up (*höfundur skýrir böl samtíðar sinnar sem leifar norraenna hugmynda um hefndarskyldu, sem enn ráði gerðum manna*, p. 261). And if this saga was written as a message for the Sturlung age, then of course it cannot date from c.1200, as is usually supposed; Bjarni puts it some sixty years later (p. 253).

Now it is certainly true that some of the events in the saga are, in the context of the *Íslendinga sögur*, highly unusual, even unique. When Styrr’s son Þorsteinn pursues Gestr, his father’s slayer, to Norway and then to Constantinople and twice makes attempts on his life but succeeds only in wounding him, on both occasions Gestr not only laughs off the wound but actually intervenes on Þorsteinn’s side, on the second occasion buying off the indignant Varangians with his own money and giving his now penniless attacker more money to get

him back to Iceland. Then there is Óláfr helgi's rejection of Barði on moral grounds; there seems to be no true parallel to this, for Grettir, the only other Icelander to be thus rejected, suffered because he was an *ógæfumaðr*, not because of *forneskja*. Again, there is Barði's mother Þuriðr; the 'female inciter' is of course a stock figure, but her bizarre humiliation, in being deliberately tumbled from her horse into a stream, 'has no parallel in the sagas, any more than much else in *Hvs.*' (á sér ekki *hlíðstæðu i fornum sögum fremur en margt annað i Heiðarvígasögu*, p. 66). Bjarni is not quite the first to propose that we should be alert to a *sensus spiritualis* (p. 266) in the saga, for, as he observes on p. 179, Nordal wrote in 1938, 'It is at times as though the saga was turning into a kind of exemplum about the wrongs entailed by the old slayings of kin' (*Það er stundum eins og sagan verði nokkurs konar dæmisaga um ranglaetið i hinum fornu ættvígum*, *ÍF III*, cxii), but Nordal made this point only in passing and did not follow it up. As so often nowadays when scholars espouse hidden religious symbolism and spiritual messages in works seemingly secular, one wonders just why the writer had taken such care to hide his important message. In the tale told by Ketill Þorsteinsson (later bishop of Hólar) in *Porgils saga ok Hafliða*, which preaches forgiveness and which Bjarni adduces as a parallel to *Hvs.* (*gagntekin sömu hugsjón* 'permeated by the same idea', p. 181; *Líkur hugmyndaheimur* 'a similar world of notions', p. 182), the message is explicit: Ketill says he resolved to refer the assault he had suffered *á guðs miskunn* 'to the mercy of God', and yielded the case to his opponent *fyrir guðs sakir* 'for the sake of God' (quoted p. 182).

Still, if Bjarni had left the matter at this point, I would have little quarrel with him; this saga does have odd features and Bjarni's explanation is far from implausible. Unfortunately, he has embedded this perfectly reasonable hypothesis in a mass of extravagant suggestions which are only too likely, I suspect, to lead many readers to dismiss the whole volume. First, he believes that a number of episodes in *Hvs.* are modelled on Old Testament events. Thus, the killing of the bullying Styrr by the youthful and undersized Gestr is seen as a derivative (*afsprengi*, p. 98) of David's killing of Goliath, and Gestr's subsequent forgiving of the attacks on Styrr's son Þorsteinn (as recounted above) is claimed to be probably based on David's forgiveness of King Saul's attacks on him (p. 104). When, just before his killing, Styrr arrives in frosty weather at the farmstead Jørvi with his companions, there is thick smoke in the house, under cover of which Gestr smites Styrr from behind with an axe. This combination of frost and fire is an image of the Christian hell (cf. *milli frosts ok funa* in *Sólarljóð* st. 18), the hell to which Styrr must now depart. This method is extended to *Laxdæla*. When Gestr Oddleifsson dies in midwinter, ice makes Breiðafjørðr impassable to ships and his corpse cannot be conveyed from Barðastrond for burial at Helgafell; then a sudden break in the weather allows this, and he is buried where he had desired; the very next day the ice returned, and remained for most of the winter (*ÍF V*, 196–97). This story, Bjarni thinks (p. 137) is based on the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt when the Red Sea miraculously opened to permit them dry passage and then closed in once more, drowning their Egyptian pursuers.

Even less likely to command wide assent is Bjarni's belief that many of the names in *Hvs.* have symbolic significance. This notion is very prominent in the book and is regarded by Bjarni as fundamental to his analysis: 'People will not get far in the interpretation of *Hvs.* if they do not understand the names symbolically' (*Menn ná ekki langt í túlkun Heiðarvígasögu án þess að skilja nöfnin táknaðum skilningi*, p. 258). Here are some examples. Barði (pp. 151–52) is *sá sem ber* ('he who beats') and *sá sem er barinn* ('he who is beaten'); his world is one of fighting (*barsmíðar*). His wife Auðr is *auðna* 'good fortune, luck'; when he strikes her, he strikes away his *auðna* (p. 63), and Auðr's name is also the inspiration of Spes (Latin for 'hope') in *Grettis saga* (p. 225). Guðlaugr washes away (*laugar*) his sins by praying, and becomes a monk in England (p. 96). Þuriðr, the personification of revenge (p. 267), is from earlier \**Pór-riðr*, and is as it were a representative of Ása-Pórr, and her humiliation in the stream is a reflex of the god's struggle through the river Vimur, as told in *Snorra Edda* (pp. 87–91). The author of *Hvs.*, Bjarni holds, was very conscious of Pórr as, so to speak, the moving spirit of paganism, which is why he shortened Þorgestr (as he is named in some sources) to Gestr (p. 106; but the statement on this page that he is called Þorgestr in *Eyrbyggja* is wrong, as indeed p. 103, n. 1 shows); Gestr may also partly owe his name (p. 109) to the fact that Christ on earth was a *gestr* among men. (In fact, the number of Icelanders in the sagas with *Pór-* as the first element in their names must be at least 1500, and they cannot all have been champions of paganism: Þorlákr inn helgi was not.) Bjarni sees the same kind of symbolism in *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings* (p. 259): Hávarðr is he who through his deeds raises for himself a lofty memorial (*há varða*), his wife Bjargey puts things to rights and brings food into the home (*bjargar málum og dregur björg í bú*) and, though their son Óláfr's name is not transparent, he is a mixture of hero and saint (like Óláfr helgi, Bjarni presumably means).

I hope Bjarni will not take it amiss if I cast back at him some of his own words, from *Skírnir* 145 (1971), p. 164, where he was reviewing Hermann Pálsson's *Tólfta öldin*:

Öllum er ljóst að hugkvæmni er einn mikilvægasti eðlisþáttur góðs vísindamanns, en hún verður at taka lögum af þeim heimildum, sem úr er unnið og láta sig sennileik einhverju varða. Lausbeizluð hugkvæmni er leikur, sem ekkert á skylt við fræði- eða vísindarannsóknir, heldur skáldskap.

Everyone can see that imagination is one of the most important qualities of a good scholar, but it must take its form from the sources that constitute the basis of the enquiry and must allot some weight to probability. Free-ranging imagination is a game, which has no relation to scholarly or scientific researches, but rather to the art of fiction.

I am afraid that parts of this review might suggest to the reader that I think this book of little value. That is far from my view. It is always engaging, even entertaining, it is lucid and erudite, and though it leaves me on the whole unconvinced, Bjarni argues his case as powerfully as anyone could have done. Everyone interested in the sagas should read it; they will learn a great deal from

it and, if they are foreigners, they will learn much Icelandic too, for Bjarni is a master of a rich, flexible and idiomatic style. (If I can do so without being too presumptuous, I would however suggest that in *skírskotanir . . . eru valin* (p. 44) the last word should be *valdar*, on p. 113 I note that the initial genitive (rather than dative) in *pessarar lýsingar verður naumast til annarrar jafnað* is unsanctioned by the dictionaries, and on p. 153 I wonder whether the datives *Drápi . . . lygum, þjófnaði og blekkingum* might not better be accusatives, since they would seem to be more naturally in apposition to *grófar misgerðir*, rather than *hefndum*, in the preceding clause.)

Finally it may be of interest to note that another scholar, evidently independently of Bjarni, thought he detected a further instance of Christian symbolism in *Hvs.*: Thomas D. Hill, 'Guðlaugr Snorrasón: The Red Faced Saint and the Refusal of Violence', *Scandinavian Studies* 67 (1995), 145–52, argues that the frightening, blood-red countenance of Guðlaugr after he has refused to join his father's killing expedition is derived from Christian iconography, where (as Pope Gregory, quoted by Hill, states) red is the colour of *caritas*. Hill's view is denied by William Sayers (in the same volume of the same journal, pp. 536–40), who thinks Guðlaugr is simply embarrassed by his father's response; Hill then replies (pp. 544–47), having, to my mind, the best of the argument. Neither writer shows any awareness of Bjarni's book.

† D. A. H. EVANS

HANSISCHE LITERATURBEZIEHUNGEN: DAS BEISPIEL DER PIÐREKS SAGA UND VERWANDTER LITERATUR. Edited by SUSANNE KRAMARZ-BEIN. Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 14. *Walter de Gruyter*. Berlin and New York, 1996. xxiv + 315 pp.

This volume is the publication of a symposium held in Bonn in 1992. After an introduction (pp. ix–xxiv) in which the editor summarises the contents of the articles, it is divided into five sections: a pair of introductory papers, half a dozen on *Piðreks saga* itself, two on the Old Norse context, two on High German parallels, and two on other Old Norse works.

Alois Wolf ('Vermutungen zum Wirksamwerden europäischer literarischer Tendenzen im mittelalterlichen Norden', pp. 3–26) explores the European tendencies in medieval Scandinavian literature, pointing out the common importance of heroic ideals, the conversion and the development of national feeling. He also draws an interesting distinction between the outlooks of Norway and Iceland, Icelanders being apparently more conscious of difference from the rest of Europe. Thomas Behrmann in 'Norwegen und das Reich unter Hákon IV. (1217–1263) und Friedrich II. (1212–1250)', pp. 27–50, gives what looks to a non-historian like a comprehensive survey of relations between Hákon's Norway and Frederick's Empire. He covers contact with England, Africa and the Middle East and shows that the geographical span of *Piðreks saga* fits equally well with the world-view of crusaders and that of merchants.

Edith Marold examines ‘Die Erzählstruktur des *Velentstháttir*’ (pp. 53–73), finding it to be characteristic of both the *Íslendinga þaettir* and *chansons de geste*. She links this connection with *Karlamagnús saga* and parallel political conditions in France, Germany and Norway. Disappointingly, she ignores the French, German and English variants of the Velent story, although she deals with *Völundarkviða*. Hans-Peter Naumann’s essay on Velent’s brother Egill (‘Der Meisterschütze Egill, Franks Casket und die *Piðreks saga*’, pp. 74–90) is out of place. It discusses the Franks Casket interestingly but has little to say about *Piðreks saga* and nothing about the Hanseatic League. In a brief item (‘*Piðreks saga* als Gegenwartsdichtung?’, pp. 91–99) Heinrich Beck suggests that the international relations depicted in the saga reflect conditions then prevailing in Germany in much the same way as Saxo turns the past into an image of the present. Gert Kreutzer gives an exhaustive account of ‘Aspekte des Komischen in der *Piðreks saga*’ (pp. 100–30), from simple farce to ironical criticism. There are possible comic relationships with *Parzival*, *König Rother* and *Eckenlied*. The mixture of ‘high’ and ‘low’ cultures indicated here, he considers, are to be found not at the Norwegian court but on the Continent. Ulrike Sprenger’s ‘Zum Superbiaproblem in der *Piðreks saga*’ (pp. 131–49) concentrates on the presentation of Piðrekr. She analyses analogues, such as the apportioning of blame in the *Rabenschlacht* and *Dietrichs Flucht*, the example of Job as a type of patience under undeserved suffering and the Scandinavian view of giant descent and diabolical nature. In her conclusion, that Piðrekr’s hell-ride stems from a conception alien to that found elsewhere in the saga, Otto Gschwantler concurs. He also suggests that the hero is not damned but has not yet gained salvation. His close reading in ‘Konsistenz und Intertextualität im Schlußteil der *Piðreks saga*’ (pp. 150–72) is very enlightening, particularly for its structural implications.

Heiko Uecker, in the highlight of the collection, ‘Nordisches in der *Piðreks saga*’ (pp. 175–85), goes to the heart of the question—what is Nordic in *Piðreks saga*? His foundation for an answer touches on nomenclature, grammar, the presentation of heroes and the borders of orality and literacy, and should be read by all concerned with these topics. Susanne Kramarz-Bein compares ‘*Piðreks saga* und *Karlamagnús saga*’ (pp. 186–211), showing that they may have more in common than a superficial resemblance as legendary cycles, sharing some specific details (e. g. twelve companions, *moniage*) as well as structural aspects.

Peter Göhler’s contribution is ‘Überlegungen zur Funktion des Hortes im *Nibelungenlied*’ (pp. 215–35). He considers that even the protagonists prize the treasure primarily for its symbolic importance rather than for its monetary value. He refers to the *Lied vom hürnen Seyfrid*, *Volsunga saga*, the Edda and Danish ballads; but if there is mention of *Piðreks saga* I have missed it. Hermann Reichert, in his examination of ‘*Piðreks saga* und oberdeutsche Heldenage’ (pp. 236–65), finds the saga generally consistent with a southerly context. Contrary to the normal ascription to Low German sources, there are specific indications of High German—even Tyrolean—origins for some of the constituent parts.

Rudolf Simek ('Zum *Königsspiegel*', pp. 269–89) looks at *Konungs skuggsjá*, appropriately, in a Hanseatic context; unlike other 'mirrors for princes' it concerns itself with merchants, and its household pattern of economy is difficult to explain. Finally, Stefanie Würth deals with '*Alexanders saga*: Literarische und kulturelle Adaptation einer lateinischen Vorlage' (pp. 290–315). She renews the discussion of Brandr Jónsson as possible translator, sketching his biography. She places the *Alexandreis* in context and deals with the nature of medieval translation and the specifics of Bishop Brandr's practice. Here there is another suggestion of contemporary political resonance.

If one were still tempted to view *Piðreks saga* from a Migration Age rather than a Late Medieval perspective, this volume would be the ideal preventative. It is a very useful tour through and around—sometimes at a considerable distance from—the subject. One last complaint: an index would have been invaluable.

ANDREW R. DAVIDSON

THE UNACCENTED VOWELS OF PROTO-NORSE. By MARTIN SYRETT. NOWELE Supplement Vol. 11. *Odense University Press*. Odense, 1994. [4] + 323 pp.

This is a thoroughly critical piece of work: a timely and welcome contribution to Norse philology. Earlier toilers in the field of Proto-Norse—at least, those seeking to give a comprehensive account of the language or of some major aspect of it—tended to be dogmatic. They imposed their version of order on the sparsely documented early history of Scandinavian (or Scandinavian and Ingvaemonic, depending on your point of view), and showed little inclination to ponder fundamental questions about the kind of exercise in which they were engaged. Syrett, in contrast, is properly concerned with the nature of the evidence he is working with, at one point (p. 36) even equating our 'knowledge' of Proto-Norse with illusions, and constantly warning of the dangers of circular argumentation. He is also refreshingly free of preconceptions—indeed, again and again he comes back to the point that we must approach the data without preconceptions of any kind—even the most ancient and hallowed.

*The Unaccented Vowels of Proto-Norse* is a self-explanatory title, but it will be worth briefly rehearsing the contents of the work. Chapter 1 provides a critical evaluation of the various sources of evidence for Proto-Norse, while chapter 2 discusses earlier interpretations of the evidence and the author's own approach to it. There follow six chapters of analysis dealing not only with final and composition syllables but also word-formation suffixes. The last chapter summarises what has gone before and offers a brief, tentative conclusion.

In itself the conclusion seems conservative and unexciting. It is that the unstressed vowel system of Proto-Norse differed from the stressed in having fewer units, which meant that the realisation of the unstressed vowels could vary to a much greater extent than that of their stressed counterparts. The implications of such a view, however, are far-reaching. Syrett reconstructs the early Proto-Norse unstressed long vowel system as /i:/, /u:/, /o:/ and [æ:], and

considers what he takes to be fluctuations in the spelling of the last of these four (especially in the 3rd sg. weak preterite ending, which exhibits the forms **-a**, **-ai** and **-e**) as an indication ‘that there was no direct mapping between the phonetic value of the unit *æ*- and any individual rune’ (p. 268). If he should be right, it would of course do away with the need to interpret a form such as **talgidai** ‘[NN] carved’ as a backward spelling (following the coalescence of /ai/ and /æ:/), which involves the doubtful assumption of an orthographic tradition among rune writers in Proto-Norse. The **ai** rendering now becomes simply ‘an approximate orthographic representation of a sound for which no equivalent rune existed’ (pp. 253–54)—a parallel to the use of **ai**, **ia** and **au** for monophthongs in the runic writing of the Viking Age.

To some extent, of course, this approach conflicts with the conception, much favoured in the literature of the last twenty or thirty years, of a near perfect fit between the phonemes of Proto-Norse and the twenty-four runes of the older *fubark*. But Syrett has his doubts about the fit—on methodological grounds if nothing else. Elmer Antonsen’s view (*A Concise Grammar of the Older Runic Inscriptions* (1975), 4) that Proto-Germanic (not ‘urnordisch’ as stated by Syrett) had six vowel phonemes and therefore it is no accident that the older *fubark* contained just six vowel runes, elicits the apt comment (p. 35) that the *fubark*’s fit with the Proto-Norse phonemic system is not accidental either, ‘since the reconstruction of the language is heavily reliant on the evidence of the early runic inscriptions.’ In more positive vein (and leading ultimately to views such as that noted above about [æ:]), it is suggested that ‘some aspects and problems of early runic phonology~orthography are better explained by assuming a degree of uncertainty in the phonemic~graphemic fit’.

The analytical procedures adopted in *The Unaccented Vowels of Proto-Norse* are designed to ensure maximum objectivity. Contemporary evidence in the form of runic inscriptions is the starting point, and the identification of syllables that share a morphological function is chosen as the initial method of analysis. Morphs thus identified are compared with reflexes in later, better documented, stages of the language, and only then is an attempt made ‘to extrapolate phonological information from the data’ (p. 37). This reassuringly cautious approach typifies the constant critical watch Syrett keeps on himself as well as others. A manifestation of the same reluctance to build castles in the air can be seen in frank admissions of ignorance, as when we are told (p. 156) that in the present state of our knowledge there is simply no way of determining the length of the final vowel in the Kjølevik stone’s acc. m. sg. **minino** ‘my’.

It will by now be apparent that I find little to criticise in this book. Occasionally, perhaps, an argument can seem slightly strained. There is the suggestion, for example, that **runo**, which occurs more than once, is an acc. pl. form ‘runes’, remodelled from earlier /ru:no:z/ by analogy with stem classes whose acc. pl. ended in a vowel—at the same time as those same stem classes were themselves adopting final /-z/ in the acc. pl. by analogy with /-o:-/-stem nouns like /ru:no:z/. I do not deny that such a sequence of events is possible, but it seems methodologically unsound to assume it (the importance of distinguishing between what *might* have happened and the limited range of developments

we as scholars can allow ourselves to reconstruct is more than once rightly underlined by Syrett himself).

The English is throughout plain and relatively jargon-free. Occasionally I found it a little over-colloquial, and one or two of the colloquialisms seemed to obscure the intended meaning. 'Flipside' (p. 27), for instance, ought from the context to mean something like 'consequence [of this]'—an interpretation that does not accord with my—possibly imperfect—understanding of the term.

Yet these are but minor quibbles. The author has deepened considerably our understanding not only of the unstressed vowel system of Proto-Norse but also of the many problems involved in dealing with a language the direct evidence for which is so meagre and uncertain. He deserves our congratulations.

MICHAEL BARNES

WORD HEATH. WORTHEIDE. ORÐHEIDI. ESSAYS ON GERMANIC LITERATURE AND USAGE (1972–92). By ANATOLY LIBERMAN. *Selected Writings*, Vol. 1. *Episteme dell'Antichità e oltre 1. Il Calamo*. Rome, 1994. 498 pp.

On the occasions on which I have heard Anatoly Liberman lecture, the performance has been striking. One after another, propositions seem to burst out, impelled by the pressure of a wealth of ideas waiting to launch themselves on the listener. There is no need for a script; Liberman draws on a wide range of accumulated knowledge, darting with a sometimes bewildering speed between examples in diverse languages and cultures. The ideas thus impelled are quirky, idiosyncratic, above all, provocative; the present volume, a collection of 21 essays, three of them hitherto unpublished, is the same.

The essays printed centre on two main areas, etymology and mythology, the one fertilising the other. This is amply illustrated by one of the central essays in the volume, Essay 11, 'Snorri and Saxo on Útgarðaloki, with Notes on Loki Laufeyjarson's Character, Career and Name' (pp. 176–234). Liberman's first concern here is to establish the nature and origin of Útgarðaloki, evaluating Snorri and Saxo as sources, sifting through previous scholars' views on the etymologies of key words that trace indebtedness to foreign concepts; just what, for example, is the significance of Snorri's use of the West Germanic *hanzki* for Skrýmir's glove (p. 183)? Why is Útgarð in Saxo more like Grendel's mere than the home of a Nordic giant, and what is its relation to the phrase *at fara einhvern um útgarða*, with an apparent meaning of 'devastate' (p. 187)? His conclusion is to reconstruct a myth, in which a sky-god was obliged to travel to the outer, or other, world, to obtain mantic wisdom from, or pay homage to, a rival deity, our Útgarðaloki. He, in turn, can be identified with the Loki of the Norse cosmogony. Etymologies of words from Loki's immediate environment are drawn in to support the argument, or to illustrate the wealth of scholarly surmise the subject has attracted: Nál, Loki's mother, for example, is elucidated by such comparisons as *Teufelsnadel*, 'Devil's Bride', apparently a Swiss word for dragonfly, or does *nál*, 'needle', being the word for a 'sharp object', as is *pike*, suggest Loki's piscine ancestry (p. 195)? Stories that show

Loki as a trickster, in Liberman's argument, are late; in origin he is a chthonian deity, and thus identifiable with Útgarðaloki.

If I have chosen to examine this one essay at disproportionate length, it is because it is symptomatic of the collection. The wealth lies in the detail: the combination of widespread reading of scholarship and the use of the most apparently disparate etymological details in pursuit of a common objective is typical of Liberman's method. So, too, is a tendency toward unexplained categorical statements of views we may be less inclined to concur with than Liberman thinks we should. Can we really accept his statement that mistletoe can 'under no circumstances become a deadly weapon' (p. 201) in a world-view in which poetry can be swallowed as mead and the wolf Fenrir be fettered with a silken band? Why should Beowulfian phrases in *Andreas* (Essay 9, 'Beowulf–Grettir', p. 140) not be quotations? Or the 'patchiness' of the *Nibelungenlied* (even if we agree that this 'patchiness' exists) be a satisfactory reason for dismissing *Beowulf* as a coherent whole: '*Beowulf* is a mediaeval poem; and a total unity of artistic design should not be assumed for it: suffice it to remember how patchy the *Nibelungenlied* is' (Essay 7, 'Germanic *sendan*, "to make a sacrifice"', p. 111). And has Steblin-Kamenskij, in *The Saga Mind*, really told us 'the truth (not the syncretic truth but just the truth) about authorship and fiction in early Scandinavia' (p. 85)?

Etymology pure, rather than in the service of mythology, is revealed in the second of the essays I would take as exemplary of the collection: Essay 14, 'Some Germanic Words Beginning with *fl-*: Language at Play' (pp. 264–91). Here, the issue at stake is that of iconicity; does the phonetic structure of words with similar initials owe its origin to semantic constraint? To what extent is *Ablaut* a grammatical, distinctive feature, and to what extent merely an expression of linguistic freedom? Since the age of the Neogrammarians, conventional philology has relied on the concept of stable laws of linguistic change; against this Liberman postulates a force towards iconicity which pushes linguistic instability to the verge of the chaotic. In the terms of contemporary informatics, this is a concept of fuzzy linguistics.

Logically, in arguing for fuzzy linguistics, Liberman argues against dogmatism—even if elsewhere in the collection he is guilty of the same sin himself. In the article immediately following the one just discussed, he takes issue with the dogmatism of etymological dictionaries and, in reviewing Ásgeir Blöndal Magnússon's Icelandic etymological dictionary (Essay 15, pp. 292–302) provides an example of how an entry in a non-dogmatic dictionary should be written (pp. 300–01). He disclaims this is a model, but if it is not, what is it? Certainly it establishes the principle that the ideal etymological dictionary should present a summary history of etymological research on each word offered, rather than attempting to propose a definite etymology of its own.

For the present reviewer, the most interesting section of the collection was the one that had least to do with the subject matter: the introduction, in which Liberman outlines the problems he faced as a Jewish student before emigrating from the Stalinist Soviet Union. Liberman's sharp words for the Communists of the West to which he emigrated, especially Italy, have a certain poignancy

in a post-Berlin Wall age, especially from a standpoint in the East of Germany, and in an age in which late capitalist philistinism seems to be the major inhibition to scholarly freedom of expression.

The book is by no means free of misprints, possibly the most creative of these being the one that makes Harald Hardrada into one of the Eumenides, 'Kind Haraldr' (p. 62). The editorial practice is somewhat puzzling in places, as when Icelandic names are not printed with diacritics when part of a bibliographical reference, giving us on p. 61 the sentence 'Hrafnhildur Böðvarsdóttir (Bodvarsdotter [1976]) showed . . .' or when Icelandic words are italicised as foreign terms, but given English plurals: 'visas' or 'visur', surely, but not *visas*. The attractive cardboard binding of my copy stood up to some pretty rough handling without showing undue signs of wear or loosening pages.

The book is announced as the first volume of Liberman's selected writings. Quirks notwithstanding, it whets one's appetite for Volume Two.

STEPHEN N. TRANTER

THE SAINTS IN ICELAND: THEIR VENERATION FROM THE CONVERSION TO 1400. By MARGARET CORMACK. With a preface by PETER FOOTE. *Subsidia Hagiographica 78. Société des Bollandistes*. Bruxelles, 1994. xii + 296 pp.

Thoroughness and carefulness are the hallmarks of this, the first part of a projected two-volume work on the Saints in Iceland. This volume deals with material relating to the four centuries after AD 1000: the second is planned to cover the period from 1400 to the Reformation.

The study proper comprises three main parts. In the first, Dr Cormack examines different sources of information relating to the saints: records concerning their feast days; inventories of church property (*máldagar*), which usually mention the name of the patron saint (or saints) of the church; hagiographic literature, principally Old Norse prose literature but not excluding Latin and poetic texts; personal names which reflect those of individual saints; and information from annals and other narrative sources concerning the forms which veneration of the saints might take (feasts, fasts, vows, prayers, offerings, pilgrimages and the adoration of relics). This examination is based on more detailed information given in the other parts. Of these, Part II comprises a list of the saints known from one or other of the above kinds of information (and also, exceptionally, from the very sparse survivals in the form of church ornaments and vestments) to have been patrons or co-patrons of individual ecclesiastical buildings, or to have been represented there by, for example, images or a copy of the saint's life. Part III is a list of the Icelandic churches, chapels etc. and the saints associated with them. These three parts are preceded by a brief introduction to Icelandic ecclesiastical literature intended for the layman and based firmly on existing scholarship, and followed by various appendices, a substantial bibliography and a selective index, and a map of Iceland showing (almost all) the ecclesiastical buildings to which reference is made.

In his preface to the work, Peter Foote commends Dr Cormack's reliability and caution in presenting the material she has investigated, and the present reviewer is happy to echo this commendation wholeheartedly. Only very occasionally might one perhaps call into question her identifications; thus, I am not certain that the *giorninga bok* mentioned at page 81 was indeed a version of the *Acts of the Apostles*, as Olmer thought, since in the list in which it appears it is preceded by a *messubok* and followed by a *martyrologium* (*Diplomatarium Islandicum* II 427).

The presentation is virtually immaculate, another testimony to the author's exceptional vigilance; I have observed only a half-dozen insignificant misprints in the entire work ('sensivity' for 'sensitivity' on page 10, 'Maunday' for 'Maundy' on page 111, and one or two missing apostrophes and accents). A few statements might with advantage be slightly modified: the comment on Hákon Magnússon at page 127 (note 291), for instance, or the at first sight rather startling statement at page 82 about the author of the preface ('A text on the fates of the apostles has been edited from a ms. written c. 1360 by P. Foote (1976)'). A pernickety critic might react adversely to the decision to treat modern Icelandic patronymics as surnames in the Bibliography, while medieval names are given in the traditional manner in the index; another might question the decision to translate Icelandic quotations into English but not Latin ones (a decision no doubt reflecting the publisher's normal practice).

But these are trivial matters. What is important is to recognise the immense diligence and care Dr Cormack has displayed in this erudite and well-researched volume, and to wish her well as she works towards the completion of her planned task.

I. J. KIRBY

THE VIKING-AGE GOLD AND SILVER OF SCOTLAND (AD 850–1100). By James Graham-Campbell. *National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh*, 1995. vii + 260 pp., 65 figs, 75 plates.

This most welcome study draws together what is known about all the recorded gold and silver objects from Scotland which were made or owned by Scandinavian settlers or their descendants. There is little material which can be attributed to a time before the coin-dated hoards, all of which were deposited after c.930; at the other end of the chronological spectrum, all hoarding appears to have ceased after the 1260s. A small quantity of 'late Norse' (later eleventh- and twelfth-century) material, particularly finger-rings, is also incorporated. Included throughout are Professor Graham-Campbell's judicious revisions and updatings of earlier (often his own) attributions and commentaries. Excluded from the catalogue is material ascribed to native insular traditions, even if it may have been hidden in anticipation of Viking raiding. Nonetheless, even some of these pieces, such as the Croy and Talnotrie hoards and the Hunterston and Westness brooches, an Anglo-Saxon gold finger-ring from near Selkirk, and a silver horn-mount from Burghead, are illustrated and briefly discussed.

After sections which define the work-scope, the collection is introduced in its order of discovery, from the seventeenth century to 1993 (pp. 9–14). This is a useful, indeed fascinating, antiquarian and archaeological review, and also serves as an introduction to the order in which the material is catalogued. The four hundred or so catalogued items come from thirty-four hoards and twenty-five single finds. The hoards may be bullion only, or a mixture of bullion with coins or coin only. The coins, which are not discussed or described individually, provide both dating information and evidence for the external contacts (and thus the source of the silver) of these Scandinavian settlers. In Chapter II, D. M. Metcalf summarises the monetary significance of the coin-hoards (pp. 16–25).

Discussion (pp. 26–33) of the small number of early hoards and related finds, that is from the period c.850–950, includes sections on Pictish and other insular silver, Hiberno-Viking arm-rings, gold rings and silver pins. The marks left through testing the silver by nicking and pecking have been rigorously noted, and are also a topic of further comment. There follows a substantial chapter (pp. 34–48) devoted to the Skaill, Orkney, hoard of c.950–70. This is by far the largest Viking-Age treasure from Scotland, and contains prestige ornaments, among them some ‘ball-type’ penannular brooches with what Graham-Campbell, in an important art-historical précis, argues is Mammen style ornament. Concomitant metallurgical analysis by Wilthew (Appendix I; pp. 63–72) of brooches, arm-rings and neck-rings from the Skaill hoard reveals them to be of high quality silver, but leaves open such questions as workshop location and chronology. Kruse and Tate’s discussion of metallurgical analysis (Appendix II; pp. 73–82) ranges more widely through the material; they note that Arabic coins probably account for the purity of silver in objects from Skaill. In contrast, the late hoard from Burray has a relatively base silver, perhaps deliberately alloyed in the face of a silver shortage.

The hoards and related finds of c.950–1100 are discussed next. Included with the introduction to this later material is a note by Leslie Webster (pp. 49–51) on the unusual Iona ring, and the broadly comparable ring from Hitchen, Herts; this is one of the few points in the book (another being the ‘details’ of the trichinopoly chain from Inch Kenneth, Mull, Pl. 3c) where illustration is unfortunately inadequate to allow full appreciation of the objects. The Burray, Orkney, hoard is also discussed here—as with Skaill, this is the first full treatment of this important find.

This section of the book concludes with a chapter dealing with ‘Contents and Contexts’ (pp. 57–62). Insofar as the form of the bullion is concerned, the hoards almost exclusively comprise standard Scandinavian types of ornament and their insular variants. They were manufactured in standard ways, most often hammered from ingots into rods which were then bent, twisted or plaited into finger-, arm- or neck-rings; rarer are the technically more sophisticated processes of lost-wax casting and engraving found on the ‘ball-type’ brooches. Punch decoration was common, and Graham-Campbell has assembled all the currently known variants of punch designs; this demonstrates that the bar stamps used to ornament the Hiberno-Viking armrings were a distinctively separate group.

A review of the characteristically Scottish ‘ring-money’ shows that it was deposited in the Scottish hoards c.950–1050; the earliest dated occurrence, however, is from the Goldsborough (Yorkshire) hoard of c.920. The typology and metrology of ‘ring money’ require further assessment, and data to facilitate this are published here. Assessment of the hacksilver, on the premise that the more regularly silver is exchanged, the more it will have been fragmented and nicked in testing, reveals that Viking-Age Scotland was a relatively inactive and unsophisticated economy.

Find circumstances often militate against detailed records of the location and context of hoard deposition, although there was clearly a predilection for prehistoric and natural mounds, as well as church or monastic sites. The small size and fragmentary condition of most single finds from settlement sites indicates that usually they were lost during commercial or metal-working activities. The remarkable find by a diver of a gold arm-ring on the sea-bed in the Sound of Jura raises the possibility of ritual offering. Here some further details of the find-spot—for example the distance from land—would have been of interest.

In terms of distribution, the material is mostly in the western and northern isles, the areas of primary Scandinavian settlement, where it might be expected; there is, however, a small group from the south-east. Chronologically, most tenth-century hoards are from the west of Scotland, and most eleventh-century ones are from the north. When it comes to determining the reasons for hoard deposition, Graham-Campbell is cautious, and would link only the Iona Abbey hoard with a historical event (in this case, a documented Viking raid on the monastery in 986).

The second part of the work consists firstly of check-lists arranged in chronological order of deposition (pp. 83–90), followed by catalogues arranged in order of discovery (pp. 91–168). The catalogues are a mine of information—they often quote antiquarian sources *in extenso*, and in several cases report oral traditions gathered by Olwyn Owen which allow more precise find spots to be attributed. They provide detailed bibliographies, cross-refer to comparanda in Britain, Ireland, Scandinavia and beyond, and contain specialist reports on a wooden container for the Burray hoard and on textile remains associated with the Lewis Castle, Stornoway, hoard.

Virtually every one of the items, no matter how small or apparently standard/featureless a fragment, is shown in a series of good quality black and white photographs. It is a pity that a small number of single finds from excavations in Orkney in the late 1960s to early 1980s are not included. The line-drawings—maps, plans, artistic motifs, and diagrams, most of them (like the plates) prepared specifically for this book—are both helpful and of a high standard.

Professor Graham-Campbell and his team of contributors have succeeded admirably in making details of this material readily available, and it is a work of which the Royal Museum of Scotland may rightly feel proud. It also promises things to come, ranging from a detailed study of the Colonsay Viking hoard to an overview of the Pictish material, all of which will assist in putting this material into a wider perspective. And the fact that this work has high-

lighted unanswered questions—Why does the geographical focus of hoarding change from the tenth to the eleventh century? Why did hoarding stop in the 1060s?—is a testimony to its synoptic value. This is a work not only for specialists in Viking-age precious metalwork; it has a significance for all students of Scandinavian settlement and of the broader Scandinavian contributions to the archaeology of the British Isles.

R. A. HALL

SAGAS AND POPULAR ANTIQUARIANISM IN ICELANDIC ARCHAEOLOGY. By ADOLF FRÍDRIKSSON. *Worldwide Archaeology Series* 10. Aldershot 1994. ix + 212 pp., 95 figs.

In what he describes as ‘a critical review of interpretation in Icelandic archaeology, with particular reference to literature and folk-lore studies’ Adolf Friðriksson asserts (p. 16) that ‘sagas, place-names and folk-lore have formed the cosmology of Icelandic archaeology’. He goes on to dissect how ‘the hegemony of literature’ (p. 45) has influenced popular antiquarianism, a phenomenon which he defines (p. vii) as spontaneous curiosity, part folk-lore and part archaeology. His method is to chart, chapter by chapter, how antiquarians and archaeologists sought examples of different classes of site, identifying them on the basis of saga references or through other clues which ultimately derive from the sagas (‘speculative topographic observation’, p. 108), excavated them, and then, usually, claimed that the results vindicated the saga in question.

A change in this procedure was personified in Kristján Eldjárn, who became sceptical of it during his time as State Antiquary and Director of the National Museum (1948–68). But thenceforth, claims the author, most Icelandic archaeologists have remained under the influence of what are now more deeply submerged preconceptions, unconsciously bolstering them by indulging in ‘highly sophisticated scientific research and advanced theorization’ (p. 108).

On occasion the substance of these arguments suffers through being expressed in a slightly unusual English phraseology. An ambiguous use of language is also frustrating; was it Eldjárn or is it the author who states (p. 21) that Roman coins are rarely found in Ireland, Scotland and the Northern Isles? Whoever it was, some reference here to Bateson’s papers on Roman coins in Ireland (for example, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 76, 1976) would have been appropriate and instructive. More remarkable omissions are explained, although not excused, by the author’s belief that popular antiquarianism, as he defines it, has not been the subject of previous study. This is to turn a blind eye to a range of earlier studies; in England alone, those by Leslie Grinsell come immediately to mind.

Several points of detail in the discussion are questionable. The author seems to teeter on the edge of the trap which he himself has defined when discussing the possibility of finding the alleged burials of some of Iceland’s original settlers (p. 75); and are the supposed late ninth century remains discovered at Reykjavík (pp. 159–61) certainly of that date? Remains excavated at Hegrane

are accepted as representing a temporary booth (p. 128), although ‘almost half’ (or perhaps more?) of the structure has been lost through erosion; and it is suggested (p. 33) that the island of Papey may have got its name because it has many hills of beehive shape, ‘quite like those houses which the Vikings must have seen in the west, such as on Skellig Michael,’ even though there is no evidence that the Skellig Michael buildings are as early as the Viking Age—that is itself ultimately a piece of ‘popular antiquarianism’.

Over and above these points, however, the basic historiographical commentary on some well-known sites makes fascinating, if archaeologically alarming, reading. A good example is the study (pp. 110–13) of how *Eyrbyggja saga* has influenced expectations about the so-called ‘court circle’ at Þórsnessþing, and how antiquarians have had the eyes to see its remains in many different locations: ‘the perpetually changing lore shows the vivid creativity of popular antiquarianism’. The author concludes (p. 144) that at present there is no secure method of identifying assembly sites. And he is similarly sceptical about the validity of dating the remains of farms, opining that the paucity of well excavated and independently dated examples means that ‘generalizations about the age or chronology of house types have as yet no sound basis’ (p. 158).

Adolf Friðriksson would redirect Icelandic archaeology into an approach which concentrates on themes rather than individual sites, and which uses saga analogy in the interpretation of remains which are contemporary with the writing of the saga. Although sometimes questionable in its arguments, as noted above, short on detailed analysis and marred by some indifferent line drawings and truly awful reproduction of photographs, this short book will play a part in shaping Icelandic archaeological research. It should be included on the reading list of every course which explores the legacy of saga literature.

R. A. HALL

NORTHERN ANTIQUITY: THE POST-MEDIEVAL RECEPTION OF EDDA AND SAGA. Edited by ANDREW WAWN. *Hisarlik Press*. Enfield Lock, Middlesex, 1994. x + 342 pp.

Inasmuch as the ‘post-medieval’ period continues on to the present day, all of us who study, teach and are inspired by the Eddas and sagas have something in common with the subjects of this interesting and important collection of essays. We continue as they did to create the past, to value the old texts for those things that we can perceive as being relevant to our own lives and times and as forwarding our own ideologies and doctrines. No doubt, too, each generation of scholars reacts in complex ways to the achievements and limitations of its precursors. We are uneasily aware of both our indebtedness to them and our superior sophistication—attitudes that in the nature of things are bound in another generation to seem biased and transparent.

Jesse L. Byock’s essay in this volume begins by quoting a number of crude ethnic slurs that Friedrich Engels, in letters to Karl Marx, directed against each of the Scandinavian nationalities. It is an appropriate viewpoint from which to consider the extent to which Scandinavians and other lovers of medieval

Icelandic literature may have been justified in believing that they had something to prove in the larger European context—some pretty hefty axes to grind. The tension they experienced between the cultural North and South in Europe energises and gives focus to much of the scholarly activity described in these essays.

Mats Malm's essay, 'Olaus Rudbeck's *Atlantica* and Old Norse Poetics,' about the work of a writer who thought Sweden was the lost land of Atlantis, emphasises, as do several other studies of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philology here, that the historical or at least legendary past was the central topic of interest. Here the *fornaldarsögur*, *Heimskringla* and what could be gleaned of pagan religion took precedence over poetry and fiction considered more purely as art. Malm also claims a scientific soundness for much early empirical philology, despite the bizarre conclusions to which, at least in Rudbeck's huge work, it was expected to lead. Related in subject to Malm's essay are Jan Ragnar Hagland's 'The Reception of Old Norse Literature in Late Eighteenth-Century Norway' and Flemming Lundgreen-Nielsen's 'Grundtvig's Norse Mythological Imagery—an Experiment that Failed.' The former shows how Norway, too, in contrast to England, Germany and Denmark, was at the end of the eighteenth century more interested in Old Norse history than poetry. In his rich and interesting study Lundgreen-Nielsen describes events a century later, when N. F. S. Grundtvig's desire to formulate a national imagery out of Old Norse myths collided with a Romantic quest for aesthetic originality, realism and individualism that emphasised character rather than the flat events of myth. Régis Boyer's 'Vikings, Sagas and Wasa Bread' is a learned and entertaining account of various myths of the Vikings through the ages in France. In a conclusion that might appropriately serve for this volume as a whole, he observes that since the myths of the Vikings were based largely on an ignorance of historical fact, what they really reflected instead was various aspects of the French imagination.

Iceland has gone through its own versions of the present's dialogue with the past, and four of the essays in this volume take up one aspect or another of the theme. M. J. Driscoll's 'Traditionality and Antiquarianism in the Post-Reformation *lygisaga*' and Jürg Glauser's 'The End of the Saga: Text, Tradition and Transmission in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Iceland' both deal to a large extent with the transition from a strict separation in Icelandic literary practice between the use of manuscripts for reproducing traditional Icelandic literature that was designed for communal reading and the exclusive use of printing for learned publication. Driscoll uses the ten romances that have been attributed to the learned séra Jón Oddsson Hjaltalín (1749–1835) to argue for an unbroken tradition of saga narrative in Iceland for nearly a thousand years. To do this he must assert, and this is the whole point, that the scholarly rejection of late narratives of fantasy and romance, like those written by Hjaltalín, results in a distortion and diminution of Icelandic literary history. The historical context of Glauser's study is similar, although his theme is different: the consternation produced in sophisticated literary circles when the classic sagas began to be issued in popular printed editions. The quotations are almost

the best feature of this thoughtful study. He opens by quoting a stunningly élitist attack by Benedikt Sveinbjarnarson Gröndal on the printed edition of *Fjórar Riddarasögur* (1852) issued early in his career by the famous printer Einar Þórðarson, and closes with the comic and ironic account in *Sjálfstætt fólk* of Bjartur's trip to the bookstore with Ásta Sóllilja, where he discovers that thirty years have passed since the last remaining copy of *Örvar-Odds saga* was sold, and that the modern era of mass-produced middle-brow books is firmly in place.

The story of Laxness's own involvement with popular modern-spelling editions of the sagas is well told by Jón Karl Helgason in his 'We Who Cherish *Njáls saga*: The Alþingi as Literary Patron.' For readers familiar with Icelandic publishing in the last half century and the changing roles of the political parties in cultural politics, this is obligatory reading, full of little ironies such as the canny capitalist marketing by the far-left Mál og menning, which as we know has recently, under a conservative government, taken over the distribution of many books once published by Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóðs, an entity created by vehemently anti-Communist elements in the Alþingi to issue an edition of *Njáls saga* as a pre-emptive strike against Laxness's version. This is cultural warfare in the trenches, whereas Jesse Byock's concern in 'Modern Nationalism and the Medieval Sagas' is, among other things, to examine the corner into which the Icelandic book-prose partisans painted themselves in their belief that all great narrative art must be the product of individual fiction writers rather than an inherited traditional account of the past. In this respect, as in Matthew Driscoll's charge against a partial and biased literary canon, Sigurður Nordal comes in for the inevitable fault-finding. It is almost time for this multifaceted and charismatic figure to become the subject of an essay on his own in a future collection like this one.

The ample and scholarly study by Judy Quinn and Margaret Clunies Ross of 'The Image of Norse Poetry and Myth in Seventeenth-Century England' cannot receive justice in a short review. Its most interesting point to me—and one that resonates with the general theme of the volume—is that, largely through ignorance, Old Norse verse was believed to have been a source of the barbarism of rhyme in European poetry, as opposed to the quantitative verse of the ancient Greeks and Romans. In the case of nineteenth-century English friends of Scandinavia—like Samuel Laing, George Stephens, George Webbe Dasent, William Morris, W. G. Collingwood, Sir Edmund Head, Sabine Baring-Gould, George E. J. Powell, John Sephton—their sense of an embattled North was directed less toward nationalistic rivals than against perceived prejudices and failures in their own society and inherited culture. The world of the sagas was, if not a Utopia, then a repository of social and ethical virtue. The central essay of the collection, by its editor Andrew Wawn, on 'The Cult of "Stalwart Frithjof" in Victorian Britain', is a thoughtful and charmingly written development of this theme. It is a model of the kind of reception study illustrated in the volume as a whole, recreating in rich detail the various cultural contexts for both the Icelandic *Friðþjófs saga hins frækna* and Bishop Esaias Tegnér's *Frithiofs saga* (1824) which was based on it.

A central element in the reception of the sagas of Iceland is their translation. John Kennedy's 'The Translations of *Völsunga saga*' provides a judicious and even-handed description of the five we have, beginning with Magnússon and Morris in 1870. He concludes by suggesting that the archaisers are not entirely wrong. He may be swimming against the tide, however, in his desire to see translators today keeping the verb tenses and sentence structure of the originals. W. H. Auden, also associated with translation from Icelandic, is the subject of Sveinn Haraldsson's "The North Begins Inside": Auden, Ancestry and Iceland', which deals not with Auden's writing but with his family's idea that they were of Icelandic descent. They probably weren't, but it almost did not matter as long as they had it 'inside'. It is a nice story: the poet's father, Dr George Augustus Auden, a distinguished physician with broad scholarly interests, was clearly responsible for his son's attraction to the North. Julian Meldon D'Arcy's essay on 'George Mackay Brown and *Orkneyinga saga*' is a thought-provoking study of the steady influence of the saga on the work of this appealing modern Orcadian poet and novelist, whose religious themes have often led him to alter the saga in an attempt to define an appropriate Christian way of life.

All the essays in this volume are fully and carefully documented, with the result that they will doubtless serve as reference material for future researchers. There is an index of proper nouns and titles, and the text is essentially error-free. All that remains is to praise Ian Duhig's poem 'The Gloss', with which the volume ends. It is an elemental and ironic evocation of the remains of ancient men from the North on the modern British land and sensibility. More powerfully than any of the essays, it insists upon the pastness of the past.

ROBERT KELLOGG

GESCHICHTEN AUS THULE: ÍSLENDINGASÖGUR IN ÜBERSETZUNGEN DEUTSCHER GERMANISTEN.  
By JULIA ZERNACK. *Berliner Beiträge zur Skandinavistik* 3. Freie Universität Berlin. Berlin, 1994. x + 421 pp. + booklet of 49 pp.

On the other side of the Atlantic, the attempt has recently been made to show that the glossary translations of *Beowulf* in Klaeber's edition are distorted by 'culturally based assumptions' stemming from Klaeber's German upbringing (Josephine Bloomfield in *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 93 (1994), 183–203). In *Geschichten aus Thule*, the revised version of her 1992 Berlin dissertation, Julia Zernack takes aim at an equally famous corpus, the saga translations published in the 'Sammlung Thule' between 1911 and 1930 and frequently reprinted, together with other German saga translations of the past two centuries. The real purpose of the Thule collection, she suspects, was not so much the philologically faithful translation of Old Norse literature as it was 'the popularisation of the *Germanenmythos*' (p. 208). Indeed, Zernack rejects the notion of 'philological faithfulness' as a quality rendering a translation immune to ideological influences (for example pp. 239, 255), and she gives the philologically trained translators particular blame for fostering—willingly

or not—an image of the sagas that ‘may have functioned as one of the decisive catalysts in the political radicalising of Germanomania’ during the rise of Nazism (p. 346; see also pp. 75–76, 316, 365). The book has three parts: a historical survey of the German-speaking reception of Old Norse literature, especially in the form of translations (pp. 11–96), a stylistic analysis of selected translations (pp. 97–315) and a concluding discussion of the ideological aspects of saga reception (pp. 316–73). The bibliography of 822 titles includes over 300 German translations and adaptations of saga material, together with a few original efforts ‘in saga style’. (The list of translations may be superseded by Zernack’s *Bibliographie der deutschsprachigen Sagaübersetzungen*, which is in preparation as volume 4 of the *Berliner Beiträge* series.) Zernack’s bibliographical thoroughness guarantees that her treatment of these much-discussed aspects of German intellectual history will have to be taken seriously.

The core of the book, however, is its linguistic component. Although it was clear from the beginning that the Thule collection modernised and ‘smoothed out’ the language of the sagas to some extent (see, for example, the 1913 review cited on p. 208), Zernack has now catalogued numerous ways in which the ‘cultural gap’ separating the sagas from modern German readers was artificially bridged, focusing on translations by Gustav Neckel (*Hrafnkels saga*), Andreas Heusler (*Hænsa-Póris saga*), Rudolf Meissner (*Laxdæla saga*), and Friedrich Ranke (*Gísla saga*): a simulated colloquial style manifested in parataxis, anacoluthon, redundant deixis, contracted word forms, modal particles and formulas, familiar figures of speech and relaxation of the requirements of the German clause frame (*Satzklammer*) in ways characteristic of spoken language; levelling of tense shifts; translation of place names and personal bynames into German; the simplifying translation of culture-specific terms, such as *Bauer* for *bóndi*; various other semantic shifts, such as the prejudicial use of loaded words in characterisations; and finally, the selection of the ‘canon’ of texts to be translated in the first place. I had to compile this list from various parts of the book (though there is an index of authors, there is no subject index); students of stylistics might have been grateful for a central checklist of the features mentioned, perhaps with rough indications of their distribution, especially since Zernack shows that not all of the Thule translators (let alone the others) worked alike, and some revised extensively for later editions.

Despite the value of many individual observations, the procedure in the linguistic part of the book is open to question in several respects. Reception theory, especially in the example of Ursula Rautenberg’s 1985 study of translations from Middle High German, leads Zernack to reject the traditional application of standards of ‘equivalence’ in favour of a descriptive approach concentrating on the target language and the ‘shifts’ discernible in the translation. But to judge from this book, one might conclude that the only achievement of ‘modern translation studies’ is a new terminology for the idea that translators’ stylistic decisions are subjective; Zernack uses this terminology uncritically. (Is translation analysis any the richer for the term *coupled pair*, for instance, which is supposed to designate the juxtaposition of a piece of original text with its translation for purposes of comparison?) The reader’s confidence in this

theoretical framework is hardly strengthened by the fact that Zernack fails to observe one of its ostensible tenets. Although she carefully distinguishes normative, subjective *Fehlerkritik* from purely descriptive translation analysis and promises to undertake only the latter (for instance pp. 80–82, 101–02, 112), she does not, for it soon becomes evident that she is not neutral: she prefers translations that convey as much ‘foreign’ flavour as possible (for example pp. 160–63, 285 n. 21, 329), since the practice of filtering it out amounts to a ‘conquering translation’, a kind of ‘cultural imperialism’ (pp. 333, 341, 343).

The stylistic descriptions are marred by various inaccuracies, such as the consistent misapplication of the terms *Prolepse*, *Inversion* and *Finalsatz*. Also, given Zernack’s admission that so little is known about the historical stylistics of both German (pp. 130, 135) and Icelandic (pp. 162 n. 14, 228 n. 20), the fact that she nevertheless does occasionally pronounce judgement on what was ‘marked’ and ‘unmarked’ in source text and translation (as on p. 235) gives pause; no theoretical justification for the use of these terms is offered. Similar objections could be raised to the enigmatic appearance of the *langue-parole* opposition on pages 119, 125, and 127.

The most fundamental methodological difficulty, as one would expect, is the link between the stylistic and the ideological planes. There is no doubt that there was a tendency in the Thule series to smooth over the ‘otherness’ of the source culture, but certain elements observed by Zernack, such as Neckel’s alliterations, Heusler’s exaggerated faithfulness to saga syntax or Ranke’s partly archaic diction, point in the opposite direction; Zernack herself concludes that Heusler built syntactic ‘hurdles’ into his translations for reasons connected with his desire to revitalise the German language (pp. 231, 255). Determining whether a given translation practice preserves or obliterates the otherness of the source text is not as easy as one might think; the translation of place names into the target language seems to Zernack to mask the local colour of the original (p. 285), but it can be argued that translation rather *brings out* the local colour in this case (Hans Naumann in an early review, p. 88 n. 22). Equally problematic is the reconstruction of the translators’ motives; Zernack speaks anachronistically of ‘a translation theory’ that appears to have ‘formed the basis of the [German] reception of the sagas as a whole’ in the period 1907–45 (p. 317). The premise that style is a product of ideology requires Zernack to look for an ulterior motive in every stylistic feature, but the resulting ‘analysis’ in many cases relies on innuendo and begging the question. In my opinion, an accurate reconstruction of the genesis of the Thule translations would require more attention to what used to be called aesthetics, such as rhythmic considerations, which Zernack only rarely mentions (pp. 135, 232–34). But Zernack does not believe in the traditional notion of aesthetic judgement (see pp. 42–43, 113).

The external presentation of the volume is highly professional, and the text of *Hrafnkels saga* in the original and two translations is printed synoptically in a supplementary booklet tucked inside the back cover. In note 22 on page 265, the page numbers for three of six cited phrases are incorrect or missing, but otherwise I noticed only a dozen typographical errors. The presentation is not

helped by Zernack's peremptory and aggressive tone, especially in connection with the work of scholars she considers to be behind the times. Too often, publications she could have drawn on for support (or should have identified as forerunners to her own work) are dismissed as uninteresting. On the other hand, she sometimes gives too much credit. On page 365, where she points out that the Eddic *dómr um dauðan hvern*, often translated as 'fame', actually has the neutral meaning 'judgement', her footnote tells us that this observation 'was already made by Ernst Walter' in an essay of 1987. If Zernack wants to use the word *already*, how about mentioning Viktor Rydberg, who made the same point in 1886 (*Undersökningar i germansk Mythologi*, I 373)?

MARVIN TAYLOR

OLD NORSE STUDIES IN THE NEW WORLD. Edited by GERALDINE BARNES, MARGARET CLUNIES ROSS and JUDY QUINN. *Department of English, University of Sydney*: Sydney, 1994. 156 pp.

This collection of papers was published to 'celebrate the Jubilee of the teaching of Old Norse at the University of Sydney 1943–1993'. Such an occasion was well worth celebrating not just as a salute to the past, but as a marker for the future—and what a future it may prove to be, if we recall Gabriel Turville-Petre's bewildering 1969 prophecy: 'I think the future of Icelandic studies in the English speaking world lies there [in Australia]'. Margaret Clunies Ross, in a barnstorming opening paper, reflects on what Turville-Petre might have meant. She believes that in his visits to Australia he had been surprised and stimulated by the high levels of literary sensibility with which his Melbourne students approached the challenge of scaldic verse. Years of teaching his Oxford pupils had perhaps not entirely accustomed him to this. Such openness to new approaches and unfamiliar texts remains, she suggests, a distinctive (or at least a prominent) feature of the antipodean approach to Icelandic studies.

There is certainly evidence in these papers of some vigorous current scholarship in Australia and New Zealand. The contributions are: Leath Davey, 'Memories of the First Old Norse Class Taught at Sydney University by George Pelham Shipp'; Geraldine Barnes, 'Reinventing Paradise: *Vínland* 1000–1992'; Graham Barwell and John Kennedy, 'Charles Venn Pilcher: Bishop Coadjutor of Sydney and Translator from the Icelandic'; Graham Barwell and John Kennedy (eds), 'Two Icelandic Medieval Passion-poems'; B. K. Martin, 'Snorri's Myth about Hrungnir: Literary Perspectives'; John Stanley Martin, 'People, Milestones and Memories: Some Reflections on the Teaching of Old Norse in Melbourne 1944–1993'; Russell Poole, 'Constructions of Fate in Victorian Philology and Literature'; Judy Quinn, '*Voluspá* in Twentieth-Century Scholarship in English'; Kellinde Wrightson, 'Changing Attitudes to Old Icelandic Marian Poetry'. Weighing in as an honorary Australian, by virtue of his having been 1993 Triebel Lecturer in Sydney, John Lindow has contributed the paper 'Interpreting Baldr, the Dying God', a valuable additional item.

Readers of the volume may be struck by three recurrent emphases. Firstly there is a keen but measured engagement with recent developments in literary and editorial theory. The reader is spared wearisome obfuscation; theoretical understandings are used as a stimulus to return to primary texts, rather than as an excuse to avoid all further contact with them. Secondly, there is evidence of attention to unfashionable primary works—notably the medieval Christian poetry of Iceland (Barwell and Kennedy, Wrightson), texts which were once much studied by supporters of the Oxford movement in Victorian Britain. Thirdly, the post-medieval reception of old northern texts is emphasised. This is not a new subject-area, either; Frank Farley, Ethel Seaton, Jack Bennett and others beavered mightily away earlier in the century apparently without requiring any empowering authorisation from impenetrable theoretical gurus. The lively papers by Barnes, Poole and Quinn, in their very different ways and styles, point to rich seams still to be mined. Geraldine Barnes's essay may underestimate Victorian fiction's fascination with *Vinland*: there was, for instance, R. M. Ballantyne's doggedly gung-ho *The Norsemen in the West, or America before Columbus. A Tale*, and Kipling's remarkable 'The Greatest Story Ever Told' with its embryonic modernism.

Australians have long exercised the right to indulge in a measure of what in cricket parlance is known as 'Pommie bashing'; and a touch of that is discernible in a couple of the volume's contributions, all of it genial (I think), most of it directed at Oxford, and, for all we know, some of it once justified. Only those seriously deficient in a sense of humour will be incapable of riding the punches. The neutral reviewer does well to recall how reluctant the great George Stephens of Cheapinghaven was to take sides between warring scholars of Manx runes in the late nineteenth century; their conflicts reminded him of 'the heroes of our Northern Walhall, [they] slay each other with gusto day by day, and when the "shades of evening fall", retire to a jolly . . . [wake], like good fellows as they are'. Stephens thought it best to smile from the side-lines, though he did offer to 'dress their wounds or give them decent burial' (MS Bodleian Eng. misc. d. 131, letter to Guðbrandur Vigfússon, 9 March 1887).

The volume's attention to the history of Old Norse teaching in Australia over half a century has seemed wholly 'uninteresting' to one imperious recent reviewer (Kirsten Wolf, *Scandinavian Studies* 67 (1995), 388–90)—such issues 'cannot matter one whit to academic readers of this book'. In fact they matter several whits to the present reviewer; and it is not difficult to imagine other academic readers, aware of and sensitive to the ever-present problems of maintaining a vigorous Old Icelandic presence within large and not always sympathetic English Departments, who may be prepared to find a few moments in their crowded schedules to listen to and (even) learn from tales of yesteryear. Margaret Clunies Ross notes that in Australia 'all' the current threats to the subject area 'have to do with money' (p. 13). Would that it were so simple back in Britain where the turbulence created by modular restructuring has not always helped the philological cause, reawakening long dormant but still damaging 'language versus literature' tensions. But perhaps such thoughts serve to strike

too hard the ‘doleful key’ which, as Russell Poole reminds us, Frederick Metcalfe (the original ‘Oxonian in Iceland’) so loathed in whingeing Anglo-Saxon elegies and so relished the absence of in Old Norse literature. Some of the more practical pedagogical problems during those pioneering Australian days (papers by Clunies Ross, Davey and J. S. Martin) assuredly remain with us today, notably the precarious availability of appropriate texts, glossaries and grammars. The black market price for a well annotated Gordon has held up well over fifty years. In other respects, though, the anecdotes seem like grainy old newsreels from a lost world: flourishing Saturday afternoon translation classes, voluntary mid-week preparation meetings, saga reading groups enthusiastically attended by non-medievalist academic colleagues, and the unchallenged priority given to developing language skills in courses lasting two years and more.

It has become a predictable reviewers’ trope when discussing essay collections to complain about lack of overall coherence, unevenness of quality, failure to convert lecture into essay, inconsistency of format, poor proof-reading and absence of index; and the present volume rings several of these bells. Tasmanian readers will deplore the absence of a single reference to Australasia’s most celebrated old-time fair dinkum Icelandophile—Jørgen Jørgensen, the revolutionary leader of Iceland for several chaotic weeks in the summer of 1809, who spent the last thirty years of his life in dissolute exile in Hobart, dreaming all the time of the lava and lyme-grass which he had once ruled and been compelled to leave behind.

ANDREW WAWN

MANUSCRIPT MATERIAL, CORRESPONDENCE AND GRAPHIC MATERIAL IN THE FISKE ICELANDIC COLLECTION: A DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGUE. By PÓRUNN SIGURDARDÓTTIR. *Islandica* XLVIII. Cornell University Press: Ithaca and London, 1994. pp. xi + 291.

An authoritative history of Viking-Age studies in the United States has yet to be written, but there is little doubt that whoever undertakes it will be prominent amongst those with reason to be grateful to Pórunn Sigurðardóttir for compiling this comprehensive descriptive catalogue of the Icelandic manuscript and graphic materials accumulated first by Willard Fiske and then by Halldór Hermannsson in the Fiske Icelandic Collection at Cornell University. The Fiske Icelandic collection has long been famous as a major resource in old northern scholarship, and even those who have never visited Ithaca will have consulted the catalogue of its enviable holdings of printed books. The appointment of a new curator and now the appearance of this descriptive catalogue represent a welcome commitment to the future of the collection.

After a visit to the United States in the 1850s, the Norwegian scholar P. E. Munch wrote to an Edinburgh friend that the publication of C. C. Rafn’s lavish documentary compilation *Antiquitates Americanae* (Copenhagen, 1837), with its detailed examination of the evidence for Viking-Age discovery of the continent, had ‘set the Americans agog on this theme’. The young Willard Fiske was clearly amongst them, and it is the correspondence of just such enthusiasts

with Fiske himself (until his death in 1904) and with Halldór Hermannsson, during his forty-three year stewardship of the Ithaca collection, that features prominently in the manuscript holdings. We find antiquarians in New England eager to believe in the Viking-Age authenticity of the Kensington Stone and its runes (recent publicity suggests that this stone, like the poor, will always be with us). We meet mid-Western protestant zealots of Scandinavian descent determined to refashion a creation myth for the United States based on something other, earlier, more Northern and less Catholic than Christopher Columbus. We glimpse newly-built mansions in Newport, Rhode Island, being decorated with stained glass designed by Burne-Jones and William Morris, with panels featuring scenes from *Eiríks saga rauða* and quotations from *Hávamál*. The catalogue reminds us, too, of folk more modestly housed in the new Icelandic settlements in Manitoba, the Dakotas and beyond—citizens of ‘Nýja Ísland’ only too eager to sustain cultural links with their old Icelandic home. And, in the background, a number of the documents remind us poignantly of the high hopes placed on the settlement of Alaska by many a famine-striken, volcanic eruption haunted Icelander during the 1870s and 1880s; this was to be the exciting new colony where butter would eventually drip from every straw, and whence, in due time and according to Jón Ólafsson’s dreams, a hundred million people of Icelandic descent would stream southward to dominate the United States and cleanse ‘ina afskræmdu ensku tungu’ spoken there.

The catalogue reveals that every fresh batch of mail to Halldór Hermannsson brought requests for help not only from relentlessly enthusiastic laymen, but also from the professorial classes in the old world as well as the new. There were productions of *Fjalla-Eyvindr* to encourage, editions of *Hrafnkels saga* and translations of *Vatnsdæla saga* to check and correct, and there was the challenge of fending off at least one professor from Leeds trying to scrounge free copies of the *Islandica* series volumes. Halldór’s role at Cornell seems not unlike that of Guðbrandur Vigfússon or Eiríkur Magnússon in Victorian Britain—a native Icelander of great learning, tireless scholarly energy and sometimes prickly temperament providing an authoritative focal point for the old northern enthusiasms of the nation, and indeed of far-flung continents.

About Fiske himself we can sense several significant features from the materials described in the catalogue. We may note, first, that there are no medieval Icelandic manuscripts in the Ithaca collection, and very few other pre-nineteenth-century items. No doubt by the time British collectors such as Sir Joseph Banks and Sabine Baring-Gould had finished their Icelandic travels, there were not many manuscripts left for collection; but Fiske himself seems to have believed that the proper place for Icelandic manuscripts was in Iceland. Secondly, Fiske’s notebooks reveal him to have been a fastidious recorder of volumes seen and volumes sought—he knew what he was looking for and had a network of well-disposed friends and acquaintances all over Europe and the United States eager to assist him in his bibliophilic quests. Thirdly, Fiske, a man of considerable wealth, was always generous in his dealings with Iceland. He was responsible for supplying many books to the Latin school in Reykjavík and to the Möðruvellir college run by his friend Jón Hjaltalín. Such well targeted

(and well intended) largesse no doubt helped him to win Icelandic friends—and his life-long love of chess will not have hurt him either; but Fiske had paid his dues in other ways. He spent a lot of time in Iceland, learned to speak the language and established friendships, not just with the good and the great of Reykjavík, but with folk out in the country. He had a particular fascination with remote Grímsey and, through the efforts of Þorvaldur Thoroddsen and others, assembled a mass of documentary material (including photographs) of the people and their pursuits. Fiske was not only a loyal member of the Reykjavík branch of the Icelandic Literary Society, but also a founding member of the Icelandic Archaeological Society, having been a member of Sigurður Vigfússon's party which, whilst visiting Þingvellir, had decided to form the society.

Accordingly, at a banquet during his 1879 visit, Fiske (along with his travelling companion Arthur Reeves) found himself the recipient of a celebratory poem written specially for the occasion by Steingrímur Thorsteinsson. No wonder so many young Icelanders were going west at just this time—the United States is depicted as a land of such freedom and opportunity:

Til foldar, þar heiðríkt skín frelsisins ljós,  
þar finnast ei kóngar né þrælar,  
þar manndáð er aðall og atorkan hrós,  
sem ein gerir þjóðirnar særar.

It was also, as Rafn and his successors had sought to prove, truly the land of their fathers:

Sem Leifur hinn heppni vér kætumst í kvöld,  
þá kom hann að Vínlandi forna;  
nú syngur og klingir hin fagnandi fjöld,  
því fundið er landið sitt horfna:  
“Hið forna Vínland er vinland nýtt”  
frá vörum íslenzkum hljóma skal titt’.

Exaggeration is a traditional function of Icelandic panegyric, of course; but Steingrímur's head was not being ransomed, and the tribute seems to reflect genuine esteem for Fiske the man as well as fascination with the ‘vinland nýtt’.

Many other recurrent themes and features catch the eye in the catalogue. Fiske sought to encourage the preparation and publication of an English-Icelandic dictionary to match the Cleasby-Guðbrandur Vigfússon Icelandic-English volume; both Fiske (in a review) and Halldór (via an unpublished bibliography of scholarship) demonstrate their fondness for the once fashionable *Friðþjófs saga*; and the diversity of Fiske's correspondents is striking, with major figures such as Lord Dufferin, Konrad Maurer, Sophus Bugge, Jón Borgfirðingur (father of Finnur Jónsson) and Matthias Jochumsson rubbing shoulders with bizarre individuals such as Garth Wilkinson, a British Swedenborgian fanatic who had his horses eat Icelandic lava to keep their teeth clean while he prepared an impenetrable book-length allegorical analysis of *Voluspá*. Noteworthy, too, are the extent and importance of photographic materials in the Fiske holdings, notably those of the Englishman F. W. W.

Howell at the end of the nineteenth century. Just how powerful a witness such material can be has been demonstrated recently in the set of late Victorian photographs of Iceland published in Frank Ponzi's revelatory *Iceland—the Grim Years* (Mosfellsbær, 1995). The catalogue also reminds us that some of the best letters and documents are to be found either bound in at the front of or lying loosely within copies of otherwise unremarkable printed books.

As was to be expected of a new volume in a monograph series with a long tradition of cataloguing primary sources, Pórunn Sigurðardóttir's book presents its material in a clear and well-organised fashion. The descriptions of individual items are for the most part succinct and informative; details of pre-Fiske manuscript ownership enable us, for instance, to glimpse fleetingly some of the Icelandic manuscript holdings of famous nineteenth-century philological figures. Not all these names are to be found in the index, and neither are the names of other individuals (some of them of real interest) mentioned in the summary descriptions of correspondence though not themselves authors of letters. This is a pity; but the indexer's art is long to learn and life is short. On p. 15, Item 25 the 'someone by the name of Percy' who must return a book to Sir Joseph Banks is surely Bishop Thomas Percy, a relentless book-borrower during the preparation of his *Five Pieces of Runic Poetry* (1763) and *Northern Antiquities* (1770). In the biographical details provided for significant figures, the compiler seems to have had rather more success locating birthdays than dates of death. Overall, the volume seems to have been seen through the press with appropriate care. I noticed only a couple of minor typos ('concul' for 'consul', p. 108, and 'Josept' for 'Joseph', p. 169); the 'með' (p. 253, 13.2) in a category heading ought to have been translated into English; and there seems no reason why 'f. ex.' (p. 169) could not have been 'e. g.', in conformity with the Latin abbreviations used elsewhere in the volume.

No doubt in some hypertextual, multi-media based future, volumes of this sort will seem quaintly old fashioned; and the contents of the Fiske collection will be accessible by the flick of a computer switch. Until such a day—and indeed well after such a day—Pórunn Sigurðardóttir's catalogue will serve its users well. It is well worthy of the series in which it appears and of the collection which it describes.

ANDREW WAWN

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