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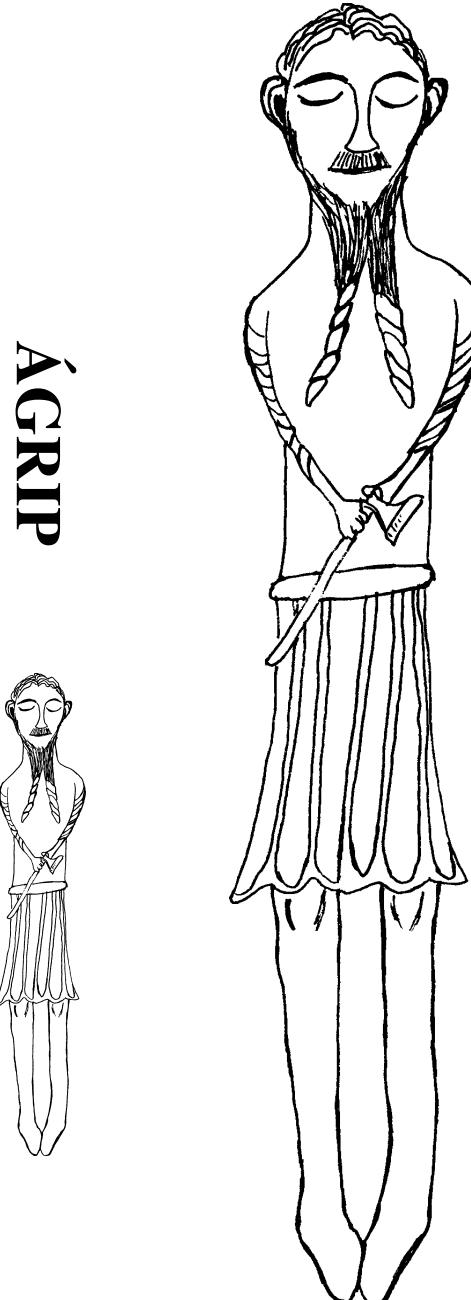
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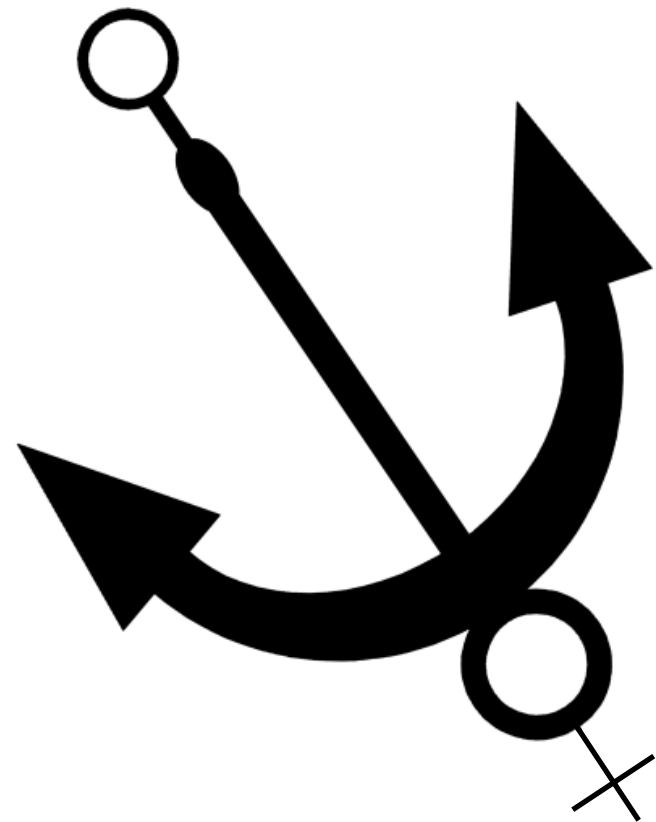
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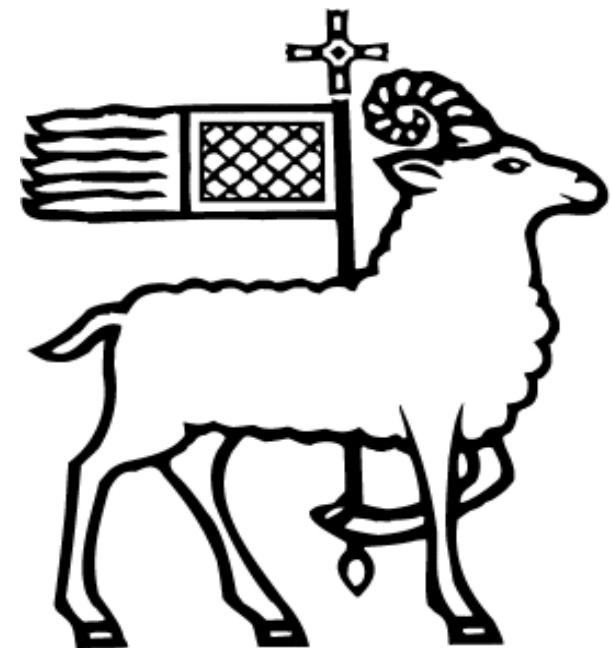
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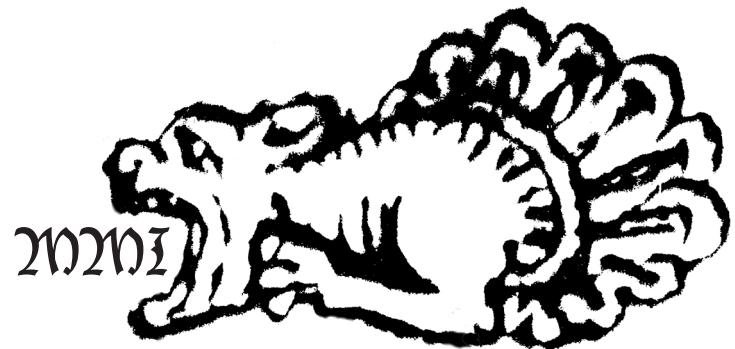
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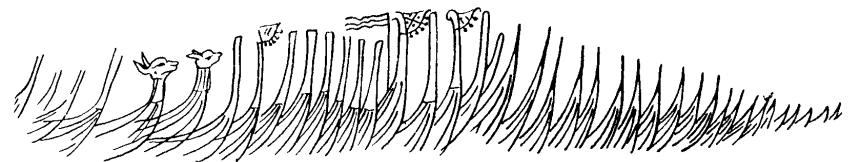
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THE SAGA OF VILMUNDUR THE OUTSIDER

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This book is a translation of a revised version, edited by Anthony Faulkes, of Árni Björnsson's *Wagner og Völsungar*, published in Icelandic in 2000. In it the sources Wagner used in compiling the libretti of his great work, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, are detailed scene by scene through all four operas of the cycle. Many will be surprised to learn that no more than 5% of his material is derived solely from medieval German books such as *Das Nibelungenlied*, while at least 80% is from Old Icelandic writings: the Prose Edda, Eddic poems, and various sagas. The concept of Götterdämmerung, for example, in which the world is consumed by fire, as well as the flickering flame surrounding Brünnhilde's mountain fastness, were known to Wagner from Icelandic sources alone, since they do not appear in any German text, and may well have been inspired originally by the volcanic eruptions that occur so frequently in Iceland. About 15% of Wagner's literary motifs in the *Ring* are common to both German and Icelandic texts.

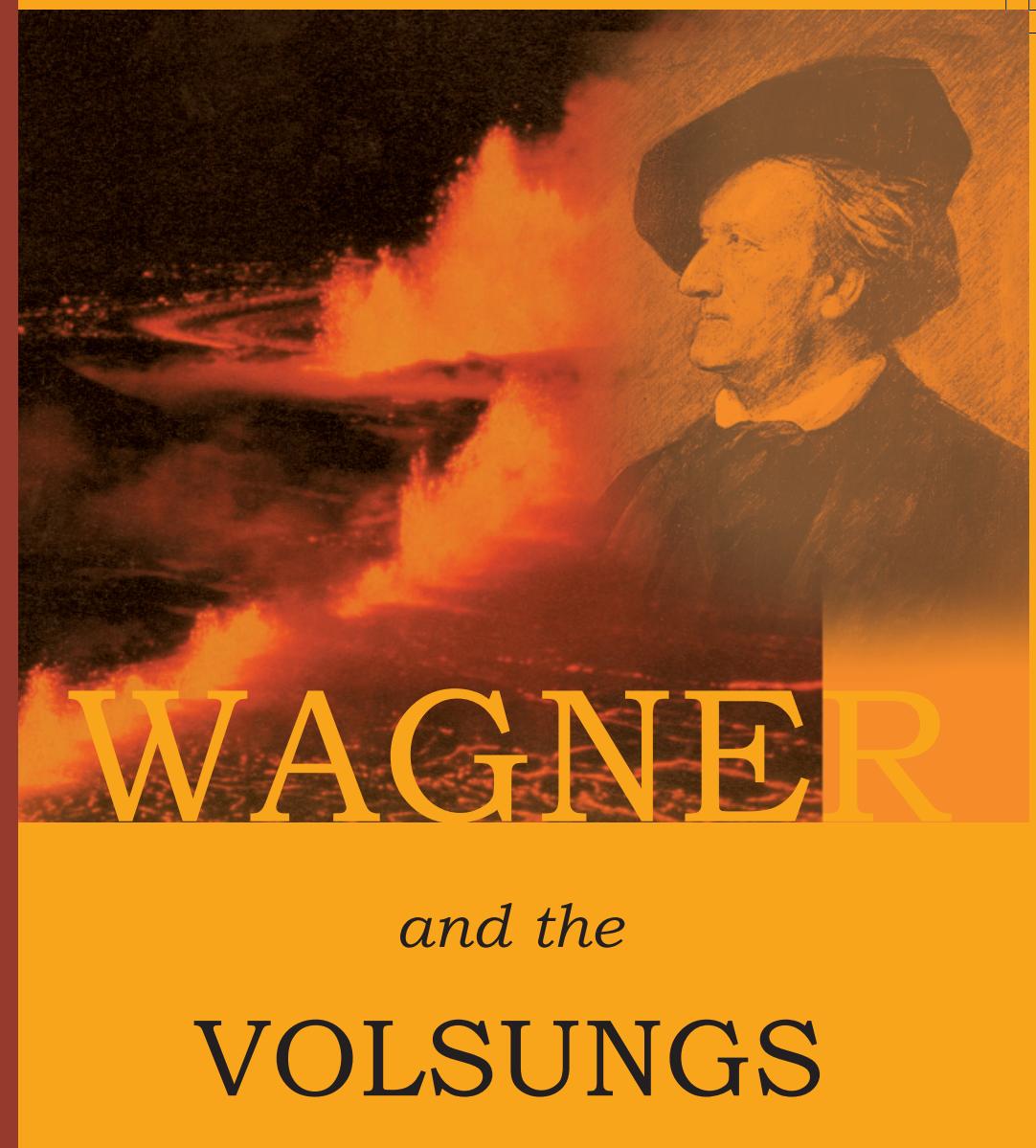
The book also contains a brief account of Wagner's life, and tells how he came to know Icelandic literature through the spread of knowledge of Old Icelandic texts in the German-speaking world during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It examines the reasons why Germanic mythology was almost exclusively preserved in Iceland in the Middle Ages, but became so popular in Germany in the nineteenth century and later. The long process of composition of words and music for the *Ring* cycle is related to details of Wagner's life, and mention is made of the reception of Wagner's works in modern Iceland, when his debt to Icelandic literature was finally repaid.

The author, Dr Árni Björnsson, has studied the cultural history of Iceland as well as that of the western world more generally. During the years 1961 to 1965 he was guest lecturer in Icelandic language and literature at the University in Greifswald and at the Free University, Berlin. From 1965 to 1968 he worked at the Manuscript Institute of Iceland and from 1969 to 1994 he was head of the Folklore Department of the National Museum of Iceland. He has published several books on aspects of Icelandic culture and its correspondences with international traditions.

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WAGNER and VOLGSUNGS



ICELANDIC SOURCES OF
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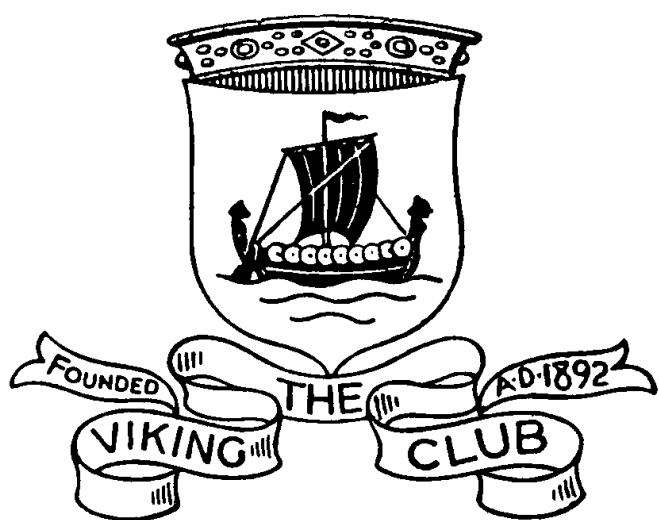
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