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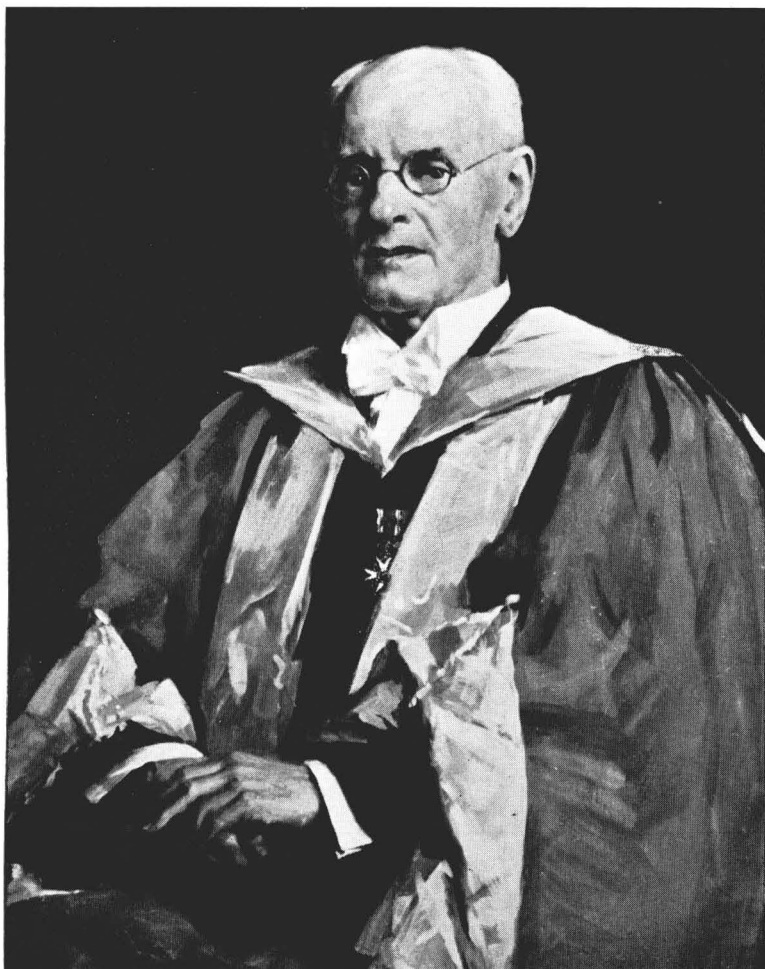
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HUGH MARWICK

1881-1965

The portrait, reproduced by courtesy of Mr H. G. MacKerran, B.Sc., Rector of Kirkwall Grammar School, is from a painting by Mr Stanley Cursiter, R.S.A.; the photograph from which it is taken was kindly lent by Mr John Fraser, who succeeded Marwick as Director of Education. Marwick appears much grimmer than I remember, but I never saw him with the eyes of a peccant schoolboy, or of a teacher in the presence of the Director of Education.

AN ORKNEY SCHOLAR : HUGH MARWICK

1881-1965

By BRUCE DICKINS

MANY of us who graduated in the days when "poor scholars" really were poor had hard work to reach the university and harder still to keep alive and fit when we got there. Few can have encountered such difficulties, or have so triumphantly surmounted them, as Hugh Marwick, perhaps the most distinguished scholar Orkney has ever produced, certainly the most notable of our time on the arts side. I do not forget Joseph Storer Clouston who wrote the standard history of Orkney, but he was a novelist before he commenced scholar and imagination was his strong suit.

The surname Marwick is typical of Orkney; it comes from an inlet on the west coast of the Mainland. Those of us who remember the Kaiser's war are familiar with the name, for it was off Marwick Head that the cruiser taking Kitchener to Russia was mined with the loss of all but a very few ratings. Hugh Marwick was the son of another Hugh who had gone to sea as a ship's carpenter before settling down as a crofter at Goodhall in the east of Rousay, 'Hrólf's island'. Rousay, which is separated from the North Mainland by a wide channel, is full of interesting sites; in the inventory of Ancient and Historical Monuments it occupies fifty pages of the Orkney volume. Hugh Marwick II was born there on 30 November 1881 and went to the island school. There was no future in crofting on the island, so to continue his education he became a pupil-teacher in the school, hoping ultimately to achieve a certificate. He was, in 1900, a candidate for a place in the Free Church Training Centre in Aberdeen. When the list of successful

candidates was published his name did not appear; he had just missed his chance. Luckily for himself — and for scholarship — someone fell out at the last moment and he was offered the vacant place. He spent the two years 1900-1902 at the Training Centre and was then appointed to the primary school at Newbattle, near Dalkeith, in Midlothian. As he had had no secondary-school education he gave his evenings to study, of mathematics in particular, and passed the Preliminary Examination that gave him entrance to the university. He saved £30 a year from his salary of £100 — incidentally the stipend of a Scots university assistant at the time — and by 1905 felt he could afford to throw up primary-school work and enter a degree course. Before matriculating in the University of Edinburgh he wrote to the Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature, then George Saintsbury, asking if it were possible to complete the English Honours Course in three, instead of the usual four, years. Saintsbury replied, at some length, that on paper it might be done but that it would be most unwise to attempt it. Fees were of course very low, and in any case were paid by the Carnegie Trust for any Scot who applied, and few Scots, however well-to-do their parents, refrained from applying. The cost of living was also low in Scotland, and, by sharing a big room with two other Orkneymen (who both did extremely well in academic life), he was able to live, not too uncomfortably, on 16/- a week.

I should explain what hurdles a candidate had in those days to surmount before being accepted for Honours in English — passes in the Ordinary Degree Examination in British History, in a classical language, in a philosophy and in a science. In his first year Marwick passed, without distinction, in British History and in Latin. In 1906-7 he was acclimatised to university work and obtained First-Class certificates in the Ordinary Classes of English Literature (in which he was 2nd Medallist),

of Logic and Metaphysics, and of Natural Philosophy and Practical Physics. These were taken before Easter, and in the Summer Term Marwick was 2nd equal in the English Honours Class. In 1907-8 he had another First in the English Honours Class and had then completed all that was necessary for entry to the Final Honours Examination. In the Physics Class he had gained two small scholarships that between them added £75 to the £100 he had saved, but neither his pocket nor his health would stand a fourth year in Edinburgh. He remained, therefore, in Orkney, helped by the loan of books and lecture notes and by stimulating letters from Gordon Hislop, a more fortunate contemporary in the English school. He returned to Edinburgh for the Final Honours Examination and, in spite of everything, was one of three candidates placed in the First Class. He obtained at once a better post as Chief English Master in the Grammar School at Burnley, Lancashire, where he met his wife Jane Barritt, whom he married in 1914. He had just been appointed headmaster of the Burgh (now styled the Grammar) School in Kirkwall, the chief secondary school in Orkney. Before he took over the post the Kaiser's war broke out and for civilians Orkney was like a beleaguered city. For Marwick himself there were compensations; many interesting people were stationed at the naval base on Scapa Flow. His wife did not enjoy it so much; she had a very difficult confinement far from her kinsfolk and friends, and was never really fit again. Their only child, a third Hugh, met his death by accident when still a boy.

Marwick took over the school from a headmaster of the older type and was at first depressed because his results were not nearly so good as those of his predecessor, who had little use for educational theory and was reputed to have applied the tawse freely to boys and girls alike. The milder methods used by Marwick were in time successful, and he sent some excellent pupils to the

university; one of them who was in Edinburgh in my time gained his D.Litt. for work on the *Orkneyinga Saga* and is now high in the Civil Service.

After fifteen years as a headmaster, during which he took his Edinburgh D.Litt., Marwick was appointed Executive Officer to the Orkney Education Committee, that is Director of Education for the County. This gave him the chance of acquainting himself with every part and every aspect of the island group. Of this he made good use in his volume on Orkney in the series of County Books; few books in that series display such scholarly insight wedded to local knowledge. For his services to education in Orkney he was admitted Companion of the Order of the British Empire in 1938. He retired at the age of sixty-five in 1946, having seen through a second great war in Orkney. He did not lack honour in his own country, for in 1936 he was appointed Honorary Sheriff-Substitute of Orkney and received the Freedom of Kirkwall in 1954. No one had deserved better of the county of his birth or of the city in which he had lived for more than forty years. His notable contributions to the archaeology, history, dialect and place-names of Orkney were recognised by the University of Aberdeen which conferred on him an Honorary LL.D. in 1956. They were recognised in Scandinavia too, by the Knighthood of the Norwegian Order of St Olaf in 1946, by the Hon. D.Phil. of the University of Bergen in 1964, and by his election as a Corresponding Member of Norwegian and Swedish learned societies. Till the last few years he was reasonably fit, but his wife's growing infirmity laid on him burdens hard for a man in his eighties to bear. The last letter I had from him, early in 1965, was in a trembling hand, quite unlike the small neat characters of earlier days, and I felt that the end could not be far off. But his election as an Honorary Life Member of this society gave him great pleasure in the last weeks of his life. The end came on 21 May 1965,

a few days after he had suffered a stroke. He received a civic funeral in St Magnus' Cathedral, Kirkwall, at which his old pupil the Rev. Harald L. Mooney, Minister of Deerness, paid a striking tribute to his influence in school, city and county. An excellent memoir by R[obert] R[endall] was published in *The Orcadian* of 27 May.

* * *

The biographical detail thus disposed of, I can deal with Marwick's contribution to scholarship. He was in many ways fortunate that after the Kaiser's war there were in Orkney men of standing who had a keen interest in the history of the islands. The oldest of these was Archdeacon James Brown Craven (1850-1924); he was not an Orkneyman by birth but had been rector of the Episcopal Church of St Olaf in Kirkwall from 1876 till his retirement in 1914. He had given his life to the history of the northern and western dioceses of Scotland, in particular to the struggles of the Episcopalian Church after the establishment of Presbytery in 1689. The best-known of his works is the four-volume *History of the Church in Orkney* (1883-1901), but he has to his name twenty-three separate publications, mostly printed in Kirkwall. For a complete list of them one must go to Crockford for 1923, for not one of the copyright libraries has a full set. The National Library of Scotland has eighteen, the British Museum ten and the Cambridge University six. Craven had no degree till the University of Aberdeen gave him an Honorary D.D.

The second was Joseph Storer Clouston (1870-1944), already known as the author of several popular novels, notably *The Lunatic at Large* and *The Spy in Black*. He was a graduate of Magdalen College, Oxford, who had edited *Records of the Earldom of Orkney* (Scottish Historical Society 1914) and was to reprint, with con-

siderable additions, *The Statistical Account of Orkney 1795-8* as *The Orkney Parishes* (Kirkwall 1927). His standard *History of Orkney* was published in Kirkwall in 1932.

A third was John Mooney (1862-1950), a Kirkwall business man who had started life as a poor boy with the sketchiest of educations but had by this time made himself a very competent historian. He had published little so far, but will be remembered as the author of *Eynhallow : the holy island of the Orkneys* (Kirkwall 1923 and 1949), *St Magnus, Earl of Orkney* (Kirkwall 1935), *The Cathedral and Royal Burgh of Kirkwall* (Kirkwall 1943 and 1947), and *Charters and Other Records of the City and Royal Burgh of Kirkwall, with the Treaty of 1468 between Denmark and Scotland* (Kirkwall 1950 and Aberdeen 1952). A fourth one should mention was John Fraser who was prominent in public life in Orkney.

These four, as well as Marwick, were among those who founded the Orkney Antiquarian Society in 1922, with Archdeacon Craven as President and Marwick as Secretary. Craven had not much longer to live but Marwick held the secretaryship for a dozen years, contributing papers on every aspect of archaeology, history and place-names in Orkney. Marwick, Clouston, Mooney and Fraser were the mainstay of the Society. Clouston's contributions were chiefly on history and heraldry, Mooney's on ecclesiastical and municipal history, Fraser's on the antiquities of various parishes in Orkney. I was one of the very few contributors from the adjacent island of Great Britain. Fifteen volumes of *Proceedings* were issued, the last in 1939. The Society was in abeyance during Hitler's war and was not revived. In its place an *Orkney Miscellany*, to which Marwick contributed papers on family history, was started in 1953. Of this, four volumes were published, the latest in 1957, and nothing more has so far appeared.

I hope I may be forgiven if I explain here how I came

to know Hugh Marwick and to form a lifelong friendship with him. I had heard of him from Gordon Hislop, his contemporary in English Honours in Edinburgh and a colleague of mine in that University from 1920 till his too early death in 1929. Soon after, in the Long Vacation of 1921, Professor G. Baldwin Brown and I had planned a runological tour in the north of Scotland, and were told that Marwick had discovered a new inscription in the ruined chapel (dedicated to St Come or to St Peter) on the Brough of Birsay; this is a tidal island 250 yards off the north-west corner of the Mainland of Orkney. When we reached Orkney to begin our work on the twelfth-century inscriptions in Maeshowe Marwick was away from Kirkwall, but we were able to examine the stone in his house and were later told the full story of its discovery. The Burgh School had had a holiday for Empire Day and Marwick had taken his son, aged six, on a trip to Birsay. The tide being out, he crossed to the island and was poking in the ruins of the chapel when he noticed that one of the stones was inscribed, doubly inscribed in fact, and clearly in runic characters. There was little time to spare before the tide came in and he did not know how long it would be before he could pay another visit to the Brough. His mind was quickly made up. With the boy under one arm and the inscription (of sandstone, 2 feet 10 in length, six inches in breadth and four inches thick) under the other, he made his way back to the Mainland, leaping from knife-edge to knife-edge of rock all slimy with seaweed. I have made the passage unencumbered and am sure that he was lucky to escape a fall that would have been dangerous to him and to his burden. When he returned to Kirkwall he got *post facto* permission to remove the stone, which is now, by the gift of the owner, in the National Museum, Queen Street, Edinburgh. Of the two inscriptions one is so worn that only a letter or two can be read, the other is perfectly legible as Norse

characters of the sixteen-letter *fuþork*. Marwick could make no sense of it, nor could I till I remembered that there were a few personal names in Old Norse of Latin origin and ending in *-us*, notably *Magnús* and *Markús*. Among these is *Philippús*. The first seven characters were therefore a personal name, 'filibus', that is Philippús, followed by the abbreviated formula 'ræ[ist] ru[nar]'. The interpretation was "Philippús carved [these] runes". Marwick announced the discovery in a letter to *The Scotsman* and published it in greater detail, with a reproduction, in *The Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, LVI, 67-71, the first of his papers to appear in a learned periodical.

Marwick had of course been at work for many years collecting material for a dictionary of the Orkney dialect, especially those words that were certainly or possibly of Norse origin. He had taught himself the elements of Old Norse, for when he was an Edinburgh undergraduate there was no teaching of the language in any of the Scots universities. That is not surprising when one remembers that the staff of the English Department was limited to two, Professor Saintsbury and one lecturer. It had risen to four when I went to Edinburgh in 1919, and Old Norse was put on, at first as a voluntary class, in the early 'twenties. Marwick had, however, met and been stimulated by the distinguished Faroese scholar Jakob Jakobsen (1864-1918), who had visited Orkney in 1909, 1910 and 1912 and had published a paper on Orkney in the *Festskrift til H. F. Feilberg* (1911), 318-47. Jakobsen's first love was for the language, literature and history of his native islands. Much of what he published was in Faroese or, at most convenient, in Danish. For example, he edited Provost V. U. Hammershaimb's Faroese anthology (1886-91) and a collection of Faroese folk- and fairy-tales (1898-1901), and brought together the first and only volume of *Diplomatarium Færoense* (Tórshavn and København 1907). Jakobsen visited

Shetland in 1893, 1894 and 1895 and published in English two popular lectures on *The Dialect and Place-Names of Shetland* (Lerwick 1897), in which he brought out the interest of the *haaf*-names, tabu-terms used by Shetland fishermen. For example, the parish minister and the church must on no account be given their proper names at sea; the minister must be referred to as *de upstander*, *de beniman* 'the prayer-man', *de predikanter* 'the preacher' or *de loader* 'the bawler', the church as *de beni-hoose* 'the prayer-house' or *kløster* (from ON *klaustr*). Similarly the ship must be referred to as *de faar* 'the conveyance', the mast as *de steng* or *stong* 'stick', the sail as *de cloot* or *skegga* (see the word *skega* in his *Etymological Dictionary of the Norn Language*); the halibut as *de baldin* 'the fierce one' and the seal as *de hoarin* 'the hairy one'. No medievalist will be surprised at the first group of these tabu-terms, since an ecclesiastical writer could rage against the wicked stupidity of lay-folk who thought it bad luck to see a priest of the Lord but lucky to sight a stinking beast of a wolf. Jakobsen's doctoral thesis, *Det norrøne Sprog på Shetland*, was published in 1897 and his long paper 'Shetlandsøernes Stednavne' appeared in *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* 1901, 55-258, in English, Lerwick 1936. Jakobsen's chief work was his *Etymologisk Ordbog over det Norrøne Sprog på Shetland* (København 1921), which he had hoped from the start would appear in an English edition. He died, however, in 1918, and it was not till 1928-32 that his sister Fru Anna Horsbøl was able to carry out his wishes with *An Etymological Dictionary of the Norn Language in Shetland* (2 vols., Copenhagen and London). One of her most valuable helpers was Hugh Marwick who, as a native of Orkney, was better than anyone qualified to discuss difficult questions of odal law and to revise Jakobsen's translation of the Norn fragments.

Jakobsen's list included some 10,000 words of Norse

origin that survived in Shetland in the closing years of the last century. Shetland, affectionately but only too appropriately styled *de Aald Rock*, had been less attractive than Orkney to the hungry Scot. The southern group, with its soft outlines and pastel colours, provided good farm land and still maintains one of the most prosperous agricultural communities in Scotland. Under the Sinclair earls (from 1369), and particularly after 1468, it suffered earlier and more intensive infiltration by ferrylopers from the mainland. Moreover, its people were farmers rather than fishermen and seafarers, and the odds against the survival of Norn words, of *haaf*-terms in particular, were heavy. Norn terms in general were certainly less than a third, more probably less than a quarter, as numerous as in Shetland. Only a handful of *haaf*-terms (such as *biter* 'knife' and *mungerhoose*, from ON *munkahús*, 'church') are recorded. Of these few a couple are of special interest. Marwick noted the use of *horse-leg-been* and *keel-root* for right-hand and left-hand oar respectively but could offer no explanation. This was given many years later by a Norwegian scholar, S. Solheim, in *Maal og Minne* for 1947 (pp. 1-15); Folaften and Kjøl-rot are shoals in the Gulafjord, one on either side of the passage. These terms must go back to the days of frequent communication by sea with Norway.

The main types of Norn borrowings into the Orkney dialect can be classified as follows:

1. Direct loans (from Old Norse except when prefixed by N[ew] N[orse]): *aftak* 'lull in a storm'; *aize* < *eisa* 'blaze fiercely'; *bismer* < *bismari* 'steelyard'; *felkyied* 'woe-begone', originally 'bewitched'; *gren* 'lobster's hole'; *grind* 'gate'; *hogboon* < *haug-búinn* or *-búandi* 'barrow-dweller'; *klibber* < *klyfberi* 'wooden pack-saddle'; *messigate* < *messugata* 'path to church'; *moorit* < *mórauðr* 'reddish brown (of wool)'; *riulin* < *hriflingr* 'rough shoe of untanned leather'; *roo* < *hrúga* 'heap'. And of course

a great number of topographical terms, either independently or in compound, as *air* < *eyrr* 'gravelly beach'; *berry* < *björg* 'cliff'; *breck* < *brekka* 'slope'; *fors* 'waterfall'; *geo* < *gjá* 'cleft'; *klett* < *klettr* 'solitary rock'; *rost* < *røst* 'part of a tiderace'; *wart* < *varða* 'beacon'.

2. Calques: *brig-steens* 'paving-flags in front of house': *brústeinn*; *beat fluiks* 'flap one's arms for warmth': NN *berja floka*.

3. Part-translations: *aithken* 'sheepmark' < *auðkenni*, *auð-* replaced by Scots *eath-*; *dayset* 'nightfall' < *dagsetr*; *equal-man* 'umpire' < *jafnaðar-maðr*; *meadow-skift* < *engja-skift*.

4. Adaptations of Norse idiom: *go afore de crag* 'fall over a cliff': *ganga fyrir björg*; *oot apae de day* 'near noon': NN *ute paa dagen*; *what for a* 'what kind of a' : NN *kvat fyre en*.

To his Dictionary Marwick prefixed a valuable introduction on the history of the Norn language in Orkney, discussed the scanty fragments of rhymes, riddles, etc. that have come down to us, and traced the phonological development of the language from Old Norse. Moreover in Appendix I he dealt with the forms of the twelfth-century inscriptions from Maeshowe. In Appendix II he printed specimens of the Orkney Norn of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In Appendix III he collected literary references to the Orkney Norn from Jo. Ben. to Sir Walter Scott, and in Appendix IV he tabulated the variations in vowel sounds he had noted in different parishes. It is in every way a most scholarly and well-balanced piece of work, which in its original form was presented as a thesis for the D.Litt. degree of Edinburgh in 1926. The examiners, of whom I was one, had no hesitation in recommending the award of the degree. Then came the question of publication. I urged him to have it printed *seriatim* in *The Orcadian*.

This would have been cheap and might have brought in new material that could have been incorporated as an appendix. Marwick preferred to have it printed at his own expense by one of the University Presses — never, I think, a very good idea, since a publisher who ventures nothing is not much concerned to push the book and is satisfied to take a disproportionate share of what comes in from sales. Marwick got much credit but not a great deal else, I suspect.

Marwick's second paper had been on 'Celtic Place-Names in Orkney', and his interest in local place-names never flagged, his last work (still unpublished) being on the place-names of Birsay parish. In the interim he published a paper on 'The Place-Names of North Ronaldsay' (1923) and a monograph on *The Place-Names of Rousay* (1947), and included sections on the island names in his 'Antiquarian Notes on Papa Westray' (1925) and 'Antiquarian Notes on Stronsay' (1926). His 'Orkney Farm-Name Studies' appeared in 1931 and a comprehensive monograph, *Orkney Farm-Names*, in 1952. This summed up his conclusions. The first section (pp. 1-188), on island- and farm-names, brought together the material and offered interpretation where this seemed possible. Only a limited number of names, few of them farm-names, are recorded before the rentals of 1492 (still in manuscript) and of 1497-1503 (printed by Peterkin). These furnish some excellent forms but cover by no means the whole of the area. The second section (pp. 191-222) describes the farming background. The third (pp. 227-251) attempts to establish the chronology of different types. Names in *land*, *bólstaðr* (preserved as -bister or -buster) and *garðr* may go back to the earliest phase of the Norse settlement. Names in *setr* and *staðir* (usually represented by -ston through influence of the dative *stǫðum*) are secondary in character, while names in *kví* (modern -quoy) 'cattlefold' are mostly of relatively late date since the holdings they

define were still uncultivated when *skatt* was imposed. It is likely enough that Norse settlement in Orkney, as in Shetland, began before the Viking Age, as A. W. Brøgger urged on archaeological grounds in *Ancient Emigrants*. Yet the evidence of the names in *vin* 'meadow', on which Jakobsen laid so much stress, is inconclusive for Orkney, since *vin* may have continued in use as a generic term and such compounds as ON *leik-vin* 'sports-meadow' (surviving as Lyking) may have been imported readymade. *Orkney Farm-Names* was reviewed at length in *Maal og Minne* for 1953 (pp. 109-125) by Magnus Olsen, who welcomed it as a notable contribution to Scandinavian place-name studies, describing it as virtually a new volume of *Norske Gaardnavne*.

The chapter Marwick contributed to Dr John Gunn's *Orkney : The Magnetic North* (first published in 1932) is a model survey of Orkney history from the earliest times to the present day, showing familiarity with every variety of source, archaeological discovery, medieval narrative and family papers of the modern period. For many years he described new finds in Orkney in the *Proceedings* either of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland or of the Orkney Antiquarian Society, and in 1952 produced for the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works the official guide to *Orkney : Ancient Monuments*, now deservedly in its fourth edition. This is well illustrated with half-tones of important sites, line-blocks of plans and a sketch-map which serves as a key to the distribution of the most important monuments, while the thirty-two pages of letterpress are a masterly condensation of what is known on the subject. Marwick had already made important contributions to the archaeology of Orkney, notably in a paper of 1928 on Skara Brae (better styled Skerrabrae) in the parish of Sandwick, a prehistoric village site that had been known for generations but had never been scientifically excavated till 1927-30, after the first year by Gordon Childe. Childe

was furious that a local antiquary should have had the temerity to express an opinion before the oracle had spoken. Yet Marwick knew the site long before Childe had left the outback of his native Australia, and the latter could not in the end improve on Marwick's provisional dating: "I should be disposed to assign to Skerrabrae a prolonged period of occupation — probably of centuries — beginning somewhere in the middle of the first millennium B.C. and ending before the commencement of the Christian era" (*Proceedings of the Orkney Antiquarian Society*, VII 26).

One of Marwick's most important papers is on 'Leidang in the West' (1935). In Norway and its colonies Old Norse *leiðangr* means 'ship-levy'. Only in case of actual or threatened invasion could the full *leiðangr* be mustered, but the ruler, king or earl, had the right to call out a half-levy for aggressive action. In time this right came to be commuted for payments in kind, which were assessed by *skatt-land* (or $4\frac{1}{2}$ -land), the unit that had been required to furnish and equip a man for the local fleet. Four *skatt-lands* made up an *urisland* 'ounce-land', which Marwick urged could be equated with the Hebridean *davach* or *tirunga* (a Gaelic translation of ON *eyrisland* 'ounce-land') and with the Manx *treen* of similar derivation. The whole paper is so closely reasoned that, in so brief an abstract, I cannot hope to have summarised it satisfactorily.

Marwick's interest in the history of the islands was not confined to the medieval period. In his two volumes entitled *Merchant Lairds of Long Ago* (1936 and 1939) he used the family papers of the Traills of Elsness to illustrate the economic history of Orkney in the first half of the eighteenth century, both agricultural and commercial. The main crops were oats (the usual breadstuff) and bere, a tough type of barley, which was largely malted, for already in the sixteenth century the men of Orkney were said to drink the starkest ale in Albion

without becoming *wud, fou* or *fuilish* 'mad, drunk or foolish'. The surplus was exported to the Continent, chiefly to Norway, the ships bringing back timber and tar, which were not produced in Orkney. To the normal hazards of wind and weather were then added the risk of capture by a French privateer. I suspect there was a certain amount of smuggling too, unless the Orkney lairds differed widely from their Shetland counterparts. There is a story of the Bruces of Symbister (a family, now extinct) that a laird running a cargo of spirits was sighted by a revenue cutter, which quickly gained upon him. His only chance was to take a short cut between two rocky islets, calculating that he drew less water than the cutter. The cutter stuck, and, after the cargo had been safely landed and concealed, he returned to help it off the rocks. He claimed salvage and got it.

Marwick's work is so varied that I could but treat it subject by subject. When or where it was published must be left to the Bibliography which follows.

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¹ A volume (much of it in English) to mark the centenary of Jakobsen's birth; it includes a bibliography of Jakobsen's writings.

KORMAKR THE POET AND HIS VERSES

By EINAR ÓL. SVEINSSON

I

MAY I remind you of a poem by the French poet Baudelaire. He is standing in the street; the din of the traffic overwhelms him; then suddenly he sees a woman walking by, tall, slender, dressed in mourning — “*douleur majestueuse*”. He describes her in a little more detail: the lovely hand with which she raises the hem of her dress; her light movements; her aristocratic air . . . and the poet drinks from her eyes, which remind him of a pale sky presaging storm, the gentleness that enchants and the charm that slays. It was like a flash of light . . . and then the night. Transient beauty, your glance brought me rebirth. Shall I never see you again, this side of eternity?

Un éclair . . . puis la nuit! — Fugitive beauté
Dont le regard m'a fait soudainement renaître,
Ne te verrai-je plus que dans l'éternité?

Elsewhere, far, far away! Too late! Perhaps never!
For I know not whither you flee, you know not whither
I go; oh, you whom I would have loved! oh, you that knew
it well!

Ailleurs, bien loin d'ici! trop tard! jamais peut-être!
Car j'ignore où tu fuis, tu ne sais où je vais,
Ô toi que j'eusse aimé, ô toi qui le savais!

This subject, ladies and gentlemen — the poet and the woman who walks by — is my theme today.

A glance at the world's love poems will show that, more often than not, they are about the woman who walks by; either she has not yet come, or she appears like a flash of light and vanishes, or else she has vanished, whither? To some place where the poet will never meet her again.

Or, if he should meet her, she has then become another woman, or he another man. Much more rarely do the poets tell of the fair one who stops and stays with them. It is no task of ours today to examine the truth of these poets' account of their world, but one is bound to admit that they should know it better than most.

II

My address today is called "Kormakr the Poet and his Verses". Its subject is one of the ancient sagas of Icelanders, the account it gives of the poet, and the verses it attributes to him.

Briefly, the events of the saga are as follows:

In the days of Haraldr hárfagri, king of Norway, there was a chieftain in the land named Kormakr.¹ He was rich and well born, of a family from the Vík region in the south-east. His son is called Qgmundr and is a great viking. Qgmundr marries Helga, the daughter of Earl Fróði, and fights with a viking over her. Qgmundr does not make friends with King Haraldr, but goes to Iceland. His wife Helga and their son die at sea. Qgmundr lands at Miðfjörður, meets Miðfjarðar-Skeggi and accepts land from him at Melur. He marries Dalla, daughter of Qmundr sjóni, and their sons are Þorgils and the poet Kormakr. Qgmundr dies, and Skeggi takes over the management of the estate. It is clear that Dalla and her sons now find themselves in reduced circumstances.

One day Kormakr goes up the mountain with some farm hands and lodges at Gnúpsdalur on the way. In this place there is a young maiden named Steingerðr, daughter of Þorkell of Tunga. They fall in love with each other and Kormakr composes many verses about her. He stays on at the farm and waits, while the men go up the

¹ I should mention that in modern editions, including my own, the name is always written Kormákr, but I have come to the conclusion now that this form is not correct and finds no support in the older authorities; Kormakr with a short *a* also agrees with the Irish form, Cormac. Page references in what follows are to my edition of the saga in *Vatnsdæla saga* (Íslensk fornrit VIII, 1939), 203-302.

mountain to look for "dun coloured sheep", as he says in a verse.

After this, Kormakr begins to make regular visits to Gnúpsdalur, and the girl's father is ill pleased and takes her home; but Kormakr then starts going to Tunga.

There is a woman named Þorveig, at Steinsstaðir in Miðfjörður, who is something of a witch. Her sons take to visiting Tunga and one of them, Oddr, casts his affections upon Steingerðr. At the urging of Þorkell the brothers try to harm Kormakr. One evening they lie in ambush for him, meaning to kill him, but he strikes them down. After this he drives Þorveig out of Miðfjörður and refuses to pay blood-money for her sons; but in return she swears that he shall never enjoy the love of Steingerðr. A little later mention is made of her performing a magical ceremony called *seiðr*, and this is clearly one of the key incidents in the story.

Steingerðr now bids Kormakr speak to her father and marry her. He does as she asks, requests her hand in marriage, and the wedding day is fixed. But then differences over money occur, "and then it befell strangely that after these matters were settled Kormakr was ill content; but it was for this cause, that Þorveig performed the *seiðr*, to the end that they should have no pleasure of one another". And when the time for the wedding comes, Kormakr stays at home.

This conduct angers the kinsfolk of Steingerðr and they marry her in haste to Hólmgröngu-Bersi, a great champion. When Kormakr hears this he undergoes a change of heart and is filled with an obsessive desire to have her. He pursues them, but achieves nothing, apart from a duel with Bersi in which he is wounded. Later, the uncle of Kormakr, Steinarr, fights Bersi and wounds him in the backside. After this, Steingerðr acquires an aversion for him and declares herself legally separated from him. Next comes an account of various dealings between Bersi and others, but the only one relevant to the

story of Kormakr is that in which the brothers of Steingerðr demand her part of the marriage settlement back from Bersi and are involved in a duel.

Next, Steingerðr is married to Þorvaldr tinteinn Eysteinnsson, of the family of the Skíðungar, and she raises no objections to the match. Kormakr pretends not to know anything about it and prepares to go abroad. However, he wants to meet her before leaving, and he asks her to make him a shirt, which is symbolic; but she receives him coldly. He then composes some satirical verses about her husband, and they part on bad terms.

Kormakr now goes abroad and is with Hákon Aðalsteinsfóstri, and later with Haraldr gráfeldr, and travels widely on viking and other warlike expeditions, probably to find relief from his memories. After a while, though, he feels the urge to return to Iceland. Now follows a strange episode: when Kormakr comes to land in Miðfjörður, he sees a woman there riding. It is Steingerðr. He goes to meet her and they talk together. Evening begins to draw on and they walk until they come to a small farm, where they spend the night. It is said that they lie with a bed-board between them. Kormakr composes various verses, and it is clear that he longs for them to share one bed "without fear of harm" and expects as much. She leaves him with coldness in the morning.

We hear next of an exchange of satirical verses by Kormakr and Þorvaldr, and of duels in which some sorcery is involved; for Kormakr seeks the aid of Þórdís spákona, but he has no faith in her lore and always spoils things for her. This section ends with Kormakr giving Steingerðr two kisses "somewhat lingeringly" and having to pay for them. After that he goes abroad once more and again is with Haraldr gráfeldr.

But now there is a strange development. Steingerðr asks her husband to take her abroad. Þorvaldr does so, and they, too, stay with King Haraldr. The saga tells of many episodes in their dealings with Kormakr. On one

occasion he saves them from vikings; on another, when he meets Steingerðr he gives her four kisses; on a voyage to Bjarmaland (northern Russia) Steingerðr rams his ship and he barely escapes with his life. Then vikings snatch Steingerðr away from her husband, and Þorvaldr promises Kormakr he may have her if he can save her; but when it comes to the point, she is unwilling to bargain — in the words of the saga, *kaupa um knifa*. Besides Kormakr “declares that such is not fated; saying that ill spirits or evil fortune have scotched it from the start”. At this they part, Steingerðr going with her husband, and they never meet again. But Kormakr and Þorgils skarði again take up their viking expeditions and harry in Ireland, Bretland (i.e. Wales), England and Scotland, and are the first to raise the fortification known as Skarðaborg — or Scarborough. On one of these viking expeditions Kormakr dies.

In this brief synopsis I have confined myself almost entirely to the events of the story — its facts. I have deliberately by-passed its psychological problems. And I have no more than touched on one half of the saga: its verses. I will come to both of these later.

III

But before we proceed any further, my readers will naturally want to know a bit more about the saga itself. It was written in Iceland, evidently in the neighbourhood where Kormakr and Steingerðr themselves grew up, in the western part of the Húnavatnsþing. It shows no mark of exceptional knowledge, e.g. in the field of genealogy or personal history. It shows no signs of clerical learning, nor of any links with any ecclesiastical centre of education. It does not belong to the school of Þingeyrar. What it says about the eastern part of Húnavatnsþing and places beyond does not give evidence of accurate knowledge, either of topography or people. When was the saga written? Here we come up against difficulties.

It is unlikely to have been written before 1200 — though this cannot be stated dogmatically — and it is out of the question that it could have been written after 1300, when the last generation of the Republic had passed away. But when, within this period? Theodor Möbius maintains that the saga is late, from the latter part of the thirteenth century. He considers it was written as a setting for the verses and is in this respect unique; normally, he maintains, the sagas follow rich oral traditions kept alive by skilful story-tellers, but here the accounts are vague and poverty-stricken, apart from those dealing with Bersi, which must have been based on a specific, probably written, saga about him. The composition is very imperfect. Möbius appears to regard all this as supporting his dating of the saga. Finnur Jónsson agrees, and pursues the line still further. He points out that the saga is untrustworthy in many respects, full of superstition and with considerable traces of Mythical Saga motifs, though some elements of the superstition are ancient. Eugen Mogk is of a similar opinion regarding its age.

As can be seen, the significance of these age-characteristics is open to debate, and in fact not all have agreed about them. Guðbrandur Vigfússon says: "Kormaks Saga . . . the most primitive piece of Icelandic prose writing that has come down to us. The style is so rough and broken it is at times hardly intelligible, not only in its wording, but even in the matter."²

Björn M. Ólsen considered all the arguments of Möbius and Finnur Jónsson in his lectures and he shows that they are inadequate, and may, besides, be interpreted quite differently. Instead of being *post-classical*, he maintains, the saga is *pre-classical*, composed before the golden age of Icelandic saga-writing. I am in complete agreement with this view. All its characteristics fall easily into place on the hypothesis that it belongs to the category of saga that I have called "archaic". I would have chosen a more

² Gudbrand Vigfusson, *Sturlunga saga* (1878), I liv.

positive proof of the age of the saga, but a comparison with *Hallfredar saga* in one respect and another supports the view that *Kormaks saga* is the earlier work. Björn M. Ólsen has also pointed out a number of archaic words, and by no stretch of the imagination can the vocabulary be called late, while one might take note, too, of archaic spellings, including, for example, the occasional use of a single consonant for a double one in *Mǫðruvallabók*. Every peculiarity of the story can be satisfactorily explained by the writer's not yet having acquired the knowledge possessed by authors of the classical sagas, knowledge of how to construct a consistent story from given verses and anecdotes. I have pointed out elsewhere that in archaic sagas it is common to find the artistic illusion broken; thus in *Kormaks saga*, too, the author explains the inconsistency of Kormakr by saying: "And then it befell strangely that after these matters were settled, Kormakr was ill content; *but it was for this cause, that Þorveig performed the 'seiðr' to the end that they should have no pleasure of one another*" (223), and "The stratagem that Steinarr used against Bersi was by the counsel of Þórðr, that the duel should go against Bersi" (249-50). It may well be, too, that the bias shown in the saga against Þorveig, Þórdís spákona, Narfi and the Skíðungar is an archaic characteristic rather than a mark of later origin. Should the sentence, "hann skauzk í skugga ok skammaðisk sín" (278) be regarded as late or archaic?

This view of the saga's age is accepted by Sigurður Nordal.

Before leaving this subject, I should mention a well-known phenomenon: verses sometimes occur twice (52nd and 65th verses; 76th verse repeated; two verses by Hólmǫngu-Bersi almost identical); and almost the same incidents occur more than once, as when Þorvaldr tinteinn is twice worsted by vikings (pp. 293 and 296-98), and when Kormakr kisses Steingerðr twice and pays, reciting the same verse on each occasion. These are instances of what

might be called variants. Then there is also frequent discrepancy between verse and prose, and other unevenness. All this points in the same direction: *Kormaks saga* is less "edited" than is usually the case with Sagas of Icelanders; it is more like oral traditions.

Before passing on to another subject, though, there is one thing I should mention. The whole saga is preserved in Mǫðruvallabók, but we also have a small fragment of it from a vellum book believed to be considerably later. If Mǫðruvallabók stood alone, one might well question the text. But the fragment has exactly the same text, with minor variants, and each has its own quota of small mistakes. This supports the view that there has been no deliberate tampering with the text of the saga, but that, like all the works of man, it contains some errors.

Nearly all those who have written about the saga have thought much in it to be old. To this there is one exception: in his work *Skáldasögur* (1961), the Icelandic scholar Bjarni Einarsson maintains that the saga is pure fiction, written very early in the thirteenth century. Its model is the story of Tristan; but since *Kormaks saga*, by his admission, dates from the earlier decades of the century, it must be prior to the translation of *Tristans saga* by Brother Róbert (1226). Thus an explanation of the link between *Kormaks saga* and the French poems is completely lacking. The scholar mentioned above thinks that the verses in the saga were composed by its author in the style of troubadour poetry of the south; but again the link is not shown. This work might be regarded as a plea for the views expressed in it, but it includes no discussion of arguments against them. An attempt is made to minimize the saga's faults, which therefore receive no more impartial treatment than the rest. The author does not go so far as to deny that Kormakr existed and composed verses about the Norwegian rulers, which would indeed be difficult; but he supposes the preservation of the court poetry to have been faithful, while most of

what the Sagas of Icelanders say about the origin of the verses they contain he regards as worthless invention. I admit that this work has been instrumental in some degree in persuading me to look at *Kormaks saga* afresh; but I am not going to be drawn into any controversy by it. My only desire is to see whether any new light can be thrown on *Kormaks saga* and its verses.

IV

What evidence is there, outside his saga, of the existence of Kormakr?

Snorri Sturluson in his *Edda* has six quatrains, most of them about the earls of Hlaðir, attributed to Kormakr. In *Heimskringla* the saga of Hákon the Good (chapter 14) records a complete verse attributed to Kormakr Ögmundarson and said to be from the *drápa* on Earl Sigurðr of Hlaðir. I know of no reason to question the authenticity of these verses. In the third grammatical treatise, Ólafr hvítaskáld ascribes one couplet to Kormakr:

Því at málvinu minnar,
mildr Þórketill! vildir

The sequel is missing, but the verse was undoubtedly addressed to Þórketill, i.e. the father of Steingerðr, while he calls her his *málvina*. Þórketill is an older form of Þorkell.

Kormakr is mentioned in the *Íslendingadrápa* of Haukr Valdísarson. Here it is said that he fought often and sometimes taught men to bite the dust, and he is also called high-born. It is said, too, that he was with princes, that he was never afraid, and that he believed in himself. These last words seem to point to his dislike of superstition, mentioned in the saga; though it could be interpreted in other ways. Dalla, Ögmundr and Kormakr are also mentioned in all versions of *Landnámabók*, as well as in *Egils saga*, and Þorgils is in *Egils saga* too. Here the relationship between *Egils saga* and *Landnáma* is not clear. In *Egils saga* the father of Ögmundr is named Galti.

There is probably a disagreement here between *Kormaks saga* and *Egils saga* (although *galti* might of course be a nickname), and in fact it is most unlikely that any Kormakr was chieftain in Vík about the year 900. How old is *Íslendingadrápa*? This is uncertain, and a debt of gratitude would be owed to the man who could find any sure indications of date in it. Jón Helgason thinks that the words about Hallr of Síða — that he had *sonu mæta* (worthy sons), and that the dear God of Heaven created *höfuðsmanna veg sannan* (a true glory of chieftains) — refer to the sanctity of Jón Ögmundarson.³ But might the God of Heaven not be thanked for the “glory” that from the sons of Hallr are descended the bishops Jón Ögmundarson, Klængr Þorsteinsson and Magnús Einarsson, and from his daughters, Ketill Þorsteinsson and the earls of Orkney, Magnús and Rögnvaldr kali, both of whom were regarded as saints (though Rögnvaldr not before 1192)? There is no need to mention that four Icelandic bishops of the thirteenth century were descendants of Hallr. It is evident that his twelfth-century descendants were glorious enough for the praise of the *Íslendingadrápa* to refer to them. So unfortunately we are still left without sufficient evidence to date the poem.

In addition to the sources already listed, *Skáldatal* mentions Kormakr Ögmundarson, the poet of King Haraldr gráfeldr and Earl Hákon Sigurðarson of Hlaðir. Nobody would deny the value of this authority.

All things considered, one may state that this *dossier* on Kormakr is much fuller than those of many poets whose biographies have never been under suspicion; and this *dossier* shows the belief in Kormakr held by the wisest men of the age of Icelandic saga-writing. On the other hand, *Egils saga* arouses a doubt regarding the genealogy at the beginning of *Kormaks saga*, while the name Kormakr suggests unequivocally that he was to some

³ Jón Helgason and Sigurður Nordal, *Litteraturhistorie: Norge og Island* (Nordisk Kultur VIII: B, 1953), 141.

extent of Irish origin. There are enough witnesses to his having been a poet. The couplet quoted by Ólafr hvítaskáld indicates that he had a woman friend and came to compose in a friendly way about her father. Finally, he had been abroad and composed poems about the rulers of Norway: probably one or other of the earls of Hlaðir, father and son, Sigurðr or Hákon, and King Haraldr gráfeldr.

V

And now the time has come for us to consider more closely the verses which the saga has preserved and attributes to Kormakr: if possible, to find evidence to show whether they were composed when the saga was written, or, if older, whether they are from the tenth century or later.

First, to consider their text. Undeniably this is anything but good, and sometimes without a doubt extremely corrupt. The worthy scribe who compiled *Mǫðruvallabók* was not endowed with any great understanding of the poetry of the scalds. Things are much better when we have the fragment to help as well; then some mutual correction is possible, of the verses also, though this does not go very far. In my edition of the saga an attempt is made to follow the text of the manuscripts as closely as possible, not from any belief in the text as such, but rather because there is seldom any other guiding light to show the scholar the way, once he makes any considerable departure from this text.

A valuable aid towards the correction of the text of scaldic verse is provided by the rules of prosody. This applies only to a small extent to alliteration, however, since it was so much taken for granted as to be generally unimpeachable. Metre and rhyme are another matter; there is more variation in the treatment of the poets, and various deductions may be made from this. Closer examination will now be made of these particulars.

1. Regular court measure (*dróttkvætt*).

Alls metk **auðar þellu** (1)
 Íslands, þá's mér grandar, (2)
 Húnalands ok **handan**
 hugstarkr sem Danmarkar;
 verð es Engla **jarðar**
 Eir hádyrnis geira,
 sól-Gunni met'k **svinna**
 sunds, ok frá grundar.

2. Alliteration (printed bold): two of the lifts (pro-
sodically stressed syllables) in the odd lines (1, 3, etc.)
and the first lift in the even lines (2, 4, etc.) have allitera-
tion.

3. *Hendingar* or rhymes within the lines: *Alls* : *þellu*,
verð : *jarðar*, half rhyme (*skothending*); *-lands* : *handan*,
Eir : *geira*, full rhyme (*aðalhending*). The line *Húnalands*
ok handan contains an incorrect full rhyme, for according
to the usual rules the full rhymes occur in even lines, the
half rhymes in odd ones. Only syllables with stress or
secondary stress rhyme; the endings and other unstressed
syllables do not. In regular *dróttkvætt* there is half
rhyme in the odd lines (1, 3, etc.), full rhyme in the even
ones. Before these rules became dominant, the rhymes
were very irregular, but there was a tendency to have full
rhyme in line 4 and 8, later also in 2 and 6. In the days
of the poets of King Haraldr Fairhair the general rules of
rhyme won ground in *dróttkvætt*, especially in the court
poetry, less so in *lausavísur* (separate stanzas), and those
of Torf-Einarr are irregular, but those of Egill and
Kormakr are sometimes regular, sometimes not. When
some authors of the Sagas of Icelanders in the thirteenth
and fourteenth centuries compose verses for their sagas,
as in a group of verses in *Njáls saga* and many stanzas in
Grettis saga, these are quite regular. Sometimes in the
twelfth century poets also make new measures out of old
irregularities (*munnvörp*, *skothenda*, *háttlausá* in Snorri's
Háttatal). But of course these measures are different
from the verse of the archaic poets: here there is a definite

rule, while in the other case there was not. In *fornaldar-sögur* (Mythical Sagas) the rhyme may be irregular; especially in the verses of Ragnarr loðbrók, Áslaug, and their sons.

All in all, irregularity in Kormak's verses — in so far as they are not textually corrupt, as they often are — speaks for their being old.

4. Length of lines: each line has at least six syllables. If some of the lifts fall on a short syllable, more syllables are needed to fill the rhythmical scheme. Shorter lines in the manuscripts can sometimes be explained through linguistic changes, such as the phenomenon of hiatus, loss of a vowel after a kindred one. Before changes took place, the verse was correct, but after the changes it was too short. Examples from the verses ascribed to Kormakr in his saga: 19/8 *þjóðáar* (linns þjóðáar rinna) for *þjóðár* as in M; 33/4 *tváa* (hornungr tváa morna) for *tvá* M; 54/8 *Þórketils*, so M; 59/6 *sæing* (angrlaust sæing gongum) for *sæng* M; 59/8 *dynjeyjar* (dynjeyjar við Freyja) for *dyneyjar* M; 81/8 *náar* (Aurreks náar gauri) for *nærr* M. — We shall see later how learned men of the thirteenth century explained these phenomena (see § VIII).

5. Rhythm: each line has three lifts, which correspond to the syllables most stressed according to natural recital and to the alliteration. The end of a line is always \acute{x} (a long stressed syllable and one short, unstressed). A line ending with a word like *Steingerðr* (78/7 stýrðu ei á mik Steingerðr) with $\acute{\grave{}}$ or rather $\acute{\grave{}}$ (viz. the ultima has a secondary or even strong secondary stress) indicates a corrupt text.

It is a general rule in the classical court measure (*dróttkvætt*) that the even line begins with a lift (a stressed syllable). On the other hand, in the oldest scaldic poetry we often come across such lines beginning with words stressed lightly or not at all. If such appeared in even lines, it gave the stanza an unusual character (see v. 77).

Very often this kind of rhythm is accompanied by irregularity in rhyme.

6. Evidence of the rhymes: the verses ascribed to Kormakr can be roughly divided into those whose rhymes are tolerably correct, and others which are less so (and often with the deviating rhythm described above). Obviously the latter give little help in discerning the linguistic form of the words. On the other hand, the former deserve careful scrutiny from this point of view. See the following examples: 8/4 -starkr rhymes with -markar, 9/4 *rinna (: minn), 19/8 *rinna (: linns), 26/4 mín (: þína; otherwise the *i* is short in such words), 53/2 skald (: kalda), 63/8 *goll (: troll), 68/6 (skaldi :) aldri, 69/2 *mannr (: annars), 69/4 *þissa? (: ómissila), 70/4 *rinna (: sinn), 76/6 *golls (: þolli). Words which are marked with an asterisk are changed from the manuscript reading; others unchanged. In the manuscript no distinction is made between *a* and *á*, or between *i* and *í*. The most frequent instances in this category are in the 4th or 8th line, where the rule regarding full rhyme was most strictly observed even by the "archaic" scalds.

7. Now let us glance briefly at cases where full rhyme is found with a vowel mutation or *umlaut* in one of the elements. On this subject Finnur Jónsson has written a striking section in *Norsk-islandske kultur- og sprogforhold*, and Hreinn Benediktsson has treated it since then in various articles.⁴

Beginning with words that have a u-mutation of *a* (*ø*) rhyming with *a*, we find the following examples: 1/4 ramma- : skømmu, 7/2 annat : Nønnu, 10/6 þøll : vallar, 16/4 høll : alla, 31/8 Skøfnungr : þrafna, 32/2 vøndr : randir, 59/6 angr- : gøngum, 67/4 gøgnum : þagnar, 70/2 hald- : føldu, 84/6 søng : vanga. (In 74/2 skølm : falma or skálm : fálma.) On the other hand I can find only one

⁴ *Acta Philologica Scandinavica* 26 (1963), 1-18; cf. also *Lingua Islandica* 3 (1961-2), 7-38.

example of φ : a in a half-rhyme — 59/7 sköfnungi : drafnar — and this is admittedly not a significant one, owing to irregularity of rhymes, especially in odd lines. When account is taken of the fact that the use of a : φ as a full rhyme ceases by the end of the third or during the last quarter of the twelfth century,⁵ it is against all the laws of probability that the rhymes in the saga should be from the thirteenth.

I-mutation of a sometimes rhymes with an early e , as in 61/8 verði : Steingerði, 72/8 Steingerðr : verðan, 1/6 Gerdar : verða, 85/8 Gerðr : verða. It should be noticed that here the e is before r and it is clear from the poems of the older scalds that when this was the case, the words were considered to rhyme. The same also applies in 71/8 sverð : gerðu (*gerði* common form), 72/2 errótttr (orrottr M) : þerra.⁶ *Gefn* rhymes with *stefnu* (26/2, 33/2), and once with *svefna* (62/2).

Finnur Jónsson mentions other examples from this time and explains the rhyme through the influence of certain consonants on the e . On the other hand, Hreinn Benediktsson maintains that at that time the difference between φ and e was negligible.⁷

The word *eldr* (< **ēliðr*; Old Swedish *ēleþer*, *ēlder*; Old English *æled*) in *eldhús* 2/4 is used as full rhyme with *felldan*. In scaldic poetry the contracted word-form *eldr* always occurs, while Egill (lv. 18/4) and of course many other poets rhyme it with words with φ in their root. After the contraction and elimination of the second element of the diphthong there would have been an open e .⁸ Nor is the rhyme in 2/8 *eldask* : *þreskeldi* at all suspect.

⁵ See Hreinn Benediktsson, *APhS* 26 (1963), 11.

⁶ Cf. Finnur Jónsson, *Norsk-islandske kultur- og sprogforhold i 9. og 10. årh.* (1921), 236-7. Cf. also the usual Norwegian spelling in stressed syllables before r , and Trygve Sköld, *Die Kriterien der urnordischen Lehnwörter im Lappischen* (1961), 162-3.

⁷ *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 79 (1964), 73-4, 70-72.

⁸ Cf. the name *Helgi* among the Irish, see C. Marstrander, *Bidrag til det norske sprogs historie i Irland* (1915), 63; cf. also Sköld's conclusions from Lapp loan-words, *op. cit.*, 114, 162-3.

In 85/4 dreyrugt : eyri, R forms a rhyme with *r*. Various other examples occur in verses attributed to Kormakr, but the same phenomenon is found in other early scalds.⁹ This also applies to nasalized and non-nasalized vowels, as in 16/8 hús : fúsir, 32/6 ófúss : húsa (*fúss*, cf. the name Alfonso). Such rhymes were common from the beginning.¹⁰ Lastly mention may be made of the rhyme in 22/4 yðr : hnyðja, where a *v*-mutation of *i* and an *i*-mutation of *u* are found in the same line, though this was not customary with the old scalds; however, the stanza is so full of metrical irregularities that it would be wiser not to rely on it in this matter.

Finally I will mention the rhyme in 61/4 óþekkr : sökkuva (written *sauckua* in M) in a regular verse. Bearing in mind the fact that poets throughout the tenth century rhyme *i* and *y* < *i* (*þings* : *syngva*),¹¹ one might expect *e* > *ø* to have been at a similar stage and that the *e* in **sekkva*, which was originally nasalized (from *i* + *n*), would have been so close to *ɛ* in óþekkr (*-þankiar) that the poet would have considered that there was no difference, or so little as to be ignored.¹² This interpretation of -*ekk*- (< -*enk*-) : -*ekk*- (< -*ink*-) agrees with examples from other poets.¹³

In 33/4 we have the rhyme horn : morna (i.e. morgna).

8. Examples were quoted above of old word-forms occurring in manuscripts, like Þórketils for example. Other examples are: 18/7 órar, 22/3 ór; skjaldi 22/2;¹⁴ aldregi 22/5, 68; þeima 68; 70/2 hvaðar- (written *hvaðran*-, but the correction is necessary). The comparative form 1/8 optarr (rhyme : svarra) also occurs in a verse attributed to Hólmǫngu-Bersi (*Korm. s.*, lv. 44) and a poem attributed to Óttarr the Black (3, 6/6 *sunnarr*), and in manuscripts

⁹ See Finnur Jónsson, *op. cit.*, 262-3.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, 263; Hreinn Benediktsson, *APhS* 26 (1963), 8.

¹¹ Finnur Jónsson, *op. cit.*, 240-41.

¹² Cf. Lennart Moberg, *Om de nordiske nasalassimilationerna* (1944), 193.

¹³ See Finnur Jónsson, *op. cit.*, 237.

¹⁴ Cf. Finnur Jónsson, *Det norsk-islandske skjaldesprog* (1901), 56.

it is often written thus. The word-form is hardly suspect. There is no doubt that we should change 13/4 *þorfe ng* to *þorfgi*, and 18/7 *várar* must be corrected to *órar* because of the alliteration.

9. More noteworthy still is another phenomenon found in many of the verses: that is, the word — or more properly, the words — *of*. The preposition *of* is common; in the M text of the verses of Kormakr I believe I can find 15 examples, against 7 of the form *um*. On the other hand I reckon there to be 17 instances of the expletive particle *of*. Some of these may be what Hans Kuhn calls the “potential” *of*, but the text would well support omission. Kuhn declares that from the tenth century there are on the average ten examples to ten pages of *Skjalde-digtning A*,¹⁵ while the verses of Kormakr cover only just over ten pages. As one might expect, many instances are found before the past participle (15/4, 25/3, 26/1, 30/1, 33/1, 69/1, 70/1, 71/1, 79/5, 81/7), a usage known, in fact, up to the later part of the thirteenth century. But with Kormakr it appears in other places, some where it would scarcely be expected in the days of the saga-writer. There are five examples of the use of *of* before the infinitive of a verb (51/1, 5, 70/4, 71/4, 77/1), including *of tæja* (tanna), cf. Goth. *atungjan*, and one example before a personally inflected form of the verb (69/7).¹⁶ Finally, there is one example of the expletive particle *of* before a nominal form, 60/7 *of hugsí*. In the eleventh century this use completely disappears and the few later examples arise from imitation of older poems. This is not likely to be the case, however, with an everyday word like *hugsí*.

I have made no attempt to examine whether the expletive particle *of* might not be inserted more widely than it occurs in the text of the saga.

10. Finally, let me touch on the subject of the suffixed article. It is generally accepted that this was not used in

¹⁵ See *Das Füllwort of-um im Altwestnordischen* (1929), 84.

¹⁶ Might 54/7 *ok* (abbr.) before *angra* be a mistake for *of* (*of angra*)?

the tenth century, except possibly in colloquial speech. In most cases it is possible to omit it from the scaldic poetry said to be of this period. In *Kormaks saga* a difficulty arises if the article is omitted in verses 73 and 79; of these, the former is corrupt, as can be clearly seen, while the 3rd line of the latter is very doubtful (*vit skulum dalkinn deila*).

Several instances of verses with linguistic characteristics supporting an early dating, some with more than one, were mentioned above: 1, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, 18, 19, 22(?), 25, 26, 30, 31, 32, 33, 51, 53(?), 54, 59, 60, 63, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 76, 77, 81, 84. These, then, are 30-31 in number, out of the 64 verses ascribed to Kormakr in the saga. Of the remainder, in the great majority of cases neither language nor versification gives any definite indication one way or another, while three (73, 78, 79) could not derive from the tenth century in their present form. Finally, many are in some degree corrupt.

I have not considered here those verses in the saga ascribed to others, but they contain various old characteristics and in no way suggest that they are later or that either their preservation or the author's treatment of them differs in any way.

VI

The preservation of the verses. Before I come to this subject and try to draw conclusions from what has already been said, let us take a quick look at some kennings. Snorri does not mention that either a hand or the sea may be used as the definer or determinant (German *Bestimmungswort*) in kennings for a woman, but later scholars do. In a verse attributed to Egill a hand is first used (v. 14 *hauka klifs Hlín*). A second example is found in Kormakr and looks like a copy of the kenning of Egill (5 *haukmærar Hlín*); later poets use it one after another, and it is clear that it was regarded as permissible.¹⁷ In

¹⁷ See Rudolf Meissner, *Die Kenningar der Skalden* (1921), 419-20; Konstantin Reichardt, *Arkiv* 46 (1936), 199 ff.

verses ascribed to Kormakr there are three unambiguous examples of sea used in the same way in kennings for a woman, and two uncertain ones (54 *skerjarðar skorð*, 70 *böru Vör*, 83 *sunds *Rindr*, 25 *varrskíðs vegskorð*? 59 *drafnar Freyja*? — the two last examples are both very doubtful). Such kennings are rare later,¹⁸ though some ancient scholars regard them as valid, and the same is true of many men of later ages. I shall not discuss here how these kennings came to be; simply the fact that they occur in verses handed down from classical poets, or poets of high standing. Finally, I must mention the so-called half-kennings, i.e. kennings lacking the definer. Examples from the verses of Kormakr in M are: 6 *sága | snyrtigrund*, 15/3 *Ilmi*, 24/3 *reiði-Sif*, 24/4 *runnr*, 33/2 *Gefn*, 62/7 *Hrund*, 84/5 *Sága*.¹⁹

VII

But now to turn to the preservation or transmission of the verses. Some appear to believe that once it can be established to one's satisfaction that verses or saga-material derive from oral traditions, then all one's problems are solved and one will find nothing but truth there. This is not so. On the contrary, everything transmitted orally, in the conditions here obtaining, is subject to change, and this in spite of the fact that men of learning (*fróðir menn*) have helped in its transmission. Forgetfulness may affect the ending of a word, or words, and the meaning will be changed. And if the verse is then recorded unaltered, one may expect a text like that of the verses of Kormakr in M. Or part of a verse, whether longer or shorter, may be lost, or the whole verse totally

¹⁸ Meissner, *op. cit.*, 419, 408 (*sól, dís*); Reichardt, *loc. cit.*

¹⁹ Hans Kuhn, *Germanische Philologie, Festschrift für Otto Behagel* (1934), 416, also mentions 7/7 *sægi-Freyja*, but if the stanza is explained as in *Íslensk fornrit VIII* (1939), 213, only a very insignificant correction is needed; 61/7 *tróða* — here a syllable is missing in the line, and consequently Konráð Gíslason's insertion of the word *auðs* (*Njála II* (1889), 195) is to be recommended — in its favour is also the similarity of the words *auðs* and *áðr*, one of which could easily be left out by a copyist. On the examples in 6 and 24 see below.

obliterated. In its wake, forgetfulness generally brings attempts to supply what is missing and other emendations on the part of those who wish to have the verse complete and preferably correct. The more of a verse that is lost, the greater the amount of re-creation. To some extent chance alone will determine how faithful the transmitters of a verse may be, and the transmission of verses in the Sagas of Icelanders is, *on the whole*, less reliable than that of the court poems. A verse may pass through many intermediaries, and it takes all kinds to make a world; many try to hand on faithfully and are conscientious in their corrections, while some may refurbish the verses to some extent, or even invent new ones to insert in the saga, as was done by Ingimundr of Reykhólar, though of course his kind of saga was quite different from the Sagas of Icelanders. A verse, too, can easily be transferred from one poet to another. Of the life history of the verses in *Kormaks saga* nothing is known, though marks of antiquity in them indicate that the greater part date back to the tenth century. However, many of them are clearly very corrupt. The corruption is often so obvious that it gives us clear warning not to trust the text. This is the case with verses 73, 78 and 79, among others. The same applies to 6, 24 and 61; it is unthinkable that *sága* / *snyrtigrund* could be two distinct terms of address; the quatrain containing *reiði-Sif* and *runnr* must be corrupt, and in 61/7 a syllable is lacking. We are then left with just four "half-kennings" which are more difficult to dispose of. It would be most natural to assume that they were in the original text of the saga, but for all that, there is no saying whether or not they come from the tenth century.

We come now to the author, or saga-writer, and here matters are a little different from what they were with the oral transmitters. The saga is usually the work of one man, and he sets his mark on it. By careful reading one may often get quite a clear picture of him and his idio-

syncrasies. *Kormaks saga*, for example, indicates that its author is no virtuoso in the art of saga-writing. Apart from the account of the poet's visit to Tunga and his meeting with Steingerðr on returning from abroad — as well as the sections about Hólmǫngu-Bersi, which look as though they were part of a separate saga — his narrative is exceptionally inconsequential, filled with inconsistencies and contradictions. The saga lives by its verses. There is nothing to suggest that the author might have been a writer of fiction, nor, for that matter, a forger of verses. And if we look at what seems to me the unquestionable source of his story and its substantial core — the verses, that is — we find nothing to indicate that he was an expert on them, and there are astonishingly many cases of contradiction between verse and prose — i.e. he fails to understand them.

When the author has written his saga, it then comes into the keeping of the manuscripts. There is nothing in the text to show that copyists might have deliberately altered it, but they could hardly have had a good understanding of the verse, and its transmission in the manuscripts would be bad, too.

I have put forward the view here that the author of the saga did not invent much, and this mostly on account of his own personality; but he may, besides this, be the product of an age which was still *by and large* under the influence of Ari fróði and his school. But let us imagine a different type of author; one who invented a story and concocted verses for it. What sort of verses would these have been? Probably like the additional verses in *Njáls saga* or the late verses in *Grettis saga*; regular verses in court measure, bearing no special marks of an earlier age.

VIII

Here we come to an important point which needs to be discussed in a little more detail. Some might suppose that an author who concocted a saga and invented verses for it

might have tried to use archaic language. This view has indeed been advanced, and then precisely that taken for granted which requires proof, if it is to be relied on. But I do not know of any research that has ever been done on this subject.

The scaldic poetry, especially that written in court measure, may be described as a conservative branch of literature. Those who compose it acquire a conservative attitude towards their art. One reason for this is the dominant memory of earlier poems. Imitation is a universal element in art; the scalds were doubtless moved to imitate the work of classical poets of ancient times. But this is not to say that their imitation was all of one sort. There may be some difficulty in distinguishing the types of poetry clearly, but an attempt must be made. On the one hand, then, we have the poet who searches his memory for appropriate words — and these may be just as genuine, although he makes no effort to be original; on the other hand we have the poet who deliberately seeks after learned and ostentatious phrases.

Although at a first glance the scaldic poetry may appear to be static, in fact there is development. But who was aware of it? Chiefly Snorri. To some extent with regard to metre, but also kennings and poetic designations (*heiti*): — “but these poetic designations like others I find no obligation on the poet to use, unless he finds such designations already in the works of classical poets —”. But he can hardly have known much about changes in the language, which besides would not be of a kind to attract much attention.

Let us imagine a saga-writer who wanted at all costs to copy the versification of a past age — metre, style, language. What knowledge would he have had?

Of course this question cannot be answered with any degree of accuracy, but something may be deduced from the knowledge possessed by contemporaries; though here we are dealing with men who would have stood head and

shoulders above the common run as far as learning was concerned.

It was easiest to be aware of changes in metrical form. Snorri composes in "the archaic measures" (*fornskálda-hættir*) — but would not others do the same as he, making the measure more regular than it originally had been? That is, assuming that they were aware of the metrical forms of the earliest kind of court measure.

With regard to kennings, it may be considered certain that both hand and sea were used as definers in kennings for a woman in the oral transmission of the verses, and this may well date from the tenth century. On the other hand it is unlikely that this could apply to the instances of "half-kennings". But during the course of two and a half centuries kennings could quite easily become corrupted, so that these are not, by themselves, any certain proof regarding the original verses.

When we come to linguistic characteristics, it is even more unlikely that the saga-writer could have contributed anything to the verses. This I shall now consider in more detail.

Ólafr hvítaskáld mentions in one place *vindandinn forna*,²⁰ and this refers to the preservation of *v* before *r*, e.g. in the expression *vreiðr vega*. The name of this phenomenon dates without a doubt from scalds of an earlier period. But Ólafr has a rational explanation to support its age. Apart from this, though, he is completely led astray with regard to the use of *hr* and *r* in Icelandic (*hringhreytanda hrammastan . . .*). Besides this, he allows Latin works of rhetoric to mislead him into supposing that a letter or syllable is omitted according to the requirements of the verse: he is not aware that ancient word-forms decide this. He even explains the shortening of the name *Þórketill* as being thus arbitrary, though both from the M text of the verses of Kormakr and from examples in *Njáls*

²⁰ Björn Magnússon Ólsen, *Den tredje og fjærde grammatiske afhandling i Snorres Edda* (1884), 87.

saga one might suppose that men in the thirteenth century would have had an inkling of the truth about this form (that it is an early one). The word *skjalði* in 22/2 is fixed by a full rhyme. This form seems to belong to the tenth-eleventh centuries, but is also found in the twelfth, while men are aware of it as late as the thirteenth (cf. *Háttatal* 54). The examples on pp. 30 ff. above show, on the other hand, that word forms have been modernized, not archaized. The form *hvaðrantveggja* indicates that either the author or the scribe was unable to cope with the older form. The same is true of *hvaðarr* in *Ragnars saga*.²¹ Ólafr hvítaskáld mentions the form *hvaðartveggi* and considers that a syllable has here been added "to preserve the metre".²² I know of no instances to show that men understood the nature or history of the full rhyme with *a : ø*, and its appearance in *Kormaks saga* is a riddle if the verses were composed in the thirteenth century. The understanding of the less learned of contracted forms, such as *þjóðáar*, may be imagined when one bears in mind the 7th verse in Snorri's *Háttatal* and his explanation, "It is the licence of the metres to have syllables long or short, so that they add to or subtract from the proper number in the verse, and may be found so long that five syllables are in the second and fourth lines, as are here:

Hjálms fylli spekr hilmir
 hvatr Vindhlés skatna,
 hann kná hjörvi þunnum
 hræs þjóðár ræsa;
 ýgr hilmir lætr eiga
 öld dreyrfá skjöldu,
 stýrs rýðr stillir hersum
 sterkr járngrá serki."

Here Snorri imitates the old poems, but to judge by his words, he does not realize that syllables have dropped out, and the second line is quite wrong. If this could happen to Snorri, no words are needed regarding his contem-

²¹ Finnur Jónsson, *Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigting* (1912-15), II A 241.

²² Björn Magnússon Olsen, *ed. cit.*, 64-5.

poraries. Then there is the word *várr*. In a verse from 1219 by Guðmundr Oddsson²³ we find the form *óvar* (acc. plur.), while in manuscripts of a verse from 1202 by Grímr Hjaltason the form is *vora*, i.e. *vára*; but in a verse of Ámundi Árnason *var* or *vor* is in full rhyme with *kórum* (a correction but unquestionable). Clearly here one should read *órr*. According to this it may be considered certain that in verses composed for sagas in the beginning of the thirteenth century there would be complete confusion between the forms of this word.

Lastly there is the use of the expletive particle *of*. Men of the thirteenth century had an inkling of the fact that it was often added before the past participle, and this use continued intermittently throughout the century. But no one knew what other verb-forms could take it. Least of all would anyone have known the correct use of the expletive particle just before a nominal form. And it is inconceivable that any forger of verses in the thirteenth century would have hit on the average and ensured that verse purporting to be from the tenth century should contain one instance, or thereabouts, of an expletive particle to every page of *Skjaldedigtning*!

The conclusion to be drawn from these considerations is that, apart from having no disposition to compose verses on behalf of Kormakr, the author of *Kormaks saga* was in no way competent to do so. It is unlikely that he touched the verses up to any large extent, and it is most likely that errors in them are due to copying, and still more to oral transmission.

²³ *Skjaldedigtning*, II A 79.

IX

Before leaving the verses completely, let us take a look at three of related content. They are:

61. Heitask hellur fljóta
 hvatt sem korn á vatni
 . . . en bjǫð sekkva,
 fœrask fjǫll en stóru
 fræg í djúpan ægi,
 <auðs> áðr jafnfogr tróða
 alin verði Steingerði.
- 52 and 65. Naddhríðar skalk níða
 Njót, svá't steinar fljóti . . .
19. Því at upp skulu allar,
 ǫlstafns, áðr ek þér hafna
 lýsigrund, í landi,
 linns, þjóðáar rinna.

Before proceeding further, I may mention other verses containing certain parallels to these. In the *drápa* of Ólafr Tryggvason by Hallfreðr (1001) it says:

29. Fyrr mun heimr ok himnar
 hugreifum Áleifi
 . . . í tvau bresta,
 áðr en glíkr at góðu
 gæðingr myni fœðask.

The *drápa* of Jarl Þorfinnr by Arnórr jarlaskáld (c. 1065):

24. Björt verðr sól at svartri,
 sökkr fold í mar dökkvan,
 brestr erfíði Austra,
 allr glymr sær á fjöllum,
 áðr at eyjum fríðri (MSS. fríðum) . . .
 gæðingr myni fœðask.

Vǫlusþá:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| 57. Sól tér sortna, | geisar eimi |
| sígr (sökkr) fold í mar, | við aldrnara, |
| hverfa af himni | leikr hár hiti |
| heiðar stjornur, | við himin sjálfan. |

Lastly let me mention the inscription on a stone at Skarpåker in Södermanland in Sweden: *Jǫrð s<k>al rifna ok upphiminn.*

There is undoubtedly some sort of link between these verses. The principal source of *Þorfinns drápa* is probably *Völuspá*, though the details of the sea resounding on the mountains and the comeliness of Þorfinnr might be derived from Kormakr (*friðri* cf. *jafnfjöggr*). The conclusion to the verse of Arnórr reminds one of the verse of Hallfreðr. Nothing in the verses of Kormakr suggests that they might be later than the others.

These verses display certain familiar *motifs*. All are concerned with world prodigies. However, these can occur in various connexions, changing their significance and content. According to the connexion one speaks, e.g., of *adynata*, or *impossibilia*, and all the examples from Kormakr are from this group; on the other hand *motifs* may be connected with Doomsday, but the same *motifs* may easily be found in both categories.

According to the category one may distinguish:

(1) Oaths: treaty-oaths between men or nations, the whispered oaths of lovers. The formula is a familiar one: that something shall endure as long as nature follows its normal course, e.g. as long as the wind continues to blow, the cock to crow, the moon to shine, or as long as the wind drives the clouds and the grass grows, the trees burgeon, the sun rises and the world endures.²⁴

Or let us take the treaty between the Byzantines and the Varangian chief Igor in 945: Our friendship shall not fade while the sun shines and the earth endures, now and in the future (*Nestor's Chronicle*). But if the formula is reversed, then the oath shall be kept until nature ceases its normal course, i.e. for ever, and then follow promises such as those given to Steingerðr by Kormakr in verses 19 and 61.

(2) No distinction need be made between this and eulogistic statements about men and women in which it is said that their like shall never be found on earth, and the

²⁴ See *Skirnir* 139 (1965), 180-81.

formula is similar. Examples of this are in the verses of Hallfreðr and Arnórr.

(3) Stories of saints, where it is said that a man's sins will not be forgiven until a certain miracle has occurred, or the like.

(4) Description of the prodigies accompanying the end of the world, where certain details are the same as in the above-mentioned formulas. Here perhaps one should add prophecy, either concerning the last days or natural wonders of the future; though in the accounts of pessimists such *motifs* are sometimes also allowed to intrude into descriptions of the present time.

(5) Frequently when gods are extolled, it is said in their praise that they have power over nature. Men can also sometimes acquire the power to bring about certain changes in nature, by faith (that moves mountains), prayers, or magic. In spells, formulas are sometimes used similar to those in oaths. Instances of this category will not be mentioned below unless the same *motifs* (phenomena) occur in these as in the above-mentioned cases.

(6) All this is serious. But it can also be turned to jest, and then we have ironic stories of marvels (the journey of Þórr to Útgarða-Loki) to the point where they become complete nonsense. Everybody knows the nonsense rhymes, such as "Séð hef ég köttinn syngja á bók", or the English "One fine day in the middle of the night", etc. I will content myself with mentioning examples of this in Curtius's book, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (1958), 102-6, a work now in fashion and greatly overrated. In what follows such material will be entirely omitted.

The time has now come to consider particular *motifs*, with special reference to those which are found in the verses of Kormakr, or such variants as may appear closest to them. The principal *motifs* in the following analysis will therefore be:

A.1. Lands sink in the sea (v. 61).

A.2. Mountains sink in the sea (v. 61). There are still other changes of land or sea.

B. Slabs of rock float like corn on the water, or stones float (vv. 61, 52, 65).

C. Great rivers run backwards.

Let us first have a look at Kormak's verse 61. Andreas Heusler and Fredrik Paasche²⁵ have pointed out lines in the poems of Horace (*Epod.* xvi, 25) recalling v. 61 in *Kormaks saga*. Paasche believes that the verse was composed by a cleric, learned in Latin, who was familiar with Horace's poem. On the other hand Heusler says: "Die Stelle Kormáks Str. 42 *Heitask hellur fljóta . . . zeilt nicht auf die Völuspá; sie enthält — gegen Olrik, Ragnarök (1922) 23, 46 f. — nicht Weltuntergangs-, sondern Unmöglichkeits motive, 'Adynata', 'Impossibilia', und zwar in naher, erklärungs bedürftiger Ubereinstimmung mit Horaz, Epoden 16, 25: Simul imis saxa renarint vadis levata . . . (quando Padus Matina laverit cacumina) in mare seu celsus procurrerit Appenninus (færask fjöll in stóru í djúpan ægi)."*

But here there are several points worth noting. Men give an account of the prodigies associated with the end of the world; the same prodigies may sometimes be attributed to the gods. The same *motif* may sometimes be transferred from one class (or occasion) to another, as when a poet says in praise of a woman that the earth will sink in the sea before another as beautiful as she is born, as in the case of Kormakr, or men take an oath that they will not turn homewards until the mountains sink in the sea, as is said in the verse of Horace. The matter is similar, but the occasion quite different. But if it should appear to some readers that the words of Heusler suggest that the *motifs* of these two authorities are identical, then

²⁵ A. Heusler, *Die altgermanische Dichtung* (1926), 181; (second edition 1941), 191; F. Paasche in F. Paasche and F. Bull, *Norsk litteraturhistorie* I (1924), 202-3.

they should read the poem of Horace from beginning to end, and they will be rather surprised: they will see that his poem is a long catalogue containing a mass of material, and that little of it is found in Kormakr.

But is this such an especially rare *motif*? Is there no source apart from the poems of Horace that might account for it? This is certainly a question worth considering. Let me mention what I have come across; though incomplete, it may be of some value.

A. Lands sinking in the sea. This conception was clearly a familiar one in the *north* in ancient times. *Völuspá* says that in the beginning the sons of Borr raised the land, while at the end (*ragnarök*) the earth sinks in the sea, and finally a new world rises up again out of the ocean. There is no doubt that the poet had these ideas from old sources and this earth-cycle was doubtless widely known on the northwest fringe of Europe.²⁶ Beside the northern accounts, there are others similar among the *Hindus*, *Greeks* and *Celts*.²⁷

The example from the poems of Horace was mentioned above. Elsewhere he remarks that the heaven will be swallowed up by the sea and the earth stretched before you can escape the scorching of love (Epod. v. 77).

In the early Middle Ages a prophecy, perhaps best known because it was among works attributed to the Venerable Bede, was widely current. It may be supposed that it became known in Iceland during the later Middle Ages. During the Viking Age it is not unlikely that those vikings who travelled to other lands were to some extent familiar with it. Here are a few of its features: "These days are close to the end of this world. On the first day the sea will rise fifty ells higher than the highest mountains, and then all lakes will rise up and stand like a wall about the whole earth. On the second day the sea will sink and the lakes dry up and drop to the deepest pit

²⁶ See Axel Olrik, *Ragnarök* (übertragen von Wilhelm Ranisch, 1922), 22 ff.

²⁷ *ibid.*, s.v. *Erde* in the index, p. 479.

of hell, so that they can scarcely be seen . . . On the tenth day all mountains and hills will be turned into plains . . . ”²⁸ If one considers which was likely to have a better chance of becoming current among vikings: the poem of Horace or the prophecy about the end of the world, there seems to be little doubt that it was the prophecy.

With other nations the prevalent concept was one of the sea changing to dry land. This is found among the *Egyptians*.²⁹ In the Bible there are various examples, such as: Ps. 66.6, Nahum 1.4, Rev. 21.1.

Among the *Romans* examples may easily be found, e.g. in Propertius and Virgil.³⁰

Wherever land is high or mountainous, the mountains become one of the clearest symbols of everything in the world and nature that is most firm and enduring. It is said in praise of Jahve that the mountains shook or shivered at his glance (Judges 5.5, Is. 64.2) — the same applies to Þórr. In various places mention is made of moving mountains, e.g. among the *Egyptians* in the prayer for King Akhenaton (see below C, p. 50). In the *Indian* cycle of narrative poems, *Mahabharata*, Krishna tells his wife that though the Himalayas move and the heavens collapse, his words will not be in vain.³¹ In many places in the Bible moving mountains are spoken of, see especially Matt. 17.20, I Cor. 13.2, Job 9.5, Is. 54.10 (concerning Jahve). References to mountains being cast into the sea are familiar, Matt. 21.21, Ps. 46.3, Rev. 8.8.

For those who lived inland the ocean was not such a dominant image and to them came the idea of mountains and valleys becoming level. Thus Isaiah prophesies (40.4): “Every valley shall be exalted, and

²⁸ Kr. Kälund, *Alfræði Íslenzk I* (1908), 59; G. Nölle in *Paul und Braunes Beiträge* 6 (1879), 413 ff.

²⁹ H. Gressman, *Altorientalische Texte zum Alten Testament* (second edition 1926), 47.

³⁰ Franz Rolf Schröder in *Edda-Skalden-Saga, Festschrift [für] Felix Genzmer* (1952), 113-4; this paper is hereafter referred to as Schröder 1.

³¹ Olrik, *Ragnarök*, 47 note.

every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain." See also Is. 42.16, Zech. 4.7.

In *Chinesische Meisternovellen* (1950) Franz Kuhn has translated a story (the first in the collection) from a historical novel, *Tung tschou liä kwo tschi*, issued in 1752 by Tsai Yüan Fang. In this the minister warns the emperor of various natural disasters, saying, "Mountains collapse and rivers dry up; the bowels of the earth tremble; hills fall down and plains shake; all this bodes ill for the imperial family".³² But this *motif* can be traced yet further back in the Middle Kingdom. A. Waley³³ gives a translation of a Chinese poem in which two friends swear eternal loyalty to one another, until the mountains are levelled, rivers dry up, and the earth and heavens run together into one.

B. Stones float on water.

Romans. Horatius, *vide supra*, p. 46.

Medieval ballads see S. Bugge, *Aarbøger f. nord. oldk.* 1889, 7; *Danm. gl. Folkeviser* VI, 143-44; Child, *Popular ballads* II, 437; A. Olrik, *Ragnarök*, 47.

French. *Karlamagnús saga (Þáttur af Landrés)*, 56: "She is such a witch that she can make stones float, but feathers sink to the bottom."

Russian. In the year 985 King Vladimir of Kiev made peace with the Bulgars. It was stipulated that this peace should endure "until stones start floating on water and hops sink to the bottom" (*Nestor's Chronicle*). Of various peoples in Russia, such as the Chermis, Votjaks, Mordvins, and Chuvass, it is said that in their spells they mentioned a variety of world prodigies: "This sickness shall not torment the sufferer until stone and iron float on water, or down sinks in the sea, or the ocean dries up," and so it continued.³⁴

³² From J. Carney, *Studies in Irish literature and history* (1955), 237-40.

³³ *A hundred and seventy Chinese poems* (1920), 37.

³⁴ Uno Holmberg [Harva], *Die Religion der Tscheremissen* (FF Communications 61, 1926), 195.

Franz Rolf Schröder mentions several examples from later times.³⁵

C. Rivers run backwards.

Well known in the works of *Roman* authors such as Propertius, Horace, Ovid, Tibullus, Virgil.³⁶

Greek. The *Medea* of Euripides (418, chorus): "the headstreams of the sacred rivers run backwards in their courses, and faith and virtue are turned about." In a poem about Paris and Oenone: "Rivers will run backwards, before Paris can live without Oenone." This poem was translated into Latin and may have been known to Propertius.³⁷ Appollonius Rhodius mentions the same phenomenon and many other *impossibilia*.³⁸

Russian. In the year 1071 a false prophet declared that in five years the River Dnieper would flow backwards and countries be changed about.

Egyptian. Prayer for Akhenaton to the sun god on the death of the king about 1350 B.C.: "May he abide here until the swan turns black and the raven white; till mountains begin to move and water to run up hill."³⁹ Another Egyptian example: The courtiers say to Pharaoh: "If you said to your father, the River Nile, the king of the Gods: 'Let the water flow backwards upon the mountains', he would fulfil your wish."⁴⁰

Indian. In *Rigveda* it says in two hymns: "May Indra by his power let the River Indus flow upwards."⁴¹

Icelanders have invented the riddle: "What rivers run backwards?" Also well known are the words attributed to Ambáles (Hamlet): "Tonight every waterfall will run upwards" (a prophecy of storm).

Both *Egyptians* and *Jews* mention rivers becoming dry

³⁵ Schröder 1, 118 ff.

³⁶ Schröder 1, 125-8.

³⁷ A. Bugge, *Vikingerne* I (1904), 299.

³⁸ See Schröder 1, 128.

³⁹ See Schröder 1, 124.

⁴⁰ Franz Rolf Schröder in *Germanisch-romanische Monatschrift* (1961), 229; this paper is referred to now as Schröder 2.

⁴¹ Schröder 2, 229-30.

land (see, for example, Job 14.11, Ps. 107.33, Is. 42.15, Habak. 3.9). The same idea occurs in a stanza by Omar Khayyám.⁴²

The examples given above are to some extent random ones, but all the same they give some idea of the spread of these *motifs*.⁴³

What is the natural and reasonable interpretation of these *motifs*? As far as I can see, the answer to this question is: they are *Allerweltsmotive*! Their place of origin is unknown, their wandering through the world also. But they are very old and very widespread.

A more thorough collection of examples would only strengthen the conclusion that the *Epode* of Horace is of no value whatever for dating the verses attributed to Kormakr in his saga.

X

In the foregoing chapters various general evidence, especially from prosody and linguistic history, and later from the content of certain verses, has been investigated in the hope of reaching some conclusions about the age of the verses. This hope was not disappointed. Of these factors the evidence provided by linguistic history is without a doubt the most reliable and various, and it seems to lead to the inescapable conclusion that a considerable number of the verses are old, e.g. from the tenth century. Other verses cannot be so, at least in their present form. Others are suspect, or parts of them at any rate. And finally there is quite a number of verses in which no evidence could be found to indicate how early or late they might be.

Prosody seems on the whole to support the evidence of linguistic history.

⁴² Schröder 2, 230. He also mentions examples from later times.

⁴³ Apart from the sources I have drawn on, chiefly Olrik, *Ragnarök*, and Schröder 1 and 2, reference may also be made to examples in Stith Thompson, *Motif-index of folk-literature* (1955-8), and T. P. Cross, *Motif-index of early Irish literature* (1952), but most of them differ from those given above — so vast is this subject.

Finally I have dealt with *motifs* occurring in the content of the verses, from which some have concluded that the verses in question must have been later than the days of Kormakr. I have long suspected that in this respect an adequate collation and investigation of parallels were lacking, and that they would reveal the fallibility of this conclusion. Experience has also proved this to be correct.

It seems likely that more evidence of the relationship between prose and verse might be found by a closer comparison of these two elements in the saga.⁴⁴ However, this is a subject that will have to wait for more time or other investigators.

In conclusion it is proper that some words of caution should be added here. It is possible that what has been said above about the age of the verses and the fact that they are for the most part from the tenth century might be taken to imply that I regard it as certain that these same verses were all composed by Kormakr. This, however, I would not venture to assert in advance. On the other hand, where there is a similarity of poetic character and colour, the likelihood of this increases. Then there sometimes occurs an overlapping in content of one verse with another. It seems more probable that the greater part of the verse can be attributed to Kormakr than is otherwise the case in various other sagas of poets. *Kormaks saga* might here be mentioned side by side with *Egils saga*, although the verses bear witness to two poets of a very different kind.

It may still be asked whether there is not more than mere contradiction in the contents at issue between the verse and the prose narrative of the saga. This is indeed the case.

No one with any knowledge of ancient poetry can fail to realise that in lyrical quality the poetry of *Kormaks saga*

⁴⁴ Cf. *Islensk fornrit* VIII (1939), xciii. Þorveig's ship, ch. 8, etc.

ranks with the best examples to be found in scaldic verse. Of course, this does not apply equally to all the verses, and possible reasons for this need not be gone into here. But the best of those verses which the saga attributes to Kormakr possess a poetic beauty with a special quality — a quality which many Icelanders have associated with the poet's Irish name and Celtic antecedents, which are open to no doubt. I do not propose to pursue this further here, nor is there any need to do so. If one and the same man had composed the verses and compiled the saga, one might expect to find the same poetic quality throughout. Such, however, is not the case. The saga is completely lacking in romantic spirit, in any sense of the word. It is exceptionally devoid of anything of the kind. In various places its narrative is not at all unlike the narrative passages in *Landnáma*, though almost all the incidents in the saga are such that they might be expected to move the story-teller and leave a perceptible mark on his narrative. By this I do not mean that he does not, in one place and another, show understanding of his material; but understanding is not the same as emotion clothed in language. Even in the best parts, as for example in the account of the first meeting between Kormakr and Steingerðr at Tunga, or their meeting at the cottage, the author excels by the simplicity of the narration, not by conveying the emotion of an artist who knows what he is about. And it is quite certain that the word "romantic" in no way applies to his narrative.

Thus we have displayed once again the marked difference between prose and verse in *Kormaks saga*.

At this point one cannot avoid reference to the theory that the verses attributed to Kormakr in the saga are imitations of the poetry of the troubadours and imbued with the medieval spirit of what is called *amour courtois*. Admittedly the examination of chronological characteristics made above should render the consideration of influence from troubadour poetry something less than

imperative; however, in order that nothing should be omitted I think it only right to touch on this subject, though there is no reason to deal with it at any length.

The concept of *amour courtois*, or courtly love, is generally so clearly defined by the authorities on literary history in those countries where it occurred that there is no occasion to be led astray; though by hastily giving the phenomenon an Icelandic name, some danger of this may be incurred, and I have therefore avoided doing so. It is impossible to deal with this subject without a comprehensive understanding of the varied and finely devised shades of love poetry and erotic philosophy. But this is not the occasion to enlarge on that.

In my edition of the saga, in connexion with similarity between verses of Kormakr and Horace, I said this: "Such poets (i.e. love poets) have much in common, though living in different lands and different ages and knowing nothing of one another." In another place I have described Kormakr as the forerunner of the southern troubadours. Now a forerunner is quite different from an imitator, and in spite of similarities, a forerunner may not accord with the essential matter of the ensuing development.

Clearly it is not possible here to say much about the poems of the troubadours on "courtly love". But perhaps I may be allowed to quote an essay by Alexander J. Denomy in which, during his last years (*Speculum* 1953; he died in 1957) he was, as it were, looking back over an earlier, almost lifelong, study of courtly love. He gives a kind of definition of the idea of courtly love in these words: "Courtly love is a type of sensual love and what distinguishes it from other forms of sexual love, from mere passion, from so-called platonic love, from married love, is its purpose and motive, its formal object, namely, the lover's progress and growth in natural goodness, merit and worth." This may be compared with the spirit in the poems of Kormakr; there is nothing in common.

In this same article Denomy has many other points that throw further light on this and show many characteristics in love poetry from various parts of the world which have great similarity to those found in the poetry, theory, and situations of those works formed by *amour courtois*. And yet, according to Denomy's opinion, it would be ridiculous to classify these motifs or incidents in the category of *amour courtois*.

I cannot do better than to end this chapter with the words of W. P. Ker on Kormakr, whether people would agree with all that he says or not: "Kormak was too rude and natural for romance, and the romancers had to make their heroes better-looking, and to provide a happy ending. But the story of the poet's unfortunate love had become a commonplace."⁴⁵

XI

Now a few words about the theory that *Kormaks saga* was the result of influence from *Tristans saga*; that *Tristans saga* was moreover the model on which it was based. Here the same applies as in the case of the verses of the saga: *Kormaks saga* would appear to be earlier than Brother Robert's translation of *Tristans saga* (1226). Absolutely no connecting link has been indicated between the French poems and the saga, any more than between the troubadour poetry and the verses in the saga. But this is not all. There is very little real correspondence when it comes to the principal content of these works. Admittedly the "eternal triangle" is found in literature all the world over as it is in real life.⁴⁶ If we take the great scenes in *Tristan*, these are not found repeated in *Kormaks*

⁴⁵ *Epic and Romance* (1957), 281.

⁴⁶ Perhaps it would not be inappropriate to quote here the words of J. Douglas Bruce in his *Evolution of the Arthurian Romance* (1923), I 174, n. 33, on *Tristan*: "It has been remarked that the whole character of this great love-story, with its *dreieckiges Verhältnis* (husband, wife, lover) is manifestly French, and consequently, could only have entered into the *Tristan* tradition after the French writers began to handle the theme. *But adultery has been a favorite theme of romances, both written and oral, in all parts of the world*" (my italics, E.O.S.).

saga. Admittedly there is a duel in Tristan, and there are many in *Kormaks saga*, but these have nothing in common; besides, duels were only too familiar among Icelanders and other Scandinavian peoples. Attention may be drawn to the accounts of such in *Landnáma*. The same applies to Saxo, the *War of the Gaedhil with the Gaill*, Nestor's *Chronicle*, *Hildebrandslied*. Other examples are easily found.

Gertrude Schoepperle, in her book *Tristan and Isolt*, points out two minor details which are similar in the Tristan poems and *Kormaks saga*, and some later scholars have also referred to them. One (I, 222) is the mention of the sharp blades, found in the poem of Eilhart of Oberge, where they were designed to wound Tristan and so reveal the love between him and the queen. But in *Kormaks saga* a sword is put in the doorway, with a scythe on the other side, clearly with the quite different object of inflicting injury and shame on Kormakr without those responsible being too much in evidence at the time. This derives from Icelandic fact, as the laws show:

"Wherever a man has placed his weapon, he is not to be convicted if another man is injured by it while he was not himself holding it, so long as the verdict decides that he did not intend harm to him and had put the weapon in a place where he expected no-one to be harmed by it . . . If anyone hangs up his weapon in a place where it falls down of its own and someone is injured by it, then the man who hung it up is responsible." "If a man plans to strike or wound or slay another, banishment is the penalty if it is not carried out, but full outlawry if it is carried out . . . If a man plans to strike or wound or maim another, whichever of these he plans, he shall be prosecuted according to the result, even if he had planned hitting or wounding and a mortal wound results . . . This is plotting that a man plots against another, if he says anything to people to bring the other nearer to death and farther from health, if what he said comes about. These are plots to maim or to kill, if he contrives that weapons or some other dangerous object should fall on a person or fly at him."⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Vilhjálmur Finsen, *Grágás* Ia (1852), 166, cf. II (1879), 334, 355; II 369-70, cf. Ia 184.

We need no more witnesses: the motif is common and there is no need to search for it in foreign books; indeed, Gertrude Schoepperle mentions it precisely as an example of how universal such motifs can be.

The other example is the account of the viking who carries off Steingerðr from the hands of her husband.⁴⁸ But it must be pointed out that the kidnapping of women was only too frequent an occurrence in the Viking Age and indeed later, and there is no need to pursue this further. Among vikings such kidnapping would most frequently take place by ship. But apart from the fact that an episode of this kind may easily be taken from real life, as indicated, the narrative in *Kormaks saga* completely lacks all the characteristics found in *Tristans saga* (in the version of Thomas).

Reference was made earlier to the Irish ancestry of Kormakr, and it may well be that something of the character of the man who composed the verses could be explained in terms of this, above all the lyrical intensity. But it might also be worth bearing in mind the existence of Irish nature-poetry and even love-poetry — though the latter consideration is perhaps less significant in view of the remarkable love-poetry existing in Scandinavia at that time. But generally speaking, one can accept the possibility that some Irish lore, both poetic and narrative, might have been preserved in the family of Kormakr. It may well be that such lore became mixed with what men told of the poet's life and so vitiated its historicity.

Many years ago Guðbrandur Vigfússon traced the account of the dealings of Kormakr with the eels in the saga (ch. 26) to Irish stories.⁴⁹ The material is ambiguous, but the account in *Kormaks saga*, which bears all the marks of credulity, could be admirably explained in terms of the existence behind it of some ancient superstition or story

⁴⁸ Gertrude Schoepperle, *Tristan and Isolt* (1912, second edition 1960), II 544.

⁴⁹ *Origines Islandicae* (1905), II 316-18; cf. also Gertrude Schoepperle, *op. cit.*, II 545.

of magic.⁵⁰ Some caution should be exercised in drawing conclusions about the origins of the story in *Kormaks saga*, in view of the superstitions about eels existing in Iceland. Another matter requiring examination is James Carney's theory regarding incidents in Irish stories and *Kormaks saga*.⁵¹

⁵¹ *Studies in Irish literature and history* (1955), 197 ff.; cf. also P. L. Henry in *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 27 (1958-9), 221-2.

But let us consider next the spirit of these two narratives and the kind of picture of human life they in fact give. If men imagine the Tristan romances as a representative of what is called courtly love and a conductor of its current out to Iceland, then the idea seems doubtful. Traces of Tristan's influence in our thirteenth-century literature do not seem to be significant. The saga which bears most marks of romantic influence is *Laxdæla*, but is this influence from *Tristans saga*? Undoubtedly there is some influence of *amour courtois* in the Tristan poems — at least in the version of the poet Thomas. On the other hand this is only to be found in occasional patches, especially in the later parts, in the versions of Eilhart and Béroul. Gertrude Schoepperle has treated this in great detail. But with Tristan this is not the main issue. The story is for the most part about the great passion that dominates the two lovers, demanding fulfilment; it is as though love here rises up in its pure essence — against society and its moral law and against Tristan's duty towards his king and uncle — bringing death in its wake. In *Kormaks saga* the essence of the story is quite different. It is, admittedly, also a tragic story; but its tragedy is not

⁵⁰ I have located and had information of four Irish stories about a magic eel that winds itself about the hero. (1) E. Windisch, *Die altirische Heldensage Táin Bó Cuailnge* (1905), 306 n. 4, ll. 2289-2305, 2410-2420; summary in R. Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage* (1921), 169-73. (2) Cecile O'Rahilly, *Pursuit of Gruaídh Ghriansholus* (Irish Texts Society 24, 1924), 74-77. (3) E. Windisch, *Táin Bó Regamna* (Irische Texte, II. Ser., 2. Heft, 1887), 239-54; translated in T. P. Cross and C. H. Slover, *Ancient Irish tales* (1937), 211-14; summary in Thurneysen, *op. cit.*, 309-11. (4) Marie-Louise Sjoestedt, 'Forbais Droma Damgaire', *Revue celtique* 43 (1926), 1-123, 44 (1927), 157-86. Some of these texts are old. For information about this I am indebted to Professor Gearóid Mac Eoin.

the same. Kormakr falls in love at once with Steingerðr, and she with him, but when they are to be married he stays away; however, as soon as she is married to another, he is ardent in his quest for her. When they lie together in the cottage, however, he recites verses that are obscure but are clearly not about the fulfilment of their love — rather a stubborn urging that this should be fulfilled later. His life after that is a constant quest for her, a vain quest. Their meetings are always equally frustrating. Finally, when he has rescued her from the hands of the viking and she refuses to be party to bargaining, it is as though his love somehow crumbles away. *Kormaks saga* is a story of love that crumbles away, it is a “tragedy of frustration”, and nothing could be less like it than *Tristan*; and yet both of them are love stories. But then love is one of the main subjects of the world’s poetry, and by itself, of course, has nothing to tell us about literary relationship.

XII

Let us now take a last look at these two, Kormakr and Steingerðr, before they vanish finally from our sight. When he first sees her — sees her coming towards him — his verses are brimming indeed with a wonderful beauty of love and youth and spring. The mysterious facets of his character are the cause of her failure to stop with him; he stays at home on their wedding day. Why? Was it just the capricious nature of the poet who seeks passionately after that which is outside his grasp, but loses interest in it as soon as it is achieved? The saga blames the magic of Þórveig. Is it conceivable that the effect of the magic sapped his strength? This we would gladly know, and we would also gladly understand better the verses which he composed in the cottage, setting the seal upon his misfortune.

The Norwegian poet Hans E. Kinck has written a famous essay on the love of Kormakr. He describes the strange character of Kormakr outstandingly well:

“But in *Kormaks saga* the hero is a poet. The story tells of the terror of love, of sudden cowardice when the two lovers have achieved their object. The bridegroom fails to attend his wedding and claim the one he loves without reason or explanation. And moreover, without a third person coming between them. There is never any third person between them. Kormakr is consumed by love for Steingerðr all his life. But every time he has a chance of possessing her, he turns back. The saga calls this capriciousness *brigðmæli*. The struggle to win the one he loves, and not her possession, this is the nature of the love of Kormakr. He stops when the objective is achieved: terror, cowardice. No earthquake, but it is just like when ancient city walls quietly, eerily crumble . . .”

Kinck tries to dig deeper: Kormakr is a poet. This means that the personality of the man and the woman disappear and are replaced by the artist and his model. Kinck refers to the story told by Ibsen in his last play *Når vi døde vågner*. Kormakr is a poet who loses his love by composing about her. She ceases to be the beloved woman; in the lines of the elaborate court measure she becomes the model. “This is the essence of this love story; it is the tragedy of the artist and the man.”

This undoubtedly touches on a vital issue, whatever other factors may be involved. And without a doubt this brings us somewhat nearer the secret of his character, which is at one with his art. At all events, she does not stop by him, nor he by her. Afterwards begins the futile quest for what has been lost. He wastes his life in aimless travels and expeditions, all equally futile. He is ever composing about her; best when she is far away. Thus their lives pass, a futile search for a lost moment.

That moment, when she ignited his mind like a spark, so that he experienced a new birth — as a poet. And after that came the night that enclosed him, never ending, till the day of his death.

WHELTER

By A. H. SMITH

WHELTER lies on the west side of the upper part of Hawes Water, one of the great lakes in the north-west of Westmorland.¹ Originally, the lake was almost divided into two (High and Low Water) by a sandy delta formed at the outlet of Measand Beck ('marsh sand-bank', from OE *mēos* and *sand*). In the 1930's, with the construction of a dam at the lower end of the lake, the level of the water was raised and several small settlements and many topographical features were submerged. Fortunately, this could not affect Whelter.²

Whelter (which appears as *Quilter* in 1366) is a massive amphitheatre of rough ground about a mile across, rising steeply some 1350 feet in a mile from the rocky shore at Whelter Knotts (ON *knotttr* 'rocky hillock') to the craggy outcrop (Whelter Crags and Bason Crag), where it reaches the top of the ridge. This very distinctive semicircular hollow is different in form from the usual narrow ravines or gills which penetrate the hillsides in the region. There can be little doubt on topographical grounds that the name is from a Norse word *hvilft* (plur. *hvilftar*) 'hollow in the terrain', common in place-names in West Iceland and the Faroes and still existing as an appellative in Icelandic.³

¹ Several of the points raised and the names cited in this note are discussed more fully in my *Place-Names of Westmorland* (English Place-Name Society, vols. XLII-XLIII, 1967), especially part II 189 ff.

² After 30 years of discrete landscaping, Hawes Water is now one of the more 'sophisticated' lakes. But it is securely enclosed; the old lane on its west side was submerged, and access to Whelter is extremely difficult except for the young and nimble. The photograph accompanying this note was therefore taken from the east side of the lake at a distance of about 1½ miles from the central point of the area. The map shows the rough, mountainous and craggy nature of the western landscape of Whelter and the absence of any kind of settlement.

³ Cf. e.g. Cleasby-Vigfússon, *Icelandic-English Dictionary*, s.v. *hvilft*; C. Matras, *Fortegnelse over Stednavne på Færøerne* (1960), 25-6; G. Franzen, *Laxdalabygdens ortnamn* (1964), 71, refers to the duplicated mountain-name *Hvilftarhvilft* in Öundurifjörður which has replaced original *Hvilft* after this had been taken over as a settlement-name. The name Whelter shows loss of *-f-*, but such loss in the consonant cluster *-lft-* is common enough in place-names. Cf. also e.g. the Icel. by-form *hvilt* from *hvilft* and the Faroese pronunciation [*kvilt*]. Another possible — but doubtful — example of *hvilft* is the field-name *Whelt* in Natland near Kendal.

According to Dr Per Hovda, the word has been found in only one Norwegian place-name, *Kvilturda* in Åkrafjorden (Hordaland), and Dr Herbert Gustavson kindly informs me that it does not occur in Swedish dialects, but a related formation *völft* 'arch, vault', is found in the Gotland dialect.⁴ Alexander Jóhannesson, *Isländisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (1956), 263, and others have related *hwilft* to Gothic *hwilftri* 'coffin'.

The survey of Westmorland place-names has raised several interesting problems of the rarer elements in Scandinavian vocabulary in England. Besides Whelter may be mentioned terms like **beð* 'embankment' in Beetham (*Place-Names of Westmorland*, I 66), the poetic *jór* 'horse' in Yosgill (*ibid.* II 69), *kinn* 'cleft, slope' in Barkin (*ibid.* I 24), etc., *óss* 'outlet of a lake' in Eusemire (*ibid.* II 210) at the foot of Ullswater, *þrøng* 'narrow, constricted place' in Thrang (*ibid.* I 204).⁵ In the Scandinavian distribution of some of these and other terms might lie a clue to a more precise location of the regions from which the Norse settlers in these parts of north-western England came. It is worth noting that many parallels to the commoner types of Scandinavian names in Westmorland are to be found in the Stavanger and Bergen areas of the west coast of Norway.

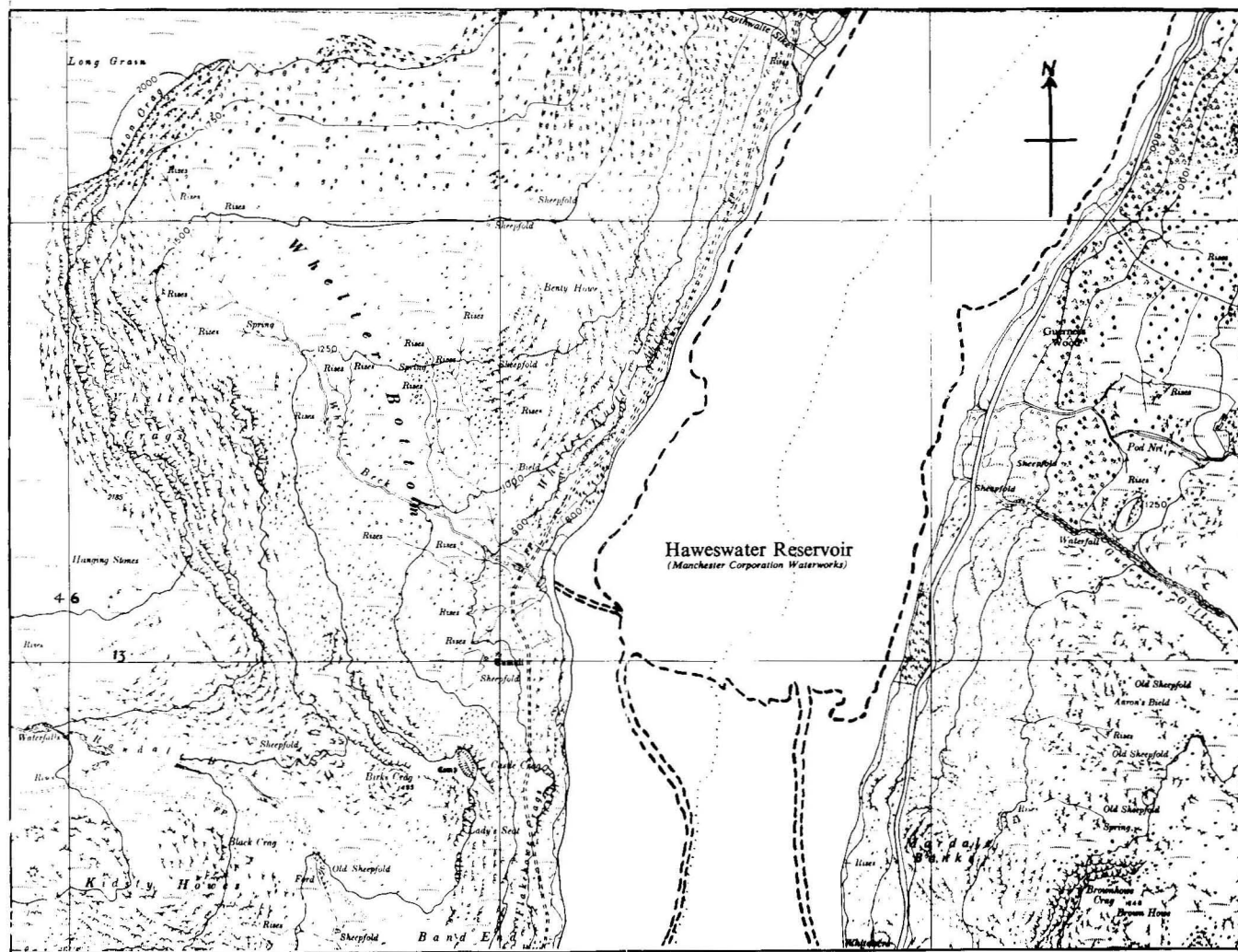
⁴ This word *völft* (from *välft*) is a parallel formation from the related ON *hválf*, *hólf* 'arch, vault', which in modern Icelandic may be used to describe the same topographical feature as *hwilft*. This word occurs in English place-names as an element in the compound **leið-hólf*, which appears to mean 'track-bridge' (cf. *Place-Names of the West Riding*, III 39, s.n. *Laither*). This compound occurs in Laythwaite, the name of a submerged site 2 miles north of Whelter, where the former lane on the edge of the lake crossed Laythwaite Sike.

⁵ Cf. especially *Place-Names of Westmorland*, II xliiv-xlv.



Whelter taken from the east side of Hawes Water (Westmorland).

(A. H. Smith)



WHELTER

in left-hand middle square, National grid NY 4613. (Each square is 1000 metres. Contours at 250 feet intervals. Broken line=original level of Hawes Water; dotted line= boundary between Bampton and Shap Rural parishes.)

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THE VINLAND MAP

I. A VIKING MAP OF THE WEST?

By D. B. QUINN

THE Vinland Map and the Tartar Relation, by R. A. Skelton, Thomas E. Marston and George D. Painter (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1965), has attracted more publicity throughout the world than anything else in the field of Viking antiquities since the excavation of the Gokstad ship, but the question of how much or how little it has to offer to those concerned with northern studies may take some considerable time to determine accurately. Most of the excitement in October 1965 centred on the supposed relevance of the map to the discovery of North America: it was presumed, in some irrational way not fully explained to the public, to have deprived Columbus of priority in opening America to European exploitation. The undoubted significance of the Tartar Relation for studies of European contact with the Far East has been passed over much more lightly. For Viking studies it is the map which has, or may have, appreciable significance.

For a world map of the mid-fifteenth century (a date of about 1440 has been claimed for it), the Vinland Map has some unusual features. It is derived, so far as the Eurasian landmass is concerned, from the circular Bianco map of 1436, roughly reshaped to fit a rectangular frame, but it has a much wider extent of ocean to the east and west than other world maps of this time. In the east the fringes of the Asiatic landmass have been torn off to make new islands in the extended ocean, while in the west, a group of great islands occupies a good part of the northern Atlantic Ocean. The first of these, Iceland, was not unknown to southern European mapmakers, especially since the Claudius Clavus map of 1427, but here it appears much larger, shaped in a recognizable manner (more like a late sixteenth-century form as some commentators have remarked), and lying off a peninsular, westward-pointing Scandinavia. Well spaced out farther west appears a substantial Greenland, insular (where Clavus had brought Scandinavia round the north of Iceland to make Greenland a peninsula), complete, as if circumnavigable, and again startlingly modern in form. It is Greenland which is probably the greatest single item of interest on the map for students of the North. Commentators have found its northern shore incredible (though arbitrary completion of partly-

known landmasses was invariable on maps before 1500), and its fidelity, on east and west coasts alike, baffling. Again, spaced out farther west still, is an additional enormous island (where Greenland is some three times the size of Iceland, this island is three times the size of Greenland), which extends southwards from an elevation two-thirds of the way up Greenland to the elevation of Brittany (over twenty degrees of latitude, some 1,500 miles), if we are meant to read elevations as such since no indications of latitude are anywhere given. The inscriptions on the islands are, respectively, *isolanda Ibernica*, a corruption which puzzles the commentators, *Gronelanda* and *Vinlanda Insula*. There are further inscriptions:— one, glossing the name *Vínland*, says it was found by Bjarni and Leif in association; another, longer and above Greenland, records again the discovery of a land by Bjarni and Leif, declares it to have been fertile and to have had vines growing there, while later, in the last year of Pope Pascal (1117-18), Henry (Eiríkr), bishop and papal legate, is said to have visited extensively this great land to the south and west, returning later to Greenland, and presumably to Europe. The textual interest of these inscriptions is discussed below by Mr Foote, but it may be worth noting that neither is wholly novel, being extensions of existing knowledge rather than completely new additions to it.

Mr R. A. Skelton, in discussing the map, goes into considerable detail on the historical geography and cartography of the northern lands in the middle ages, and makes an enduring contribution in this field apart altogether from the Vinland Map. He demonstrates that much of the Greenland coastline implies that coastal sketches were done and that the lay-out of the landmass involved making at least a limited number of astronomical fixes. All of these were quite within the capacity of Mediterranean cartographers in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, but, if used in the north, would imply either a Norwegian school of cartography in this period (Norwegian ships were certainly at Greenland as late as 1411), or, conceivably, Italian participation in northern navigation (which is so far totally undocumented). Mr Skelton argues fairly and not dogmatically that there are a few indications of Norwegian skill in geography which may make the map credible in its representation of Greenland, and he has received independent support from Roald Mørcken,¹ who considers Bergen to have been an active centre of geographical knowledge between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, and

¹ *Den nautiske mil gjennom tusen år. Sagatidens distansetabeller fra vestkysten av Grønland til Hvitehavet* (Særtryk av Bergens Sjøfartsmuseums Årshefte 1964).

who argues that Norsemen had apparently accurate distance tables at this period for northern voyaging, which would, in turn, make possible the coastal sketching from which Greenland on the Vinland Map could have been compiled. There is still a considerable question mark over these issues, but there is no doubt that the Vinland Map has led to both critical and constructive discussion of northern geography in the later middle ages and has opened the way to a further extension of knowledge in this field.

If Icelandic and Greenlandic outlines are realistic, the shape and dimensions of Vínland are entirely notional and do not correspond to North America as we know it, but to the saga-accounts which distinguish three lands in the west, and which seem here to be indicated by the divisions caused by two large inlets on the east coast (though without inscriptions to say so) as Helluland, Markland and Vínland, the last being brought far enough south on the map to correspond roughly with the more northerly vine-growing areas of Europe, so that there is here no ambiguity that Vínland equals "Vineland". For the sagas to have been known outside Iceland at this time is somewhat surprising, while their use to lay out the lands of the saga voyages on the map argues a fair degree of sophistication, though not necessarily an anachronistic one, on the part of the compiler. The map, if it is authentic, certainly puts parts of North America, however notionally, on the map for the first time, and consequently may justify some of the publicity it has earned in the United States, although it has nothing to do with the priority of Columbus in opening up the Americas. For northern studies, its relevance is that it adds a new, cartographic dimension to the saga and chronicle material on the westward expansion of the Greenlanders. No continuity between the end of the Greenland settlement about 1400 and the reopening of Greenland and North America to European contact in the sixteenth century has yet been established, but if the Vinland Map was circulating in southern Europe in the fifteenth century — for which there is no firm evidence — then an element of continuity, if only in notional cartographic terms, may be traceable. Clearly, fifteenth- and sixteenth-century maps will need to be rescrutinized with new intensity to see whether some reflection of the Vinland Map may not be found in them: the Cantino Map of 1502 has already been characterized as one which may show such traces, though much more work must be done before any useful conclusions may be drawn from speculation of this sort.

The story of the discovery of the Vinland Map, as told in the volume under review, left many questions in the reader's mind.

In 1957 Mr Laurence Witten, a New Haven bookseller, bought in Europe a volume, in a modern calf binding, containing the Vinland Map and the Tartar Relation. In April 1958 Mr Thomas Marsden, curator of manuscripts in Yale University Library, to whom Mr Witten had already shown his purchase, bought for his own collection from a London bookseller's catalogue an incomplete manuscript of the thirteenth-century world history by Vincent de Beauvais, the *Speculum historiale*. He showed it to Mr Witten who soon established to his satisfaction that it and the Tartar Relation (and hence the Vinland Map) had originally formed parts of the same manuscript, a multi-volume version of Vincent with *addenda*, a notation on the outer leaf of the Vinland Map referring to the *Speculum* and showing it be an integral part of the original. On this basis, the reunited documents, after a series of extraordinary coincidences, were eventually acquired for Yale University.

For over a year since the publication of *The Vinland Map and the Tartar Relation*, Mr Witten and Mr Marston remained unwilling to say anything about the source of either group of documents, but in November 1966, at a Conference in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, Mr Witten gave an account of what he could reconstruct of their history and so answered many questions which have been asked since the book's appearance. The manuscripts came, it appeared, from a single source, a private library, where he was told they had remained for sixty years or more, though nothing was known there of their earlier provenance. In the early part of 1957 Mr Enzo Ferrajoli de Ry offered for sale on behalf of their owner certain materials, which included both parts of the re-assembled documents, to Messrs Davis and Orioli, the London booksellers. Part of the collection (including the incomplete text of Vincent) was bought by them, but the Vinland Map, after being shown to officials at the British Museum, was rejected as not being sufficiently authenticated. In September of the same year, Mr Witten met Mr Ferrajoli at Geneva, learnt of the Map and Relation from him and was taken to see them in the library to which they had been returned. Mr Witten bought them as apparently genuine, though unauthenticated, from the owner for \$3,500. He did not see the Davis and Orioli catalogue of April 1958 until Mr Marston had ordered the manuscript of Vincent de Beauvais from it. A further visit by Mr Witten to the European library from which the reunited manuscripts came produced no trace of the missing portions of the *Speculum*. The location of this library and the name of its owner have not yet been disclosed, and it is clear that scholars, investigating the

provenance of the documents, will not be satisfied until they can test for themselves what can be found out from the former owner, since to press the inquiry farther back in time may materially assist in their interpretation of the map and relation. At the same time, Mr Witten's statement will be greatly welcomed as clearing away some of the mystery which surrounded their appearance.

In August 1959 the documents passed into the ownership of Yale University, whose authorities, very creditably, embarked on a full investigation of its purchase, engaging Mr R. A. Skelton and Mr G. D. Painter, both distinguished members of the staff of the British Museum, to report, respectively, on the Vinland Map and the Tartar Relation. To Mr Marston remained the task of verifying the texts, testing inks, paper (intermingled with parchment in the manuscripts), parchment, and handwritings. Though in his report he gives a full picture of the physical characteristics of the documents, it may be thought that his conclusions on many of the important issues raised by them are presented without sufficient discussion. His rather casual, take-it-or-leave-it manner, though in itself no reflection on his scholarship, may have contributed to the scepticism with which the publication has been received by many scholars. His conclusions, with indications of their possible significance, are: (1) that visual inspection under a microscope established that the ink used on the map is not modern (which may not be conclusive evidence); (2) that the paper which is found intermingled with parchment in the Tartar Relation and *Speculum* was manufactured in the Upper Rhineland, quite possibly at Basel, about 1440 (which appears highly probable); (3) that the hand is uniform throughout the three documents (though that on the map is thought by some palaeographers to show divergent characteristics from the book hand which is uniform throughout the Tartar Relation and *Speculum* and so requires further examination); (5) that the book hand is characteristic of the Upper Rhineland in the mid-fifteenth century (which appears likely but which requires further expert confirmation); (6) that the pair of parchment leaves on which the Vinland Map appears is conjugate with another pair, making up a single skin between them (which is highly improbable); (7) that the documents were compiled and written in or near Basel during the sittings of the Council of Basel, 1431-49, and may be associated with the activities of members of the Council (a guess but a not unlikely one). No physical tests were done on the map which would in any way establish whether it is a medieval or a modern compilation. This, apart from the question of provenance, must

leave a question-mark over the Vinland Map, which does not extend to the Tartar Relation and the *Speculum*, all the indications on which point to their fifteenth-century origin, and only minor differences on whose interpretation appear likely to arise.

Whatever the difficulties which remain, Mr Skelton's case that the map is both genuine and important is a strong one, and has not been seriously impugned by any of the map's critics during the first year of its appearance in print. The points made against the genuineness of the map can be balanced by others which can be made in its favour, or are not capable of being adjudicated, though several critics have opened up promising fields for further investigation. The most important consideration is clearly whether or not Mr Skelton's argument for a moderately advanced school of Norwegian navigational techniques and cartography can be strengthened, and whether the case for the physical authenticity of the map as we have it can be altered by further technical scrutiny. In a situation where a certain degree of open-mindedness is imperative, it is necessary to consider the map from several, diverging angles.

If the map is genuine, we may then ask what was its function. The simplest answer is that it was intended to revise the world-picture given in Vincent's text by demonstrating that mid-fifteenth-century knowledge of the spread of Christianity was greater than that which Vincent de Beauvais had at his disposal two centuries before, comprising as it did more specific information on further Asia from the Tartar Relation than his account of Carpini's mission had given. By setting out the Relation's contributions to missionary history on a map of the Eurasian landmass, and by using also the evidence of Bishop Eirik's residence in Greenland and his visit to Vinland, it could be shown how far Christians had gone in the west, namely to the forgotten lands of the Norse dispersion. Because it is so simple and obvious, this could well be an adequate explanation of the compilation of the map. A more sophisticated answer is also possible. Mr Skelton has shown, beyond reasonable doubt, that the Vinland Map contains many of the basic features of the world map in the Bianco atlas of 1436, compiled in Venice and still preserved there. This circular map has been rather rudely adapted — some say it is re-drawn as an ellipse, though Mr Skelton denies that the form is consistent enough for this to be said — to fit the rectangular shape of a folio opening. West is to the left, East to the right, with a modern-style North orientation. The date 1440 assigned to it seems rather early for a map of this sort, while the great extent of ocean shown at both sides of the

Eurasian landmass is quite exceptional. Characteristic of the period are the islands which are shown some considerable way out into the Atlantic Ocean, off the Iberian lands, but the breaking up of the eastern borders of Asia is unusual, while the three great islands in the North Atlantic — Iceland, Greenland, and Vínland — are unparalleled in their extension of the island pattern far to the West of anything shown on other pre-Columbian maps. Even though the outlines of both Iceland and of Greenland are realistic, their distances from each other are much exaggerated, Iceland being about the same distance from Greenland as Greenland from Vínland, and Vínland (if the edges of the sheet have not been trimmed) from Postrema Insula, the most prominent of the islands carved out of eastern Asia, which in turn is a similar distance from farther Tartary, the Asiatic mainland across the Great Sea of the Tartars. The spacing may be coincidence only, but if it is not, and if the scale is uniform (both assumptions on present knowledge), then the map may be taken as showing a line of access from Northern Europe to Asia by way of a series of 1000 mile steps from Scotland to the Far East. This concept of an ocean route from Europe to Asia is possibly present in some degree in the Florence map of 1459 (even if we do not accept all of S. Crinó's interpretations in *Come fu scoperta l'America* (1943)), and is clearly present in the Toscanelli letter of 1474 (and doubtless in his lost map of a similar date), while it is set out in the round on the Behaim globe of 1492. If the Vinland Map is seen as a forerunner of these great cartographical landmarks of the latter part of the century, the inclusion of the northern islands, the fractionalizing of eastern Asia, and the disposition of the islands between the two extremes of the main landmass make up an intelligible pattern. Mr Skelton has several times drawn attention to the amateur quality of the cartography of the Vinland Map, but this is not in itself an obstacle to considering that it may embody the speculations of a mid-fifteenth-century cosmographical theorist. At the same time, this view of the map can be nothing more than a likely suggestion unless some more definite link between the disposition of the northern islands on the Vinland Map and an important line of intellectual speculation about the transoceanic route to Asia, which played a significant, perhaps even dominating part in the Columbian voyages half a century later, is brought to light.

Provided that both the Vinland Map and the Tartar Relation belong with Vincent de Beauvais's text, then the Council of Basel was a likely place from which they might have emerged. Missionary enterprise was under active discussion there; those parts

of Europe from which the Tartar Relation is believed to have emerged (Silesia or thereabouts) were represented; there were numerous Italian humanists present whose interest in cartography can be plausibly demonstrated; Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini wrote of Basel in 1438 as being the centre of the Christian world (though a smaller one than that shown on the Vinland Map). There was even a northern delegation which could have brought news of the sagas and sketches of the northern islands. Erik VII united in his person the lands of Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Pomerania, Iceland and Greenland (the latter only in title); his four ambassadors arrived at Basel on 15 March 1434 with a guard of 150 men bearing the motto *Rex Daciae cuius regni non est finis*,² conceivably implying not only that the Union of Kalmar would last for ever but that its limits were unbounded (as in theory they could claim to be in the West).

Without expressing any opinion on its precise value, it may be worth pointing out that G. Uzielli in 1894³ set out an elaborate argument that Nicholas of Cusa, prominent in the Council of Basel until 1438, had thereafter, possibly as early as 1440 during the meetings of the Council of Florence, communicated information on Vinland to Toscanelli. Other churchmen who left the Council of Basel also retreated to the rival Council held successively at Ferrara, Florence and Rome between 1438 and 1443, and they had, besides their theological debates, time on their hands to embark on such scholarly pursuits as bringing Vincent de Beauvais's *Speculum* up to date and setting out graphically cartographical knowledge and cosmographical speculation such as the Vinland Map does or may incorporate. The Vinland Map could have arisen just as well in Florence, where there was much discussion of the range of Christian activity and of Christian unity, as in Basel, and have been recopied a little later in or near Basel, especially as both Mr Skelton and Mr Painter think that both map and relation are second or later versions of the original compilations. It will take intensive research over some considerable period to follow through the presumed association of the documents with Basel or Florence, but it is clearly a scholarly task worth attempting even if the result should prove entirely inconclusive.

Mr Marston is convinced that he has proved that the Vinland Map is not a forgery: he receives rather cautious support from

² *Consilium Basileense. Studien und Documente* (8 vols. in 9, 1896-1936), v. 397.

³ G. Uzielli, *La vita ed i tempi di Paolo Pozzo Toscanelli* (1894), 97-119. Cf. G. Siatta, *Nicolò Cusano e l'umanesimo italiano* (1957), 18, 35.

Mr Skelton. All three writers are convinced that the Vinland material has not been inserted recently on an older map; they are satisfied that the pair of parchment leaves on which the map appears are genuine and are an authentic part of the group of documents. It might, in these circumstances, appear to be ultra-sceptical to suggest that the map could still be a forgery. That there was a map accompanying the *Speculum* and Tartar Relation is likely in itself. If it was a map of the known world, without Greenland or Vinland, though with legends drawn from the Tartar Relation, it could have been copied on another pair of blank parchment leaves, if any such were available in the *Speculum*. Iceland, Greenland, and Vinland, with perhaps other novelties, could then have been composed and added to this copy which would then have a completely homogeneous appearance. It would then be possible to dispose of the original map and to pass off the copy with its striking additions as the original. Such a feat could not have been accomplished without both scholarship and executive skill, but forgery has frequently been the result of an excess of scholarly vanity as well as of greed. There is, so far, no positive evidence whatever, so far as is known, that such a forgery was made: on the other hand there is as yet no satisfactory physical evidence that the map is genuine. In the absence of physical tests or of such evidence on provenance as would render them superfluous a degree of suspicion must attach to the map. If in the end the Vinland Map is more fully authenticated, and is admitted firmly rather than provisionally into the accepted body of sources on Norse history, it can open up an important range of inquiry into precisely what was known in southern Europe of the northerly and westerly lands of the Norse dispersion towards the end of the middle ages.

The Vinland Map and its associated documents were made available in January 1967 by Yale University Library (prior to public exhibition by the British Museum) for inspection by scholars in several disciplines and have been subjected to laboratory procedures. From these it is hoped that much new information will eventually emerge. Personal inspection of the map (through the courtesy of Mr T. C. Skeat, Keeper of Manuscripts) shows it to be strikingly different in appearance from the parchment leaves in the Vincent of Beauvais and the Tartar Relation. A great deal of the natural surface has, seemingly, been removed; the material is unusually translucent, and is a light greyish-brown colour on which slightly faded and rubbed legends in brownish ink remain (much less prominently than in the reproduction). There is a good deal of darkening in the inner

fold, some of it by dust but some, perhaps, from mucilage applied to an external guard. It might appear that the map had, comparatively recently, been subjected to heavy cleaning, which spread a little of the ink-colour over the surface. As the inner fold has remained rather dirty, it may be thought that the cleaning was done after the map was guarded and bound in with the Tartar Relation. A possible explanation of these circumstances is that the map was used for some considerable time as the outer cover for the gathering which contained the Tartar Relation and was appreciably soiled by long use for this purpose. If this was so, it would provide an explanation why the map was only recently identified as possibly of interest for its own sake, and might appear to strengthen the case for its authenticity. On the other side, it could be argued that strenuous cleaning could provide a means of ageing the appearance of the inked surface and covering up signs of recent forgery: visual inspection did not provide any obvious indication that this was likely. The work of the English palaeographers who have seen the documents and the techniques of the British Museum laboratory may well carry us far beyond our present knowledge, but it remains a little unfortunate that they were not fully exploited at an earlier stage.

II. ON THE VÍNLAND LEGENDS ON *THE VINLAND MAP*

By P. G. FOOTE

WHEN Professor Quinn undertook to write on *The Vinland Map*, he suggested that it would be better if the legends on the map concerning the voyages of Byarnus, Leiphus and Henricus episcopus were considered by a philologist and I then agreed to contribute a note on them. It must be stressed that I am thus dealing with only a very small part of the work done in *The Vinland Map and the Tartar Relation* and the limited application of my observations should at all times be remembered. The legends accompanying the countries delineated on the map as *Gronelanda* and *Vinlanda* (or *Vinilanda* or *Vimlanda*) *Insula* are printed and translated with some commentary on pp. 139-41 of the volume; they are discussed at greater length by Mr Skelton on pp. 222-7; and they enter into Mr Painter's speculative essay on the map and its background, especially on pp. 255-61. Individual references are not normally given to these pages in what follows, but for the sake of clarity I shall repeat the texts and translations in the form the book gives them.

It seems important to note at the outset that the longer legends on the map, both those to do with Vínland and others, appear all of a piece and the work of a single compiler; similarity in phrasing exists between the Vínland entries and others on the map; the language of the legends sometimes echoes the language of the *Tartar Relation*; and the matter of the Vínland entries, containing as they do information about geographical discovery and Christian mission in the western extremes of the world, balances some matter on the map to do with the Franciscan mission to the Mongols which produced the *Tartar Relation* itself.¹ The Vínland material may thus seem to have been selected and the style adapted to suit the context of the whole map, and, as we shall see, the legends are in general demonstrably remote in language from a postulated Norse source. These circumstances must naturally be taken into account in estimating the value of the information offered by the legends.

The first piece is this²: *Vinlanda*³ *Insula a Byarno reperta et leipho socijs* ("Island of Vinland, discovered by Bjarni and Leif in company"). In Icelandic sources Bjarni (Herjólfsson) and Leifr (Eiríksson) figure as discoverers of Vínland but not in company.

The connexion between them lay in Leif's purchase of Bjarni's ship — they were *kaupnautar* but not *forunautar*.⁴ We have no means of knowing whether the description of them as *socii*, which is repeated in the next legend, is justified. Mr Skelton concludes his discussion of this passage by saying that it is possible that the Icelandic sources telling of separate voyages by Bjarni and Leifr have been merged into an account of a single voyage made by them as *félagar*, and he rightly adds that it does not help to think of identifying the Byarnus with Bjarni Grímólfsson — for in order to make any sense of *socii* we should then have to presume that Leiphus was an error for Karlsefni.⁵ It thus appears that this bit of the text adds nothing probable or certain to our knowledge and may well indicate some confusion of facts.

The next passage speaks of their voyage: *Volente deo post longum iter ab insula Gronelanda per meridiem ad reliquas extremas partes occidentalis oceani maris iter facientes ad austrum inter glacies byarnus et leiphus erissonius socij terram nouam uberrimam videlicet viniiferam inuenerunt quam Vinilandam [? or Vimlandam] insulam appellauerunt* ("By God's will, after a long voyage from the island of Greenland to the south toward the most distant remaining parts of the western ocean sea, sailing southward amidst the ice, the companions Bjarni and Leif Eiriksson discovered a new land, extremely fertile and even having vines, the which island they named Vinland"). One may quarrel with the translation of the last clause but not with Mr Skelton's general conclusion on this passage: "All this seems to be culled from a narrative similar to that in the Tale [i.e. *Grœnlendinga saga*], which mentions the glaciers of Helluland, the vines of Vinland, and the naming of the country." This part of the legend does not appear to add to our knowledge either.

Mr Skelton notes that the description of Vinland and Greenland as islands, in agreement of course with their depiction on the map, is at odds with what we know of Norwegian-Icelandic geographical opinion in the middle ages. Adam of Bremen, however, writing about 1075 and using Danish information, had already described the countries as islands, and the idea seems to have become commonplace at any rate outside Scandinavia.⁶ To account for the surprisingly lifelike delineation of Greenland on the map Mr Skelton recalls that it is entirely likely that Norsemen had first-hand knowledge of the coasts up to and even beyond lat. 75° N, and he does not reject the possibility that in the favourable conditions of the thirteenth century or earlier a circumnavigation of the country might have been made.⁷ Such a conjecture has of course no relevance to the description and depiction of Vinland.

We must at any rate conclude that the information that the countries were islands could hardly have been derived from any west Norse literary source.

Mr Skelton does not comment on the name-forms in these pieces but they are not without interest. The writer uses *-landa* as the latinisation of *-land* (also in *Isolanda* and *Ierlanda*); the literary latinisation usually preferred in Scandinavia in the middle ages seems to have been *-landia*. A weak masculine name like Bjarni is normally latinised as a third declension noun (Biarno), as names of the same class in early German also were; a form like the one here in *-us* would seem quite exceptional.⁸ The use of *y* for [j] is extremely rare in early Icelandic orthography and probably confined entirely to foreign words — it is hardly likely to have been written in such a common name as Bjarni, even in latinised form. In Danish writing, on the other hand, the usage is comparatively frequent; but here it is perhaps best to regard it as the present scribe's own.⁹ The preserved diphthong in Leiphus ought certainly to indicate a west Norse and not an east Norse source, whether oral or written.¹⁰ The oddest form of all is *erissonius* for Eirfksson (the monophthongisation in the first element is common in Norwegian, not unknown in Icelandic sources, and frequent in latinised forms¹¹). This patronymic latinised by a Scandinavian writer would have appeared as *Erici* or *Erici filius*. The man responsible for *erissonius* was either completely familiar with patronymics of this kind in use as mere surnames — and this they were certainly not in the Scandinavian countries in the fifteenth century and hardly in those northern regions of Germany where such forms were usual, although their adoption as surnames seems to have been well advanced in England — or else he did not recognise Eirfksson as a patronymic at all.¹² It seems quite likely that this information came orally to the first non-Scandinavian recorder of it, although the *-ss-* in *erissonius* seems most probably the result of scribal error. These name-forms reinforce the impression of distance between the entries on the map and any ultimate northern source. Given the nature of the legends so far examined, it is reasonable to be cautious in approaching what seems to be really new material in the remainder.

For the legend continues like this: *Henricus Gronelande regionumque finitimarum sedis apostolicae episcopus legatus in hac terra spaciosa vero et opulentissima in postremo anno pontificis [or patris] sanctissimi nostri Pascali accessit in nomine dei omnipotentis longo tempore mansit estiuo et brumali postea versus Gronelandam redit ad orientem hiemalem deinde humillima obediencia superiori voluntati processit* ("Eric [Henricus], legate of

the Apostolic See and bishop of Greenland and the neighboring regions, arrived in this truly vast and very rich land, in the name of Almighty God, in the last year of our most blessed father Pascal, remained a long time in both summer and winter, and later returned northeastward toward Greenland and then proceeded [i.e. home to Europe?] in most humble obedience to the will of his superiors"). Nothing for sure can be made of the meaning of this last clause, but it may be noted that, like *terra spaciosa . . . et opulentissima*, it echoes a phrase in the *Tartar Relation*.¹³ Northeastward for *ad orientem hiemalem* is wrong; it means southeastward, and that poses a pretty problem too. Something may be made however of the note on Bishop Henricus.

Henricus is a common latinisation of Eiríkr, and in a *Landnámabók* genealogy we meet the Icelander Eiríkr Gnúpsson, who is described as *Grænlandinga byskup*.¹⁴ He also appears in episcopal lists, on which more below, and in a couple of tantalisingly brief annal entries, which can be quoted here in full¹⁵:

- (1) Lögmannsannáll *s.a.* 1112 Ferð Eiríks byskups.
Flateyjarbók *s.a.* 1113 Ferð Eiríks byskups.
- (2) Annales Reseniani *s.a.* 1121 Eiríkr byskup leitaði Vínlands.
Henrik Høyers Annaler *s.a.* 1121 Eiríkr byskup leitaði Vínlands.
Annales regii *s.a.* 1121 Eiríkr byskup af Grænlandi fór at leita Vínlands.
Lögmannsannáll *s.a.* 1121 Eiríkr byskup upsi leitaði Vínlands.
Gottskálks annáll *s.a.* 1121 Eiríkr Grænlandinga byskup leitaði Vínlands.
Flateyjarbók *s.a.* 1121 Eiríkr byskup af Grænlandi fór at leita Vínlands.

The entry in Flateyjarbók, (1) above, is not independent of Lögmannsannáll but derived from it; the date 1112 in Lögmannsannáll is probably also to be preferred.¹⁶ The information given in (2) above, unanimously entered for 1121, must be derived from a single source, not younger than *c.* 1300, although of course not all the annal collections bear independent witness to it (Flateyjarbók here follows a source like Annales regii, for example¹⁷). It is again the Lögmannsannáll which in a way stands out from the rest by adding a detail not found elsewhere, the nickname *upsi* for Bishop Eiríkr. Like the laconic entry for 1112, this might suggest that Einar Hafliðason, who compiled the annal and who in the extant manuscript is himself the scribe of the entries

down to 1362,¹⁸ was so familiar with an account of Bishop Eiríkr that no more than the briefest memorandum was necessary to make all plain to himself and others.¹⁹ Einar was close to ecclesiastical sources, however, and it would not be safe to jump to the conclusion that a written narrative about Bishop Eiríkr was available in the fourteenth century. All the same, it seems reasonable to conclude, merely on the basis of this meagre material, that some people in Iceland in the fourteenth century knew, or thought they knew, a good deal more about him than we do now. An Icelandic source for what is additional in the legend would be by no means impossible.

Mr Skelton's treatment of the known Icelandic sources cannot be commended. He does not go to the standard edition of the annals but follows Reeves.²⁰ Reeves gives the *Annales regii* 1121 entry as "Bishop Eric of Greenland —" and the *Flateyjarbók* entry as "Eric, Bishop of Greenland —". Mr Skelton only has the latter translation but the former is more accurate and should be carefully retained because it avoids the suggestion that Greenland constituted the fixed diocese of Bishop Eiríkr. Mr Skelton is led woefully astray by Reeves when he says of Bishop Eiríkr, "His name appears at the head of a list of the bishops at Gardar (the episcopal seat in Greenland), included in the twelfth-century Icelandic work *Rimbegla*." It is hard not to infer from this, first, that the list itself was a twelfth-century source; second, that thus already at this early date Eiríkr was described as a diocesan; and third, that no other lists of bishops exist. If Mr Skelton had made a check, he would have discovered that we have numerous episcopal lists.²¹ He would also have found that there is no list included in any twelfth-century work covered by the title *Rimbegla* but that the edition of texts to do with calendar computation and the like published in 1780 as *Rymbegla* does contain one.²² The list printed there, however, is from a manuscript derived from work by Björn Jónsson of Skarðsá (1574-1655).²³ Björn's list is headed: *Þessir hafa biskupar verið á Grænlandi í Görðum*. His list is closely akin to that in an extant fourteenth-century codex and may be derived from it, and it is noteworthy that this codex and the two other episcopal lists we have from the fourteenth century purport only to record the names of the bishops *á Grænlandi* without reference to Gardar.²⁴ They thus neither claim nor disclaim fixed diocesan status for Bishop Eiríkr. The *Einars þáttur Sokkasonar* shows that the establishment of the see of Gardar after Eirík's time was known to the Icelanders,²⁵ and there is in fact no reason to suppose that they were in any doubt as to Eirík's status as a missionary bishop.

Of the entry under (1) above, Ferð Eiríks byskups, Mr Skelton says that the journey was "presumably from Norway or Iceland to Greenland". It may be added that there is some warrant for this presumption in the fact that elsewhere in the annal collections we find that the voyage to or arrival in Greenland of a new bishop is separately recorded — it naturally often took place at least a year after his consecration and a good many bishops must have sailed by way of Iceland. Of Bishop Helgi Ógmundarson, for example, we only hear that he came to Greenland in 1212 and the date of consecration is not recorded; we read of the consecration of Bishop Óláfr *s.a.* 1246, and then *s.a.* 1247 Óláfr byskup fór til Grœnlands.²⁶

Mr Skelton and Mr Painter both discuss the sense of the verb *leita* in the entries for 1121, *leitadi* and *fór at leita*, and they come to different conclusions. The former quotes and accepts Halldór Hermannsson's definition of the verb, "to search for something which is undetermined, or lost". Mr Painter writes, "The expressions . . . would in fact normally indicate a search for something lost or unlocated, and have often been taken as meaning not only that the position and even existence of Vinland were then uncertain, but that Eirik never arrived, or perished there. We now know that he both arrived and returned; and the doubtful words mean here, as occasionally elsewhere, simply 'set out for', as Gathorne-Hardy had already maintained." Mr Painter's reference to Mr Gathorne-Hardy is not as scrupulously just as it might be. Gathorne-Hardy is arguing against Nansen's opinion that *leita* must show "that Wineland was at that date not a known but a legendary country, for 'leita' can only apply to a search for that the existence of which is undetermined".²⁷ To refute Nansen Gathorne-Hardy quotes a single example, that of Aud of whom it is said that she "'fór at leita Íslands' . . . at a time when her own brother was already settled there, and long after the foundation of the Icelandic colony". This undeniably demonstrates that one could *leita* something that was as real as Iceland, but it does not prove that it meant "simply 'set out for'". According to the narrative, Aud is setting out from Orkney and she wants to go to Iceland — but for her and her companions it is a voyage of discovery all the same, it means setting out into the unknown, Iceland has to be found by them.²⁸ A better gloss for the verb *leita* in such a context might be "set out to find, attempt to visit, something known to exist but whose precise location can only be determined by exploration". Our knowledge of the word's usage must at any rate lead us to the conclusion that the man ultimately responsible for the phrasing of the 1121 annal

entry himself believed that Bishop Eiríkr was setting out for a place probably real but certainly unfamiliar, a country with which neither the bishop and his companions nor the people he lived among had had any recent dealings. It does not seem to me that we are in a good position to argue with him. This is awkward for Mr Painter's speculations on the continued existence of a Vinland colony and of Greenlandic contact with it.

I may mention another point concerning an Icelandic matter where Mr Painter's apparent ignorance of the sources leads him to give a tendentious account. He writes: "In 1106 Pascal had appointed John the first bishop of Hólar, the northern see of Iceland, and the establishment of a Greenland bishopric was a natural next step." This suggests to me that Mr Painter is not aware of the following facts.²⁹ The diocese of Hólar was formed by a division of the existing diocese comprising the whole of Iceland previously under the sole jurisdiction of the bishop in Skálholt. The Hólar diocese comprised only the Northern Quarter, approximately the middle north of Iceland; in geographical terms the Greenland bishopric was not "a natural next step" from the Hólar bishopric, and in terms of ecclesiastical concern a bishop for the Greenlanders was "a natural next step" any time after the consecration of Ísleifr as bishop of the Icelanders in 1056. The initiative for the creation of the new see came from the inhabitants of the north of Iceland and with the consent of Bishop Gizurr of Skálholt the necessary steps were taken. Jón Ógmundarson, a priest from the south, was elected by the clergy and people and went to Lund for consecration. Archbishop Asger there directed him to Rome to get papal dispensation because he had been twice married; Jón made the journey and got the dispensation. He was then consecrated to the see of Hólar with its established episcopal residence and its fixed boundaries, so that his position was a good deal different from that of Bishop Eiríkr.³⁰ The suggestion of calculated papal policy conveyed by Mr Painter's words is hard to maintain.

To return to the map legend about Bishop Eiríkur, we find information there which is either unknown from the sparse Icelandic sources or at odds with them. He is described as legate of the Apostolic See and bishop of Greenland and the neighbouring regions — certainly then a missionary bishop; he went to Vinland in the last year of Pope Pascal — Pope Pascal II's last year on a strict interpretation would presumably fall between August 1117 (he was consecrated in August 1099) and his death in January 1118, but it would be hard to deny that it could not also mean a time earlier in 1117 or later in 1118; and having stayed in

Greenland for a long time in both summer and winter, the bishop then returned to Greenland. We may look at these points in reverse order.

Mr Skelton thinks that the phrase *longo tempore . . . estiuo et brumali* must mean "at least a year". Mr Painter would like it to mean the same, or even longer, but concludes that "the question remains open". It seems to me that a meaning of "at most a year" is as reasonable an inference. Mr Painter observes, "The emphasis on summer and winter is a distinctly 'northern' feature", but if there is anything in this and we are to regard the phrase as echoing some Norse source, it is hard to think of a natural wording which would at the same time indicate a period longer than the inside of one year and involve the use of both the terms summer and winter. The sort of phrase that might have given rise to the Latin would perhaps be *ok var þar lengi um sumarit ok um vetrinn eptir* or *ok var þar lengi þau misseri*: in either case a twelvemonth is the outside limit.

From the map we understand that Bishop Eiríkr went to Vínland in 1117 or 1118, while the Icelandic annals give 1121 for his "search". Either the voyage mentioned in the two sources is one and the same and one of them has the wrong date, or there were two expeditions. In the latter case an earlier successful expedition was clearly unknown to the man responsible for the 1121 entry, who would then obviously not have used *leita*, or to Einar Hafliðason, the one man in the fourteenth century who otherwise gives the impression of knowing something about Bishop Eiríkr. If there was only one expedition (about whose outcome the Icelandic sources are silent and, as far as that goes, noncommittal), it is necessary to consider the possibilities and probabilities which may give an inkling of how an alteration from 1117-18 to 1121 or the other way round might have come about. The possibility of confusion of roman numerals always exists (not hard with, say, xvii and xxi), but the dating in the map legend and in the annals (except for the decades in some of them) is not by the use of roman numerals and we could not in any case tell where the corruption lay. It might be suggested that the annual date 1121 depends on a calculation backwards from the received date of the consecration of Arnaldr as bishop of the Greenlanders in 1124 (so all but one (1125) of the seven annals which record it), but this could not be confirmed. The date given in the map legend has "an ecclesiastical form which carries conviction of its authenticity", says Mr Skelton; it is "certainly preferable", says Mr Painter, ". . . by reason of its circumstantial form, which would hardly be liable to corruption".³¹ This is the impression

it makes, true enough, but there can be no guarantee that it is not a translation from some other form of dating. We may recall the fact that the compiler of the legends inserts the name of Pope Innocent in the map legend to do with the Carpini mission, and Mr Painter even suggests that this identification of the pope in question might have been "by deduction from the date 30 July 1247" at the end of the *Tartar Relation*.³² If that is accepted as possible in the case of Pope Innocent, we must also count it possible in the case of Pope Pascal. Another point that ought to be made is that 1117-18 was so well known in Icelandic history-writing as a momentous time that it must be counted odd if a notable event from that period, in this case Bishop Eirík's expedition to Vínland, was divorced from the other notable events contemporary with it.³³ That is to say that if the expedition took place 1117-18 it is hard to see how it got shifted to 1121 in anybody's memory. But if it took place in 1121, it is easy to imagine some such transfer in a dialogue like this: "I have read that a certain Bishop Eiríkr from Greenland once went to look for Vínland." "When was that?" "I do not remember exactly but it was about or perhaps soon after the time when Bishop Gizurr died". "When did he die then?" "He died in the same year as a lot of other famous men, the same year as Pope Pascal, for instance —." Other speculative explanations could be given, but it seems to me far from safe to consider the date offered in the legend to be above all suspicion.

Henricus is described as *sedis apostolicae . . . legatus* and this is accepted at its face-value by the editors. It seems not unreasonable to do so, but it ought to be mentioned with due caution that Friar John who led the mission to the Mongols in 1247 was also papal legate (*cum . . . fratre . . . Johanne sedis apostolice legato*), and the possibility exists that the compiler thought it appropriate that Henricus, doing in the west what Friar John was later to do in the east, should have the same dignity and the papacy the same priority and credit.³⁴

Mr Skelton says: "No original record of Bishop Eirík's ordination [*sic*] is known; but his entry in the list of bishops of Gardar compiled by Luka Jelič and based in part on that of Gams may rest on a papal document seen by one of these authors, although not cited or published by them:

1. *Erich* (Eiríkr); a. 1112-1113 consecratur in episcopum regionarium Groelandiae regionumque finitimarum; a. 1211 [*scil.* 1121] pergit Vinlandiam ubi moritur (a. 1122?).

A. 1123 Groelandenses petunt erectionem sedis episcopalis in Groelandia.

2. *Arnoldus*, a. 1124 consecratus; a. 1126 sedem figit Gardari”

The details printed by Mr Skelton and given again here are reproduced from Jelič's list, but we are led to understand by him that Gams's list agrees closely with this one. He says, for example, "The formula for Eirik's episcopal style [in the legend] . . . closely parallels that quoted by Gams and Jelič"; he speaks of "the account given . . . by Gams and Jelič"; and he remarks that the date given for Bishop Eirík's death was perhaps "inferred by Gams". But we need only look at Gams's list to see that Mr Skelton is gratuitously lending Jelič the weight of Gams's authority. All that Gams enters is:³⁵

"1112-13 cs. Erich (*Eiríkr*), 1121
c. 1123-25 cs. Arnold., *tr. Hamar*. 1150."

Gams quotes his sources moreover and could have taken this bare information from almost any one of them, although it is perhaps most likely that Keyser was the immediate source here.³⁶ Gams thus offers nothing that does not come to him from the known Icelandic sources through the medium of modern historians, and there is no question of his having seen some otherwise unknown papal document.

What is extra in Jelič's work, the description of Eiríkr as *episcopus regionarius Groelandiae regionumque finitimarum* and the suggestion that he died in Vinland in 1122, must thus stand to Jelič's account alone. Mr Skelton finds the similarity between the episcopal style here and that in the map legend a striking one, and he is interested in the tentative date given for the bishop's death. He does not however appear to have taken the elementary methodical step of checking the sources that Jelič does refer to. Jelič published three papers with the title 'L'évangélisation de l'Amérique avant Christophe Colomb', in 1891, 1895 and 1897.³⁷ The later two are virtually identical and contain primarily the list of bishops. Mr Skelton cites only the 1897 paper. Jelič introduces his list with general references to Torfæus, Gams and Gravier³⁸ and to his own first contribution. He is able to enlarge the older episcopal list for Greenland and Gardar on the basis of material drawn from Vatican records and he appears to be scrupulous in citing these sources, but these new documents concern only the younger period, particularly the fifteenth century. If Mr Skelton had gone to the 1891 essay he would have found that Jelič was already then styling Eiríkr as "évêque régional des contrées américaines".³⁹ But then he would also have discovered that this dubbing was no more than an inference

based on Jelič's knowledge of the story of Einar Sokkason and the creation of the Greenland diocese and on his acceptance, through Gravier, of Rafn's elaborate speculation that Eiríkr had gone to Vínland to visit a colony there and had decided to renounce the Greenlandic bishopric in favour of work in this new field.⁴⁰ In 1891 Jelič swallowed this whole: he speaks of various attempts to carry out missionary work in America, "dont l'histoire ne nous a laissé aucun souvenir exact, jusqu'à ce que l'Irlandais [*sic*] Eric-Upsi, consacré évêque régional des contrées américaines (1112-13), réussit à faire pénétrer la lumière de l'évangile chez les indigènes du continent. En 1121, il se rendit au Vinland et renonça à retourner au Groënland, pour se consacrer tout entier à l'évangélisation de ce nouveau pays. Son apostolat produisit des fruits abondants . . ." ⁴¹ By 1895 Jelič had apparently decided that the consecration of a new bishop for the Greenlanders was more likely to have followed from the death of the old one. He may also have realised that, given the theory that Eiríkr gave up his task in the whole field for which he had been consecrated in order to confine himself to a single remote community within it, then real chronology difficulty arose. If it was to be believed that the proper course was followed, then the bishop would have to send back word of his intention and his resignation ought properly to be accepted by some ecclesiastical superior — and all this had to be done quick enough to allow the Greenlanders to decide to ask for a new bishop already in the summer of 1123.

Jelič's description of Bishop Eiríkr must thus be counted a churchman's Latin translation⁴² of the nineteenth-century commonplace that he had the status of a missionary bishop and of the nineteenth-century speculation that he went to work in an American colony. In giving prominence to Jelič's stuff, Mr Skelton has introduced a fat red herring. The best we can say is that the legend on the map supports Jelič's inference about the mission field for which Eiríkr was consecrated — but of course we cannot be sure either that the title given him in the legend is not itself an inference.

There is very little we can feel we have learnt for certain from the legends on the Vínland map. We used to think we knew that the Icelander Eiríkr Gnúpsson was a missionary bishop active in Greenland who went to find Vínland in 1121. Now we know that he was maybe also a papal legate, but we do not know whether he went to find Vínland in 1117-18 or in 1121. It is however reported that he not only got there, wherever it was, but also returned to Greenland.

The novelties in the legend about Bishop Eiríkr are not sufficient

to show that his voyage played any part in providing the geographical knowledge on which the Vinland Map is ultimately based; neither can we believe that the contents of the legend are derived from a non-Icelandic tradition or source of any antiquity or authority. The map's background is surely to be sought in European contacts with Iceland from about 1400 onwards, and Bishop Jón Craxton is much more relevant than Bishop Eiríkr. The existence of some foreign knowledge of Icelandic traditions in the preliminary period of the great discoveries is now established; the importance of that knowledge in promoting and directing the sailings of the English, Spanish and Portuguese has yet to be weighed.⁴³

The inadequacies of Mr Skelton and Mr Painter in the bits concerning these brief legends may perhaps be partly due to the absurd secrecy that was imposed on them while they made their investigations. Yet it cannot be said either that they show much awareness of the possibility that their work might have been much improved if they had consulted Icelandic and Scandinavian philologists and historians, or if, better still, they had insisted from the start on the inclusion of such a scholar in the editorial panel.

NOTES

¹ On these points see *VM* (as the publication is henceforth referred to in the notes), 244-6, 248, 251; and the captions nos. 11 and 39, pp. 129, 133.

² I expand abbreviations in the Latin without signal.

³ It looks as though there are four minims between the *V* and *l* in this occurrence of the name, just as there are in the form in the next legend.

⁴ *Grænlandinga saga*, ch. 3.

⁵ *Eiríks saga rauða*, ch. 8.

⁶ *VM* 172-4. Even the influential descriptions (1424-c.1430) by the Dane Claudius Clavus gave Greenland connected to the European landmass, see *VM* 176-7. I miss here in the book any reference to the decretal from Pope Alexander III (1159-81) to the archbishop of Nidaros, in which the Pope says that messengers from the archbishop had brought him information about *insula quedam a (Nor)wegia per xii dietas et amplius (dist)an(s)posita*, where observance of the laws concerning marriage was causing difficulty. It has been conjectured that this must refer to Greenland or Vinland, and if that is so, the important thing to note in this connection is that the description of the country as *insula* appears to have come from the Norwegian side. On the decretal

and its interpretation see Odd Nordland, 'Øya med giftarmåls-vanskane', *Viking* XVII (1953), 87-107; Eirik Vandvik, *Latinske dokument til norsk historie* (1959), 64-7, 170-2.

⁷ VM 188-9, 195.

⁸ Cf. S. O. Nordberg, *Fornsvenskan i våra latinska originaldiplom före 1300* (1926), 16-17; Ivar Modéer, *Personnamn i Kalmar Tänkebok* (*Anthroponymica suecana* I, 1955), 120, 122-3; E. H. Lind, *Norsk-isländska Dopnamn* (1905-15), 136-7; G. Knudsen and M. Kristensen, *Danmarks gamle Personnavne* I (1936-48), 122-3.

⁹ Cf. J. Brøndum-Nielsen, *Gammeldansk Grammatik* I (2. udg., 1950), §§ 52, 176 Anm. 3 (it may be noted that the form shows no progressive palatal mutation, to *-iæ-*, usual in late medieval Danish other than the Jutland dialect, *ibid.* § 177). The only strictly (?) parallel form I have noted in VM is *Kyovia* (= Kiev) in the text of the *Tartar Relation*, VM 79.

¹⁰ J. Brøndum-Nielsen, *op. cit.*, §§ 172-3; *sten* and *-hed* may be germanised as *stein* and *-heid* (at least in writing) but this is hardly likely to account for Leiphus.

¹¹ Modéer, *op. cit.*, 125-6.

¹² There is no need to cite evidence for Iceland and Norway. On latinised patronymics, seldom used, in the Kalmar records see Modéer, *op. cit.*, 115-6; he notes elsewhere (p. 48 and cf. note 2 there) the presence of German names in his source which used the paternal name in apposition to the forename and not patronymics in *-son*, but this is not a native Swedish use. When it was decreed in 1526 that Danish noble families should take fixed names, 9 out of 75 adopted patronymic forms (in *-sen*), see P. Skautrup, *Det danske sprogs historie* II (1947), 261, cf. 262 (on latinised names); otherwise bourgeois families were acquiring family names by about 1700, but in the countryside they only became universal after 1856, see Skautrup, *op. cit.*, II (1947), 402-3; III (1953), 439-40. German names in *-sohn* (*-sen*) are chiefly found on the North Sea coasts; elsewhere the father's name in apposition or in a genitival form are usual, see A. Heintze and P. Cascorbi, *Die deutschen Familiennamen* (7. Auflage, 1933), 29-34, 37-9, 42, 82-95 (on distribution). It appears that surnames, including some patronymics, were well established in the south of England by the middle of the fourteenth century and elsewhere by the end of it; surnames in *-son* are said to begin to appear in Yorkshire c. 1380; see P. H. Reaney, *A Dictionary of British Surnames* (1958), xl-xlv. But it does not seem very likely that a *-son* termination would be misunderstood by a German or an Englishman in the fifteenth century. The earliest examples of *-sonius* in latinised

Icelandic names that I have found, though I have made only a hasty search, are from the first half of the seventeenth century and rare then, cf. Bjarni Jónsson, *Íslenzkiv Hafnarstúdentar* (1949), nos. 16, 26, 64 (Aresonius, Halsonius).

¹³ *VM* 141, 251.

¹⁴ Finnur Jónsson, *Landnámabók* (1900), 12¹⁷, 136²³. Icelandic quotations are normalised.

¹⁵ G. Storm, *Islandske annaler indtil 1578* (1888), 251; Guðbrandur Vigfússon and C. R. Unger, *Flateyjarbók* III (1868), 511; Storm, *op. cit.*, 19, 59, 112, 252, 320 (cf. note 3); *Flateyjarbók* III 512.

¹⁶ Storm, *op. cit.*, xxxviii. The sequence 1106-1113 in Lögmannsannáll is well established; two years are left blank and 1113 is firmly fixed by the entry *Sanctus Bernardus abbas monasterium intravit*. The matter and order are confused in *Flateyjarbók* (the St Bernard entry is for 1111) and the compiler seems to have spread out material to achieve an entry for every year.

¹⁷ Storm, *op. cit.*, xxxvii.

¹⁸ Guðbrandur Vigfússon in *Biskupa sögur* (gefnar út af hinu íslenzka Bókmentafélagi, 1858-78), I lxxxvii-xc; Storm, *op. cit.*, xxi; Magnús Már Lárusson in *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder* III (1958), 529-30; Hermann Pálsson, *Eftir Þjóðveldið* (1965), 32-41.

¹⁹ There was not much danger of confusion since the only other bishop named Eiríkr in the Norwegian-Icelandic sphere down to Einar's time was the well-known bishop and archbishop Eiríkr Ívarsson (Stavanger 1171-88, Nidaros 1189-1205).

²⁰ A. M. Reeves, *The Finding of Wineland the Good* (1890), 81, 80.

²¹ O. Kolsrud in *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* XVII B (1913), 280-81, 186-8.

²² *Rymbegla sive rudimentum computi ecclesiastici et annalis veterum Islandorum* . . . (1780), 320-21; also in *Diplomatarium Islandicum* III (1890-96), 308-9.

²³ *Rymbegla*, b2 (Ad lectorem); Kolsrud, *op. cit.*, 187 (B²).

²⁴ For references see Kolsrud, *op. cit.*, 186-7 (A, B, C); cf. texts in *DI* III 27, 24, 44-5.

²⁵ Or *Grænendinga þáttr*, as it is also called. The only medieval manuscript to contain this is *Flateyjarbók* from the end of the fourteenth century, although it is suggested that the tale was first written early in the thirteenth century, see Matthías Þórðarson in *Íslenzk fornrit* IV (1935), xci-xciv; Björn Sigfússon in *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder* V (1960), 523. — Mr

Skelton is totally in error when he writes that the see of Gardar was "established in 1124 as suffragan of the archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen". Arnaldr was consecrated by Archbishop Asger of Lund, and from then until the metropolitan see of Nidaros was established in 1153 Gardar belonged to the province of Lund. In fact, the claims of Hamburg-Bremen to supremacy in the north had no practical effect after the creation of Lund in 1103(4), not even in the years 1133-37 when its rights were temporarily restored by papal decree. See e.g. Jarl Gallén in *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder IX* (1964), 712.

²⁶ Storm, *op. cit.*, Navneregister, references under Helgi, Biskop i Grønland, and Ólafr, Biskop i Grønland.

²⁷ G. M. Gathorne-Hardy, *The Norse Discoverers of America* (1921), 152.

²⁸ *Eiríks saga rauða*, ch. 1, but the passage comes from *Landnámabók*, see Finnur Jónsson, *ed. cit.*, 36³⁴, 157¹⁷ (cf. 269⁹); the same phrase, *fór at leita Íslands*, is used a second time there to refer to her voyage after she had been in the Faroes, *ibid.* 37¹¹⁻¹², 157³¹⁻³² (cf. 269⁹). It is interesting to observe the phrasing in the *Grœnlendinga saga*, where the word *landaleitan* is used after Bjarni's sighting but before Leifr makes his voyage; after his successful exploration we find *Vinlandsfjör Leifs*, *Nú fýstisk Þorsteinn Eiríksson at fara til Vinlands*, *Vinlandsfjör*, *Vinlandsferð* (cf. *Íslensk fornrit IV* (1935), 248, 254, 257, 261, 264).

²⁹ Yet H. K. Mann, *Lives of the Popes VIII* (1910), 201-2, to whom Mr Painter refers, has the essential information from *Jóns saga* (see next note). It may be that Mr Painter was influenced by a remark, of somewhat similar import to his, made by R. Hennig, *Terrae incognitae II* (2. Auflage, 1950), 385. I am grateful to Professor Quinn for referring me to Hennig's essay in this book (pp. 384-95), 'Die Vinlandreise des Grönlandbischofs Eirik Gnuþsson'; cf. further note 41 below.

³⁰ *Íslendingabók*, ch. 10; *Hungrvaka*, ch. 6; *Kristnisaga*, ch. 16; fullest in *Jóns saga ens helga*, chs. 7-10 in the text from AM 234 fol. (*Biskupa sögur* (1858-78), I 158-62), chs. 19-22 in the text from Stock. perg. fol. nr. 5 (*ibid.*, I 231-5).

³¹ Mr Painter adds that the map's dating is also to be preferred because 1121 "can now be seen to be improbably late, leaving too little time for Eirík's lengthy sojourn in Vinland, his return to Greenland, the termination of his mission and his reporting to Europe, the Greenlanders' petition for a permanent bishop sent in 1123 . . ." This is to prejudice the issue, for only in the next paragraph he decides that the length of Eirík's stay in Vinland remains an open question. If he went and returned inside 1121,

the chronological difficulty is not decisive, even on Mr Painter's terms.

³² VM 248.

³³ Icelandic laws first recorded in the winter 1117-18; Þorlákr Rúnólfsson elected bishop in 1117 and consecrated in 1118 while Bishop Gizurr still alive; death of Bishop Gizurr on 28 May 1118; death in same year of Pope Pascal, King Baldwin of Jerusalem, Arnaldus (= Arnulf), patriarch of Jerusalem, Philippus king of the Swedes, and the Emperor Alexios I; terrible weather in Iceland both before and after the death of Gizurr; see *Íslendingabók*, ch. 10; *Hungrvaka*, chs. 7-8; *Kristnisaga*, chs. 17-18. The year 1121 was not entirely unremarkable either, in that Iceland's second national saint, Jón of Hólar, died then.

³⁴ One wonders what accounts for the odd word-order in *Henricus Gronelande regionumque finitimarum sedis apostolicae episcopus legatus*, where the *episcopus* ought to come somewhere else. But cf. Mr. Painter's explanation, VM 256.

³⁵ P. B. Gams, *Series Episcoporum Ecclesiae Catholicae* (1873), 334.

³⁶ R. Keyser, *Den norske Kirkes Historie under Katholicismen I* (1856), 157.

³⁷ *Compte rendu du Congrès scientifique . . . des Catholiques . . . 1891*, V^e section (1891), 170-84; *Compte rendu du Congrès scientifique des Catholiques . . . 1894*, V^e section (1895), 391-5; *Le Missioni francescane VIII* (1897), 556-60.

³⁸ Torfæus's list is in *Gronlandia antiqua* (1706), 241-56; the work by G. Gravier is *Découverte de l'Amérique par les Normands au x^e siècle* (1874).

³⁹ *Compte rendu . . .* (1891), 172, 173.

⁴⁰ Gravier, *op. cit.*, 165-7. The essentials of Rafn's theory are already in *Antiquitates americanæ* (1837), 452-3; also e.g. (in French) in *Mémoires de la Société royale des Antiquaires du Nord* (1836-9), 50; but it is much amplified in his 'Bemærkninger om en gammel bygning i Newport paa Rhode-island, Nordboernes Viinland', *Annaler for nordisk Oldkyndighed* 1840-41 (1841), 48-50, a translation of which is included in the second edition of his *Mémoire sur la découverte de l'Amérique au dixième siècle* (1843) — see pp. 49-52 for the relevant passage (Gravier cites both this and *Antiquitates americanæ*).

⁴¹ *Compte rendu . . .* (1891), 172. It was in effect only by inferring Eirík's status as "évêque régional des contrées américaines" that Jelič could get over the ecclesiastical enormity of his "renunciation". Hennig, after years of fruitless search for any documentary source that Jelič might have had, comes to

much the same conclusion, see *Terrae incognitae* II (2. Auflage, 1950), 390-91. Hennig was also worried by this statement which appears in Jelič's bishops' list (1895 and 1897): "A. 1119-1124 memoratur insula *Guarmelande de regno Suevorum*" — apparently taken by Jelič as a reference to Greenland. He refers in his note to "*Provinciale Callixti II*, Mss. Laurenziana, 1554, fol. 76v; cfr. Delisle, *Notices et extraits*, t. 32, p. 75", a reference Hennig had not been able to follow up. A look in *Notices et extraits* XXXII (1886), 75, shows that in this document from the time of Pope Callixtus II or soon after (*ibid.*, 72) there occurs, among others, a list headed *Nomina insularum de regno Suevorum* — which is in fact a list of Swedish provinces and *Guarmelande* is of course Värmland. — It may finally be observed that Hennig's own theory that Eiríkr can only have gone to Vinland because there was a colony there that formed part of his diocese depends essentially on the belief that his status in Greenland was that of a diocesan bishop — and this cannot be the case. Cf. Halldór Hermannsson's criticism in *The Problem of Wineland* (*Islandica* XXV, 1936), 76-7.

⁴² It may be noted too that *episcopus regionarius*, the title used by Jelič, appears to be a modernism.

⁴³ Björn Þorsteinsson comes to some bold conclusions in his 'Íslands- og Grænlandssiglingar Englendinga á 15. öld og fundur Norður-Ameríku', *Saga* V (1965), 3-72, but we should certainly profit from his complete familiarity with the fifteenth-century Icelandic background and sources.

BOOK REVIEWS

VIKING ART. By DAVID M. WILSON and OLE KLINDT-JENSEN. *George Allen and Unwin*, 1966. 160 pp. with 69 line drawings and 80 pp. of photogravure plates.

It seems rather rare for a book on art and archæology to deserve high praise both for its text and its illustrations. This one does for both text and illustrations show an unusual clarity and attention to detail which must help any reader to come to terms with an art often difficult of access. It is typically thoughtful that the line drawings of some of the more involved animals have been rotated through 90° to make comparison easier, and the book comes nearer than any other I know to being a substitute for actual acquaintance with the objects themselves.

It begins with a splendid condensed account of predecessors' views, and sets out its contention that the originality and continuity of Viking art has often been underestimated. The chapter is more than a *rechauffé* of previous work, and it is very valuable to have in English such a demonstration of the importance of the Valsgårde, Vendel and Borre material. Nor does the presentation become dogmatic; it is refreshing to find (p. 70) that "The methods of prehistoric archæology cannot set in chronological progression the products of a single man" — a valuable corrective to the view too often proclaimed that only archæology can reveal the truth.

The book treats the art of the whole Viking area, and produces a coherent and logical scheme of development to apply to its monuments; the application of this scheme to the Viking material in the British Isles leads to some interesting new judgements on quality and chronology. It is fair to conclude that the authors feel that the British material has in the past received attention disproportionate to its merit, and that they feel that the successive styles of all Viking art have been dated too late. This is a very sweeping summary of an argument set out with detail and delicacy, and as the picture presented fits most of the art and the best of the art, too much attention should not be given to the minor difficulties in the application of this new view to the British material. But one can agree with the authors that the influence on continental Scandinavian artists of those of the British Isles was much less than a previous generation of archæologists thought, without finding some of their analysis of particular pieces as convincing in the end as Shetelig's or

Kendrick's. It is the great strength of the book that its arguments are embodied in the specific discussion of particular pieces, and that it does not at all shirk comparison of them with previous interpretations. I am convinced by the authors that the attempts to base the Jellinge style entirely on an English art which had received an injection of Scandinavian taste must be abandoned, but I do not feel the same quality of conviction about the analysis which they substitute. In the discussion of Jellinge and Mammen styles (p. 96) the acanthus-like fronds "of Carolingian or Anglo-Saxon origin" are referred to only in parenthesis, and the main weight is put on references to Oseberg and Gokstad, where we find animals "with a similar stance, similar small head, double contour and all-embracing ribbon ornament". It seems to me that the interlace on the Oseberg sledge illustrated, whilst undeniably luxuriant, never in fact embraces the animal in a half-hitch as is the case in much British Jellinge; the interlace on the bed-head is nearer, but here the stance of the animal is quite different. In the later discussion of Mammen style (p. 123) a double spiral offshoot from the interlace which is found in the Isle of Man and at Levisham in North Yorkshire is derived from a tendril with scrolled ends found in Scandinavia. A multitude of closer parallels from earlier English art might be adduced. The Mammen style is dated (p. 133) from 950-1025 and these dates seem to me attractive for the continental material, acceptable for the Isle of Man material, and possible for Levisham if it stood alone. It does not stand alone, but is linked by this and other features with three other crosses at Sinnington and two at Middleton. If all this group were to be dated 950-1025 we should have to believe that the York Viking kingdom whilst it lived produced no art, and that our surviving material is the product of a later Anglo-Danish peasantry. This is almost to return to Collingwood's dates for the crosses, and it is particularly puzzling because this Middleton-Sinnington group is elsewhere (p. 104) dated 870-900. It may well be that I exaggerate the homogeneity of the group, and that its style links (general design, rhythmic curves, lacertine jaws penetrated by acanthus/vine scroll interlace) are signs of the continuity of a local tradition rather than contemporaneity. If this is so, then precise relation of evolutionary stages in different countries is of course suspect anyway.

One interesting question which the splendid detailed method of the book raises more than its more general predecessors is that of the nature of the communications between different parts of the Viking area and Scandinavia. Styles which in much previous

English writing have been considered mainly on too narrow a base of exclusively Danelaw material are discussed in *Viking Art* in a wider context of quite other examples, which makes the book exceptionally valuable for the traditionally-minded English reader. Sometimes I think, as a fairly parochial reader, that this goes rather too far; the idea that the backward-looking animal of some Borre and Gokstad ornament has anything to do with the Anglo-Saxon art, in which it was after all common enough, is rejected (though with characteristic fairness the authors indicate in a footnote (p. 91) that it is still held by Arbman and Hougen) and a brooch from Jelets, Voronez, Russia is produced as the most important cognate, in spite of the fact that there is no interlace round the animal. Whilst it is true that Viking culture was highly mobile and fairly homogeneous, I wonder whether there is not now some danger of enthusiasm for some aspects of the Viking communication system blinding us to the real difficulties of tenth-century travel? The very interesting discussion on p. 133 of the absence of Ringerike art from the Isle of Man is a case in point. Granting the lively contact between there and Norway which the authors mention, their conclusion on the dating of the preceding Mammen style is unexceptionable. But it is still possible to argue that if the Isle of Man was in really close contact with Norway it is curious that it should in the development of Ringerike lag behind other areas (e.g. Northern England) which at this date were not — particularly if this group of styles developed, as the authors urge, substantially from the D, E styles in Norway rather than from any Anglo-Saxon or Carolingian base. I think myself that we must accept the fact that in many ways the evolution of the art of the Viking settlements in the west was quite atypical of that in the homelands, with different change in the rate of change perhaps even leading sometimes to a different local succession of tastes. It may not be entirely irrelevant to point out that what was by many tests one of the most 'progressive' parts of the area turned in the eighteen-nineties from electricity to gas for street-lighting, so that it can show lamps converted from electricity to gas, setting a pretty problem for the style-historians of the future.

There are in *Viking Art* a couple of details which must give rise to doubt, but they are not such as to affect one's confidence in the authors' command of their most impressive range of material. The reference on p. 22 to the 'early ninth-century sculptures of East Yorkshire' is an example of the price we pay for calling the nine hundreds the tenth century, and the translation on p. 151 of the runic inscription does not make quite clear (as I think

would be preferable) that the man who is to read it is to be learned *in those runes that Balle carved* (and not necessarily any others — a salutary reminder of the particulate nature of the culture). These trifles apart the book seems to me to demand an unreserved welcome.

A. L. BINNS

THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS, ENGLAND, AND EUROPE 1035-1066. By STEN KÖRNER. *Bibliotheca Historica Lundensis* XIV. Lund, Gleerup, 1964. xii+303 pp.

Dr Körner's book is certainly among the most important of the recent publications about the Norman Conquest. To some extent the title is misleading. The book does not attempt to retell the story of the Conquest and its background. Instead it passes in review the theories of all who have written on the subject so far, and subjects them to detailed examination. There is hardly a pundit — Freeman, Stenton, Whitelock, Douglas — whose knuckles are not severely rapped in the process. This hardly makes for comfortable reading. The book's greatest defect is its lack of unity. We are presented with a series of reviews and special studies. The reader is left wondering about the purpose of some of these elaborate exercises, and what, in the end, has been achieved.

Occasionally the author is led down dangerous paths. One of the sources he investigates is the *Encomium Emmae*. He suggests that it is to be taken seriously. Its curious departures from the truth are explained by the suggestion that it is a piece of propaganda on Emma's part, designed to emphasise the rights of her son Hardacnut. The theory has much to recommend it, and it is not hard to imagine the Encomiast as Emma's mouthpiece. There is something very feminine about the book's obsession with certain selected facts, and the cavalier treatment of inconvenient ones. But none of this establishes it as a respectable source for eleventh-century history. Dr Körner stresses the statement in the *Encomium* that Hardacnut received Edward out of brotherly love. He suggests that Edward arrived in England uninvited and that he was unwelcome to his half-brother. The statement in the *Encomium*, and probably the whole book, is propaganda produced during the tense period after Edward's arrival. In support of this William of Malmesbury and Saxo Grammaticus are quoted. But William was writing over a generation after

the event, and his words hint at friendly feelings between Hardacnut and Edward. Saxo is the only chronicler to refer to actual hostility. But this author is notoriously unreliable, and it may be doubted whether writing about 1200 he had any accurate information about the politics of the English court 150 years earlier.

Dr Körner is perhaps most controversial in his treatment of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. He maintains that the four manuscripts of the *Chronicle* have a common source, which he calls the X annals, and that therefore the different versions cannot be used to confirm one another's statements. One is immediately reminded of the now discarded Q of the synoptic Gospels. I am not an Anglo-Saxon specialist and do not feel competent to judge Dr Körner's conclusions. I do however feel considerable misgivings about the critical method employed. When applied to medieval chronicles, independence and dependence are relative terms. In an age when originality was considered reprehensible, every historian used, if he could, older and approved works on which to base his own. If none were available he usually apologised with some such phrase as "I am informed of this by reliable witnesses". It is not difficult to show that there are many passages in the different versions of the *Chronicle* which resemble one another. This is demonstrated most painstakingly by Professor Whitelock, whose account of the C, D and E versions of the *Chronicle* for the years 1031-57, is considerably more complex than Dr Körner seems prepared to admit.¹ But a single common source will not explain the differences between the versions, nor their different political bias.

The same thing must be said of Dr Körner's criticism of the Norman sources. The Bayeux Tapestry's description of William's meal on landing in England, for instance, is explained in terms of William of Poitiers' story that the Conqueror's ship got ahead of the rest of the invasion fleet. To calm the fears of his followers, William calmly had a meal on the shore, whilst awaiting the rest of the army. "This is obviously the origin of the Tapestry's account" says Dr Körner. Not necessarily. The evidence that the Tapestry was produced within living memory of the events it depicts is good. In such a case the common source of a story may well be the event itself. We are here dealing with historical, not simply literary, material.

None of this takes away from the real value of this book. What

¹ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: a revised translation*. Ed. by D. Whitelock (1961), especially p. xviii for Professor Whitelock's comments on the entries for 1043, 1045 and 1047.

Dr Körner is saying, in fact, is that we know far less about the Norman Conquest and the events that led up to it than even the most careful scholars have led us to believe. The main sources present the historian with immense difficulties: the Chronicle because of the complexities of its different versions, the Norman writings because of their obvious bias. When every general statement made about the Conquest is examined with this in mind, the result is often startling. Dr Körner shows, for instance, how uncertain the evidence is for the generally accepted view that many Flemings and Bretons joined the invasion army of 1066. He shows the objections to even the most cautious conclusions about Harold Godwinson's journey abroad and alleged oath to Duke William, or about the papal prohibition of the marriage of William and Matilda. On every point he has much of value and interest to say. The final results are inevitably negative and depressing, but none the less salutary. The book casts a well-deserved shadow over the junketings of 1966.

PETER KING

KING HARALD'S SAGA. Translated by MAGNUS MAGNUSSON and HERMANN PÁLSSON. *Penguin Classics* I, 183, 1966. 192 pp.

King Harald's Saga is the third saga translation by Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson to appear. It is based on the text in *Íslensk Fornrit* XXVIII. In addition to the translation the volume contains a thirty-page introduction and there are historical and biographical footnotes, a good many of which appear to be based on those in the *Fornrit* edition. The standard of accuracy is high throughout and the English free of archaisms, clear and readable. The practice, adopted in the translation of *Njáls saga*, of relegating genealogies to special italicised footnotes has been continued, a feature which must commend itself to the general reader without seriously disturbing the specialist.

The book is, however, by no means free of defects. There are several rather clumsy expressions in the introduction (e.g., p. 13, "the sweep and range of its scope", p. 26, "the framework which he fleshed out with traditional accounts", p. 32, "one flashing glimpse", p. 36, "Harald had actually made an uprising against his nephew"), and to translate Snorri's words about Ari, *var hann forvitri* as "he was very understanding", seems to me unfortunate, though I am confounded by most English dictionaries.

After George Johnston's splendid close translation of *Gísla saga* Magnusson and Pálsson seem sometimes to depart unnecessarily from the original (e.g., p. 56, *Haraldr hafði sigr* "Harald got the upper hand", p. 57, *En er slíkt var borit inn um borgarhlíðit, þá skutu þeir niðr kistunni um þvert hlíðit borgarinnar fyrir hurðirnar* "When the Varangians reached the gates they set the coffin down right across the entry, jamming open the gates"). I do not think that the verb *kveða* in the sense of speaking or reciting a verse is best translated "compose" When we read *þá kvað Haraldr þetta*, we are probably right in inferring that Haraldr composed what follows, but this is not what the saga says. Occasionally the translators seem to underestimate the intelligence of their readers (e.g., p. 56, *Halldórr varð sárr mjök* "Halldor Snorrason was severely wounded in the fight"). Finally, comment ought to be made on the treatment of proper names. No claim is made to consistency in this matter (cf. *Njal's Saga*, *Penguin Classics* L 103, p. 33), and this is just as well. The varying forms in the introduction give a chaotic impression. There we find in the space of a few pages not only *Olaf*, *Njal*, *Sverrir*, *Harðráði*, but also *Annals of Oddi*, *Íslendinga Saga*, *Fagurskinna*, *Stiklestad*. In the translation itself there is the monstrosity "The Kjolen Mountains" (OI *Kjolv*, Norw. *Kjølen*) which reminds one of the Norwegian word for a dress. One must ask whether the consistent retention of Icelandic forms would really prove an insuperable barrier to the general reader. After all, Icelanders are not English and no sensible reader would expect them to have or use anglicised names. Whatever our views on the subject, it must surely be agreed that any kind of consistency is preferable to the higgledy-piggledy assortment of forms found in this volume.

MICHAEL BARNES

BRAND. By HENRIK IBSEN. Translated with an introduction by G. M. GATHORNE-HARDY. *Universitetsforlaget, Oslo, and George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1966.* 223 pp.

Dr Gathorne-Hardy's many friends and admirers will welcome the long-awaited appearance of this translation. As was expected, his version of *Brand* is marked by the qualities we have always associated with his distinguished work as a translator: faithfulness to the letter and spirit of the original, aptness, and poetic sensibility.

Brand is one of the supreme tests for the translator. Practically

every line demands a subtle process of *gjendikting* and adjustment within the overriding problems which Ibsen's verse-forms pose. One translator (William Wilson in 1891) simply avoided them by rendering *Brand* into prose, and more recent translations by J. Forsyth and M. Meyer can only very loosely be regarded as being in verse. Only C. H. Herford and F. E. Garret (both in 1894) have, to my knowledge, attempted to produce exactly the metrical and rhyming scheme of the original. Of these Herford's version is likely to remain unsurpassed as a translation for the reader because of its nobility and virtuosity.

Dr Gathorne-Hardy's intention was to produce a translation suitable for stage use. His solution of the metrical problem was to resort to the iambic pentameter; as he says, "the traditional form of English dramatic verse to which audiences and actors alike have become accustomed through its long survival down the centuries". Certainly, there seem to be many practical advantages in this procedure, and it is to be hoped that actors and producers will take to it. But one thing is certain: both university students and the general reader will owe an immense debt of gratitude to Dr Gathorne-Hardy for his readable, unabridged and inexpensive translation, which also includes the bonuses of a 28-page introduction and translated extracts from the *Epic Brand*.

Readers of the *Saga-Book* may wonder why this translation should be recommended reading for them. With *Brand*, Ibsen ceased to look for his heroes in the medieval North, but in creating the character of Brand he retained the heroic dimension. Gerhard Gran called nineteenth-century Norway a 'poetocracy'; and, just as the sagas of the early heroes of the North provided models for emulation, so did *Brand*. To quote Professor Castberg: ". . . it cannot be denied that *Brand* has presented an ideal of individualism, and that it condemned 'the spirit of compromise' in such a way that all subsequent Norwegian generations have had their ethical values coloured by it." As with earlier periods in the history of the North, to understand modern Norway one must know its literature.

RONALD G. POPPERWELL

PROFESSOR A. H. SMITH

1903-1967

PROFESSOR Hugh Smith, Honorary Life Member of the Society, died on 11 May 1967. He was born at Sowerby in the West Riding of Yorkshire on 24 February 1903. He read English at Leeds, where he graduated in 1924, and he took his Ph.D. there in 1926. He taught for two years at Saltley College, Birmingham, and was then for two years Lektor in English in the University of Uppsala. In 1930 he became Lecturer in University College London under R. W. Chambers; he was appointed Reader in 1935 and became a D.Lit. of the University of London in 1937. After distinguished wartime service in the R.A.F., 1940-45, he finally succeeded Chambers in the Quain chair in University College in 1949. From 1946 to 1963 he also acted as Director of Scandinavian Studies in the College. He was Director of the English Place-Names Survey from 1951 until his death.

He received many honours: O.B.E. (military), 1946; Knight of the Royal Order of the North Star (Sweden), 1954; Knight of the Order of the Falcon (Iceland), 1956; Knight, first-class, of the Royal Order of Dannebrog (Denmark), 1963. He became an honorary doctor of the University of Uppsala in 1962, of the University of Sheffield in 1963, and, posthumously, of the University of Liège in 1967. He was a Corresponding Member of the Medieval Academy of America and of the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters; he was a Member of Kungl. Gustav Adolfs Akademien för Folklivsforskning, Uppsala, and of Kungl. Vitterhets, Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, Stockholm, and a Foreign Member of Kgl. Danske Videnskaberne-Selskab. He was awarded the Sir Israel Gollancz Prize of the British Academy in 1965 (and gleefully spent the money on a greenhouse). In 1963 he received as

a sixtieth birthday present a volume of essays called *Early English and Norse Studies*, published by Methuen.

He was President of the Viking Society 1932-4 and 1956-8, and a Vice-President from 1934 until his death; he was Joint Honorary Secretary of the Society 1946-57. In 1963 he was elected one of the twelve Honorary Life Members of the Society.

His great work was in the study of English place-names, and he made massive contributions of permanent value to Northern Research in his ten volumes on the place-names of Yorkshire, published over the years from 1928 to 1963, and his two volumes on the place-names of Westmorland, published only a few weeks before he died. His *English Place-name Elements*, published in two volumes in 1956, is an indispensable reference-book. I shall not list all his other works, but note that he contributed these papers to the *Saga-Book*: 'Danes and Norwegians in Yorkshire', X (1928-9), 188-215; 'Early northern nicknames and surnames', XI (1929-36), 30-60; 'The sons of Ragnar Lothbrok', XI (1929-36), 173-91; 'The early literary relations of England and Scandinavia', XI (1929-36), 215-32. Mention must also be made of his share in the translation of *Heimskringla* which Erling Monsen put out in 1932. Hugh enjoyed Snorri. His favourite bits were the preliminaries to the battle of Hjörungavágr and the story of Þórarinn Nefjólfsen.

The Department of Scandinavian Studies in University College had led a rather precarious existence from the time of its foundation in 1918 until Hugh became its Director in 1946. He did all he could to defend its interests, consolidate its budget, and urge its expansion. One of his first moves, in 1947, was to get a post in Old Icelandic established in the Department. He gave zealous support to every effort to build up the Scandinavian and Icelandic collections in the College Library (which form, of course, our Society's Library), and the maintenance of those collections was certainly not neglected while he was

Chairman of the College's Library Committee, from 1950 until his death. With Sir Ifor Evans (now Lord Evans), then Provost of the College, he ensured the purchase in 1953 of the bulk of the collection of Mr Snæbjörn Jónsson of Reykjavík, which gave the College Library a splendid addition in the field of Northern Research and an excellent representative collection of modern Icelandic literature and history.

Doubtless the most significant period in Hugh's career, both for his own place-name work and for his influence on the progress of Northern Research among us, was the two years he spent in Uppsala, 1928-30. He found himself there among a group of young Swedish scholars who have since proved themselves an outstanding generation in English and Scandinavian philological, antiquarian and folklore studies. He made lasting friendships, and many of us who in our turn have made contact with these Swedish scholars, and with others in Denmark, Iceland and Norway, have done so through Hugh Smith, and if we have always found a warm and ready welcome from them, it is not least because of their affection for him and their respect for his work.

All friends of Northern Research must grieve Hugh Smith's loss, and we shall miss him especially in the Viking Society, for while we admired his devotion to scholarship and his achievements as a scholar, we also loved him for his generosity, his zest for fun, his simplicity and good humour, and for the delight he so plainly took in the good fellowship of our gatherings.

P.G.F.

THE VIKING SOCIETY 1892-1967*

By J. A. B. TOWNSEND

“ **A**T the annual meeting of the Orkney and Shetland Society of London held at 63 Chancery Lane W.C. on Thursday evening 5th May at 8 o'clock, Mr T. McKinnon Wood in the chair, the following resolution was carried unanimously: 'That a branch of the society be formed of a social and literary character with a separate secretary, treasurer, and a committee of 6 members responsible for the management and finances of the branch.' ”

Thus the Viking Society was born, as the “Social and Literary Branch of the Orkney and Shetland Society of London, or Viking Club”. By the following year (1893) the title had been inverted to read “Viking Club, or Orkney, Shetland and Northern Society”, and it was as the Viking Club that the Society was known until 1912, when it adopted its present style of Viking Society for Northern Research.

The twenty-seven members present at the meeting formed themselves into a preliminary gathering of the new branch, and elected the following committee:— Chairman, T. McKinnon Wood; Secretary, A. W. Johnston; Treasurer, J. R. L. Corrigan; Members, J. F. Watters, W. Inkster, I. Corsie, W. Muir, Jas. B. Smith and G. A. G. Robertson. It was agreed to hold monthly meetings, and the treasurer and secretary were instructed to draw up rules for the consideration of the committee at their next meeting. These were duly presented, on 27th May, by the secretary, A. W. Johnston, who described himself as a “student and writer on Orkney and Shetland history” and a “public supporter of their Udal Rights”. Johnston, who was born

* This is an abridged version of a typescript paper circulated among members of the Society in the New Year 1967. References to what was then the future and is now (October 1968) the past remain unchanged.

in 1859, and who lived to see the fiftieth anniversary of the Society in 1942, is generally recognised as the real founder of the Society. Certainly it was he who, in the Society's darkest days during the two world wars, carried it on virtually single-handed.

The resolution presented by Johnston contained four main points. He argued that the branch should be conducted along those lines that best accorded with the traditions and recollections of the "Old Rock"; that it should be distinctly Orcadian and Shetlandic in feeling and spirit ("an association of Orcadians and Shetlanders banded together in a distant land to keep up the recollection of their native land"); that the social object was the first and most important part of the work; and that the book of laws should be made as characteristic of Orkney and Shetland as possible by the introduction of the old names for officers and meetings.

The last point was probably the most controversial. Johnston argued that this would give some "go and originality to the whole affair". The council appear to have had reservations at first, but the secretary got his way, and the first Law-Book (June, 1892) provides a glossary for those members of the club not so well versed in the old terms. It is a relatively short glossary. Members discovered that they were "Udallers" and for their "Udal-Right" paid a "Skatt" to the "Great-Foud". For this, they were (presumably) sent a "Schynd-Bill" and their names entered in the "Udal-Book". They had the right to attend the "Things" monthly, or, annually, the "Al-Thing", as arranged by the "Law-Thing-Men" under the chairmanship of the "Jarl". By means of the "Stem-Rod" they were informed by the "Law-Man" of the date and venue of the next "Thing-Stead".

By the date of the publication of the second Law-Book (9th November, 1893), the glossary had grown alarmingly and now covered the first two pages of the book, seventy entries in all. (Members, significantly, were styled

“Vikings” and no longer “Udallers” — a symptom of the broadening of the scope of the Society, which is dealt with more fully below.) The full list makes fascinating reading today, but it is hard to see how any society, posturing under such quaint terms,¹ could ever hope to be taken very seriously by anyone except themselves. The terms ultimately fell into disuse, and today the only two remaining are “Saga-Book” for the Society’s journal, and “Law-Book” for its constitution. The Society can now be seen to be what it is, an international gathering of sociable scholars, both professional and lay, who, by their work both within and without the Society, have made significant contributions to “Northern Research” and helped create a climate favourable to the growth of Norse studies.

The original Law-Book, with its twelve short rules, was accepted by a general meeting of members on 1st June, 1892, and printed shortly afterwards. Meetings at this time were held in the King’s Weigh House Rooms, just off Oxford Street. Later meeting-places were to be the University of London (South Kensington), King’s College, Westfield College, Burlington House and, finally, University College. The first social and literary meeting of the club (a “Herat Foy”) was held on 13th October, 1892, when Mrs Jessica Saxby gave a paper on “Birds of Omen” (later printed as the first volume in the Society’s “Extra Series”). That was the literary side; the social side was provided by a certain Miss Broomfield, who played a piano solo, and by Miss Lumsden, who sang the “Kerry Dance”. Following the votes of thanks the meeting “adjourned to the tea rooms where a social party was kept up till a late hour”.

Further meetings were held on 3rd and 17th November, and 1st December, 1892, at which papers were read by

¹ The following are a few examples: *Frathi-Masters* Honorary Corresponding Members; *Herath Umboths-men* Honorary District Secretaries; *Jarl* President; *Law-Right-men* Councillors; *Ransell-men* Honorary Auditors; *Saga-Skati-Kist* Literary Fund; *Skatt-Taker* Honorary Treasurer; *Thing-Seat-man* Chairman; *Viking-Skald* Poet to the Club.

Edward Blain ("Some aspects of toleration in the closing years of the 19th century"), W. A. Clouston ("Norse tales and their Eastern analogues"), and T. M. Wood ("Robert Browning"). On the 16th December, members were entertained by a "Yule Foy", or grand concert, — about 150 being present. These "Yule-Foys" were to have been regular events, with further "Foys" in the spring-time, but they appear to have lapsed after only two years.

Meetings continued to be held regularly in 1893 (on 19th January, I. G. Moodie Heddle of Melsetter spoke "In praise of cockles" — through the mouth of A. W. Johnston, and William Inkster read a story — "Wur Laird i' the Sooth Country" — composed in the Orkney dialect by W. T. Dennison), but squalls were ahead, and trouble broke out at the first annual general meeting on 13th April. The fuss was over the new constitution proposed in the first annual report of the council. The minute-book is studiously vague over the whole thing ("Mr. J. F. Watters moved as an amendment that the new departure referred to be rejected"), and the protagonists themselves appeared to be none too sure either ("It was impossible for him to specify the exact words in the Report to which he objected"). The annual report itself, however, first printed in full in *Old-Lore Series* no. 73 (1943), makes it clear that the bone of contention was the proposal to broaden the scope of the club, to include "a general examination of the literature of the whole North, its sagas and its 'grand mythological system'". This, it was evidently feared, would cause its Orkney and Shetland identity to be completely submerged. The upshot of it all was that the annual report was adopted, but that the new constitution was rejected, after a "long and animated discussion", by 16 to 11 votes.

The troubled meeting was then adjourned until 20th April, for the election of officers, and the result was the election of a new council consisting of:— Sir R. G. C. Hamilton, President; G. A. G. Robertson, Secretary (beating

A. W. Johnston by 15-12 on a vote); J. R. L. Corrigall, Treasurer; J. F. Watters, U. R. Brown, A. Sinclair, J. Corsie, W. Inkster and W. Muir, Members. Johnston was proposed as a councillor, but refused the nomination, as did J. Ingram, H. A. Moodie Heddle and W. J. Balfour. Sir R. G. C. Hamilton later wrote declining the office of President, and Mrs Saxby also refused the office of Vice-President until "harmony prevailed again in the Society". The club was obviously in danger of disintegrating after barely one year's existence, but luckily for us today, wiser councils prevailed. At a meeting held on 15th June, the chairman, W. Watson Cheyne, called upon the members to "discuss the position of the club in a friendly manner with a view to a satisfactory settlement of the question [still deliberately vague] on which they were at variance" After a long discussion, a motion was carried "that a committee be appointed to consider the rules of the club; to draw up, print and circulate new rules and to call another Special General Meeting . . . for the consideration and confirmation by members of the new rules" The proposers of this motion, T. M. Wood and W. Sinclair, spoke of the obvious "unanimous desire to restore harmony among the members and to establish the club on as wide a basis as possible consistent with its essentially Orkney and Shetland character".

The net result of all these long arguments, debates and discussions was the Law-Book of 9th November, 1893, approved by a special meeting of members on that day. This was a much more ambitious affair than its predecessor. The twelve rules had now been expanded to sixty-five, and the modest five-page pamphlet of 1892 had grown to sixteen pages. The club, as mentioned above, was now to be known as the "Viking Club, or Orkney, Shetland and Northern Society" (in 1909 the sub-heading was altered to "Society for Northern Research", and the Orkneys and Shetland passed from the Society's title). Its aims were now to be achieved in eight ways, as follows:—

- (a) By holding social gatherings, concerts, re-unions, and such other kindred entertainments as may be decided upon.
- (b) By holding meetings for papers upon subjects connected with Northern history, literature, music, art, archaeology, language, folk-lore, anthropology and other matters.
- (c) By holding exhibitions of objects of Northern or other antiquarian interest.
- (d) By publishing the *Saga-Book*.
- (e) By encouraging the transcription and publication of original documents relating to Northern history and antiquities.
- (f) By the formation of a Library of books, MSS., maps, photographs, plans and drawings relating to Northern history and antiquities.
- (g) By corresponding and exchanging the *Saga-Book* with other societies.
- (h) By such other methods as the council might determine from time to time.

In the latest Law-Book (1954) the wording and arrangement are slightly changed, but otherwise the objects and methods of the Society are precisely the same now as then.

The Society, now at harmony once more, and with its council increased to twelve members, set to vigorously to achieve the objects so admirably expressed in the new Law-Book. Meetings continued to be held twice a month, with a summer break. William Morris was probably the most famous of those who took the chair at meetings, and an impressive list of speakers was maintained. During its first twenty-one years, the Society heard papers by such notable scholars as F. York Powell, Eiríkr Magnússon, W. G. Collingwood, P. M. C. Kermode, Hans Hildebrand, A. V. Storm, Sophus Bugge, Israel Gollancz, Allen Mawer, Alexander Bugge, G. T. Flom, Finnur Jónsson, Haakon Schetelig, Axel Olrik, W. P. Ker, A. W. Brøgger, Gudmund Schütte and Dame Bertha Phillpotts. By the outbreak of

the Great War, the Society was holding an average of six meetings per year, from November to May.

The social side was represented at first by the concerts, or "Foyes", mentioned above. These concerts, however, soon fell out of favour; the final regular one seems to have been held on 16th November, 1894, when a "long and elaborate programme was carried out without hitch". A concert arranged for 15th February of the next year does not seem to have been performed, and, save for the quite rare celebration of a special occasion, concerts disappear from the Society's regular repertoire. Instead, the social side was maintained by the annual dinner. The first recorded "Great Al-Thing Dinner" was held on 29th April, 1901, at the Florence Hotel, Rupert Street, accompanied by "an excellent musical entertainment", and the dinner has been held annually ever since, save for 1915 and 1916 and the period from the beginning of the Second World War until 1952.

Publication of the *Saga-Book* began in 1895, containing articles and reports of proceedings, and the journal continued to come out regularly once a year until 1914, by which time eight volumes had been completed. The war naturally disrupted publication, and the *Saga-Book* has never quite recaptured that even flow of publication since. In the first twenty-two years eight volumes were published; it took another fifty-two years to get the next eight out. Book reviews were included in the third volume of the *Saga-Book*, but were dropped from volumes VI to X, when they were transferred to the Society's *Year-Book* (which ran from 1909 to 1932). From volume XI they have continued to be a regular feature, and the journal today is a recognised forum for both original discussion and informed comment. What it may have possibly lost over the years in quantity, it has gained in quality. There is, regrettably perhaps, no room now for the dilettante, the wide-eyed traveller who wandered across Scandinavian lands, notebook (or sketch-book) in hand. Though quite ready to be unconventional,

the *Saga-Book* is now a thoroughly scholarly journal, and recognised as such throughout the world (as indeed its circulation to university and learned libraries must show). A glance through the index produced, in 1960, to volumes I-XIV (and now reissued with volumes XV and XVI covered as well) will demonstrate the quality and range of writing that it has attracted.

Another publishing venture was begun in 1907 with the inauguration of the *Orkney and Shetland Old-Lore Series*. The aim of this series was to "bring together materials for the history of Orkney and Shetland, as well as of the Norse race in the North of Scotland, from all available sources". Subscriptions were invited (10s 6d per annum, or five annual subscriptions, 50s; original annual subscribers paid only 7s 6d per annum, or 35s for five annual subscriptions). Publication was to be quarterly, and this rate was maintained until this series too became a victim of the Great War. From January 1907 until October 1915, 56 numbers (8 volumes) were issued; in 1919 and 1920, two only, both indexes; and from 1921 publication became sporadic, though most years saw at least one number. The Second World War finally finished the series off, and no. 75 (Vol. X, part 7), issued in 1946, saw the end of a brave and valuable venture. This was probably the last link with the old club to go, and it fell sadly close to the death of the founder, that great Orcadian, A. W. Johnston. In 1912 the series had 485 subscribers. These were included in the Society by an amendment to the Law-Book, members now receiving either the *Saga-Book* or the *Old-Lore Series* in return for their annual subscription of half a guinea. (90 of the subscribers to the *Old-Lore Series* were already members of the Society.)

The Society's library began humbly enough, and was housed at first with the secretary ("Members may have loan of books on payment of carriage"). It was built up steadily by means of gifts and exchanges, listed in the *Saga-Book* and *Year-Book*, since the Society had no funds

for the purchase of books. A catalogue was produced in 1907. It consists of 23 pages and lists some 350 items. As the library grew, it was obviously impractical to keep it where it was, and the Society began to negotiate for a permanent home for its collection. In 1915, the secretary was negotiating with the University of London, and at one stage it looked as if agreement had been reached. On 16th March, the librarian wrote that he was waiting for a new store-room to be built, when he would be able to find the space for the Society's books, and in the annual report for 1919, we read that "due notice will be issued as soon as the Library has been removed to the University of London". This is repeated in 1921 and 1922, but then all mention of the scheme is dropped, and in 1925 the library is still in the "temporary charge of Mr A. W. Johnston".

In 1927, it seemed that a permanent home had at last been found for the library, when it was moved to Westfield College. Its stay there, however, proved to be a short one, and, on 8th June, 1931, the council was informed that the College required the room in which the library was housed, and the Society was asked to "move its bookcases on Septbr. 14th and its books as soon after as possible" Alfred Johnston, however, was in correspondence with the Provost of University College, Dr Allen Mawer, and the result of this was an agreement between the Society and University College whereby the library was presented to the College, under certain conditions. The librarian undertook to house the library, be responsible for binding it, and give access to it to members of the Society. The Society, for its part, undertook to hand over all donations and bequests, and arrange for all exchange publications to be sent to the librarian. As part of the agreement too, the Society was allowed the free use of a room in College for its meetings. This arrangement has been of the greatest mutual benefit to the Society and to the College. Under skilful and professional management, and despite severe losses in the war, the library has grown in size and stature,

until today it must have good cause to be claimed the finest collection of its kind in this country. There has been much talk, since the publication of the first catalogue in 1907, of a second edition of the catalogue, but this always came to nothing. A short-title list is, however, at last under way.

The Society did not ignore the needs of Icelandic teaching. In 1914, a few months before the outbreak of the war, Dr Jón Stefánsson was proposing a course in Icelandic at King's College. This was agreed to by the College, and, on 4th March, he was formally appointed a lecturer in Icelandic at the College. His remuneration was to be the fees paid by the students — King's College students being allowed to attend at half-price. Three years later the Society was giving every available assistance to the newly-formed Committee for the Promotion of Scandinavian Studies, at University College, both by making the scheme known and by assisting it financially. Yet the greatest assistance the Society has ever given to the promotion of Scandinavian Studies was in the location of the Society's library in University College in 1931, as described above. That library has been a factor of vital importance in the development of the Department of Scandinavian Studies in the College, especially through the years since 1949 when the Department has been led by successive Honorary Secretaries of the Society, Professor Hugh Smith and Professor Peter Foote. The existence of the library and the College's connections with the Society have undoubtedly helped them to initiate and encourage early and medieval Northern studies in a way hardly possible elsewhere, and this augurs well not only for the future of the Department but also for the future of the Society.

Although meetings continued to be held at much the same frequency as before (seven in 1914; five in 1915 and 1916; seven in 1917 and 1918), yet the Great War hit the Society hard, as was only to be expected. This was reflected both in the slowing down of the rate of publication, and in a slump in membership. From over 700 in

1913 (466 Old-Lore subscribers), it fell to 472 in 1918 (359 Old-Lore subscribers) — it will be seen that the number of members who were not subscribers to the *Old-Lore Series* was just about halved. Membership was slow to pick up after the war, and a further slump occurred in the late 1920's, but, by 1936, Johnston could claim (in a letter to *The Times*) that it was recovering at a growth-rate of about ten per cent per annum.

The secretary managed to maintain an interesting programme through the war. Speakers included Haakon Schetelig, Dame Bertha Phillpotts, Just Bing and P. M. C. Kermodé. And, after the war, the Society continued to attract the leading scholars, and many well-known men of the time were associated with it. Presidents included Sir Henry Howorth, W. P. Ker, R. W. Chambers, R. F. Sharp and Hugh Smith. Professor T. N. Toller, Professor Sophus Müller, Professor H. M. Chadwick, Professor E. V. Gordon, Professor Allen Mawer and Sir Charles Oman were among the Honorary Vice-Presidents. Speakers included Professor A. W. Brøgger, Dr Edith Batho, Professor Birger Nerman, May Morris, and two men who were to become successive Directors of the British Museum, Sir Thomas Kendrick and Sir Frank Francis.

Unluckily, in 1932, a "ginnunga-gap" falls in the records of the Viking Society. The minute-books are missing for a twenty-year period and do not resume until 1952. The *Year-Book* ceased publication in the same year, and the *Saga-Book* does not contain the proceedings of the Society. Annual reports continued to be printed, and survive for the period from 1936 until 1945, with some gaps. These show that the Society continued up to the outbreak of war with an average of six meetings per year, but that during the war all formal meetings were suspended, save for the annual general meeting. Publication continued, exiguously. Thin parts of the *Saga-Book* appeared annually from 1940 to 1942, and in 1945; the *Old-Lore Series* came out in 1940, 1942 and 1943. The loss in membership

was not so drastic as in the Great War. It fell from 299 in 1939 to 225 in 1945.

The Society now usually meets three times a year (once in each term of the academic year), and it has adopted the pleasant habit, where possible, of holding its summer meeting outside London. Such meetings have been held, with great success, at Reading, Birmingham, Oxford, Cambridge, Bristol and York (in 1966 to celebrate the nonacentenary of the Battle of Stamford Bridge), and, this summer, the Society is going as far afield as Edinburgh. The establishment of a visiting Professorship of Scandinavian Studies at University College has given the Society an opportunity to hear leading scholars from abroad; in recent years we have, for example, welcomed Eyvind Fjell Halvorsen of Oslo, Christian Matras of Copenhagen and Tórshavn, Einar Ól. Sveinsson of Reykjavík, and, this year, Ludvig Holm-Olsen of Bergen. The Society, alas, has, along with everyone else in the post-war years, had its financial crises, one of which caused the raising of the annual subscription from one guinea to thirty shillings, in 1958. Even at this price, however, it has been a remarkable bargain.

A few words should be said of the publishing ventures of the Society other than those already mentioned. An "Extra Series" was begun in 1894, with the issuing of Jessica Saxby's inaugural address, "Birds of omen in Shetland", together with W. A. Clouston's "Notes on the folklore of the raven and owl". This was followed by Thorsteinn Erlingsson's "Ruins of the saga-time in Iceland" in 1899, and Knut Stjerna's "Essays on Beowulf" in 1912. The "Translation Series" produced two volumes: a translation of *Kormaks saga* by W. G. Collingwood and Jón Stefánsson ("The life and death of Cormac the skald"), in 1902, and Olive Bray's translation of the mythological poems of the Elder Edda, in 1908.

In 1936, Ernest Payne, who had been a member of the Society since 1914, provided, in his will, for a fund to be

given to the Society for the printing of "translations of sagas, or other literary works, for the benefit of the members of the Society". Two volumes have so far appeared in this, the "Payne Memorial Series". The first was "The life of Gudmund the Good, Bishop of Holar" by Gabriel Turville-Petre and E. S. Olszewska (1942); and the second, "The story of Rauð and his sons", by Joan Turville-Petre (1947).

Probably the most significant and successful series is the "Text Series", begun by the Society in 1953. The aim is to provide scholarly editions and aids for students, and the series is thus part of the wider educational work of the Society. Peter Foote and Randolph Quirk produced an edition of *Gunnlaugs saga ormsstungu* in 1953, and Gabriel Turville-Petre an edition of *Hervarar saga* in 1956 (with an introduction by Christopher Tolkien). And in 1958 the Society published Einar Ól. Sveinsson's monograph on "Dating the Icelandic sagas". An edition of two *þettir* by Anthony Faulkes will be published in the winter 1967-8, and other titles are in hand or in prospect.

During the past year, the Society has instituted two new departures. The first is a register of research being undertaken in the field of Northern Studies, based upon the replies to a questionnaire sent out to members. The second is the sponsoring of a colloquium of university teachers of Old Icelandic. This was first held at University College at the end of February 1966, and it is hoped that a second may be held in 1968. The value of such a colloquium lies as much in the informal contacts made between teachers as in the formal discussions, and our social and scholarly traditions are thus maintained. With 23 Universities and Colleges represented, some good must come of it.

The Society saw its majority in 1913, the year before the outbreak of the Great War, a time of uncertainty and doubt. Its silver jubilee was celebrated during the course of that war, in 1917, and, by an unlucky chance, its golden

jubilee fell during the Second World War, in 1942. This year, it reaches its 75th year, vigorous and in good heart. Our celebrations will include a special annual dinner, deferred from last autumn, at which the guest of honour will be the Rt. Hon. Jo Grimond, M.P. for the Orkneys and Shetland. Thus we come full circle, as we fittingly recall the beginnings of the Society in those northern isles. Certainly we have come a long way in our seventy-five years, and we can look forward with renewed confidence to the centenary in 1992. Scandinavian Studies too have come a long way in that time, and the interest in them, both professional and lay, is reflected in the increasing number of "Viking" books, both scholarly and glossy, that now appear on publishers' lists. It is indeed a far cry from the days when Bernard Quaritch lamented, in a letter to the then secretary of the Viking Society, Albany F. Major, that the "interest in Scandinavian Literature is painfully weak"! The Society has played its part in bringing about the change.

THE NORSEMEN IN ST. KILDA

By A. B. TAYLOR

(Presidential address, 7 June, 1968)

I Introductory

THE St. Kilda group of islands lies 40 miles west of North Uist. It consists of one large island, St. Kilda or Hirta, three smaller islands called Boreray, Soay and Dun, five very tall stacks of rock, and numerous skerries. The circumference of the main island is nine miles. It contains five steep hills, and breath-taking cliffs surround a large part of it and rise at the highest to nearly 1,400 feet, the highest in the British Isles. The only beach suitable for landing — and that only in good weather — is in the wide circle of Village Bay (see Plate I), which gives shelter from all directions except the south-east.

St. Kilda appears to have been inhabited for over a great part of the Christian era, and its last native inhabitants, 36 in number and a dozen of them still alive today, were evacuated in 1930 by the Department of Health for Scotland under the instructions of the government of the day.

The group now belongs to the National Trust for Scotland, who have leased the main island to the Nature Conservancy.

Some valuable survey work has been done in recent years by Kenneth Williamson and J. Morton Boyd on the earliest building structures on the islands. The present paper deals with the period 800-1266, from the time when Norse settlers began to appear in the British Isles to the year when the Western Isles were ceded by Norway to Scotland. The purpose of the paper is to bring together all the information I have been able to find connecting the Norsemen with St. Kilda, and to see what it tells us. Some

of the evidence has already been published and some of it is new.¹

The islands appear in Scottish topographical writings from John of Fordun in the fourteenth century and onwards. There is a vast St. Kilda literature.² The sources quoted most frequently here are two: First is Martin Martin's *A Late Voyage to St. Kilda*, London, 1698. Martin was a gentleman of the Isle of Skye, and his writings on the Western Isles may have had some influence in inducing Dr Johnson to make his famous journey to them. The second is the Rev. Kenneth Macaulay's *The History of St. Kilda*, London, 1764. Macaulay was the minister of Ardnamurchan and was sent to St. Kilda as a missionary by the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge.³

I also use the map prepared by J. Mathieson and A. M. Cockburn and published by the Ordnance Survey in 1928. (This map is at present under revision.) There is a plan of Village Bay in Fig. 1.

I may say that I have not visited St. Kilda, but I have seen it from the plane flying from Benbecula to Stornoway. Its remote grandeur under the dark cloud that hid its highest peaks was unforgettably impressive.

St. Kilda may seem a very uninviting place to settle in. It is remote. Landing is difficult and often dangerous. The climate is harsh, with fierce winds and a penetrating dampness in the air over much of the year. But there is a fine growth of bright green pasture in summer on Hirta, Soay and Boreray, and some arable ground in Village Bay. And there are the great cliffs. Sheep, oatmeal and sea-birds provided a subsistence for a substantial population for a long period within historic times.

¹ K. Williamson, 'Ancient St. Kilda', *Scottish Field* (March 1958), 46-9. K. Williamson and J. Morton Boyd, *St. Kilda Summer* (1960); *A Mosaic of Islands* (1963). For a geographer's survey of its characteristics and occupation see D. R. Macgregor, 'The Island of St. Kilda', *Scottish Studies* IV (1960), 1-48. Reference is also made to Alf Sommerfelt, 'Norse-Gaelic Contacts', *Norsk Tidsskrift for Sprogvidenskap* XVI (1952), 226-36, 375-6.

² Williamson (1960), 208-16 has a convenient general bibliography and a useful small-scale map.

³ Cited as Martin and Macaulay. The most convenient edition of Martin is included in M. Martin, *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland*, ed. D. J. Macleod (1934).

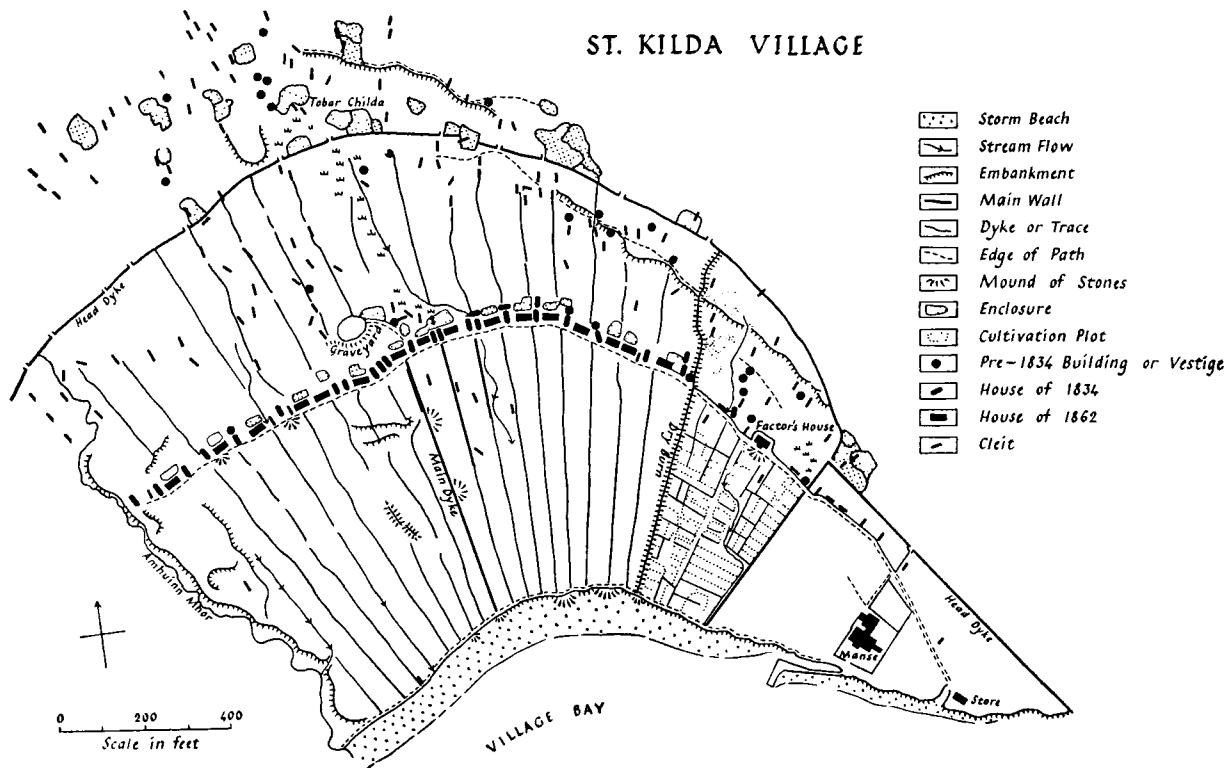


Fig. 1. St. Kilda Village, showing buildings, fields, dykes, well and landing place. Reproduced with permission from *Scottish Studies IV* (1960).



Plate I. Village Bay, St. Kilda, from the north, showing village street and head dyke.
Reproduced with permission from *Scottish Studies* IV (1960).

II *Hirt*

In his little volume of 1698, Martin wrote: "This isle is by the inhabitants called *Hirt*, and likewise by all the Western Islanders; Buchanan calls it *Hirta*."⁴

The Gaelic name is *Hirt* to this day. In Lewis it is pronounced [hirʃtj]. John MacDiarmid, a visitor to the island, recorded the sibilant before the *t* in 1877: "the towering cliffs of Hirst (the Gaelic name for St. Kilda)."⁵

The name has a long history, and I give early forms of it in Appendix A.

The earliest are *Heryte*, *Hyrte* and *Hert* in three charters of 1372-73 confirming a grant of the islands and other lands by John Lord of the Isles to his son Reginald. In the same century, John of Fordun refers to "the island of *Hirth* of all islands the strongest". The first, and indeed the only, map in which the islands have the Gaelic name is a late sixteenth-century chart of Scotland in BM Additional MS 37024, the form being *Hyrth*.⁶

Someone invented a Latin form *Hirtha*. This appears first in Hector Boece's *Scotorum Historiæ* of 1526 — applied, however, to a large island lying north of Lewis. A second Latin form *Hirta* appears in Donald Monro's *Description of the Western Isles* of 1549 and in George Buchanan's *Rerum Scoticarum Historia* of 1582. *Hirta* has subsequently become the secondary "English" name for the main island. It occurs, for example, in the Ordnance Survey map in 1928, which is entitled: "Map of St. Kilda or *Hirta* and adjacent islands and Stacs".

Various fanciful attempts at etymology were made from the sixteenth century onwards. But in 1922 Alexander Macbain wrote: "In ancient Gaelic *irt* signifies 'death', and possibly the island received its name from its remote western position, for the Celts connected the West with the abode of the dead." W. J. Watson (1926) took the same

⁴ Martin (ed. 1934), 409.

⁵ *St. Kilda and its Inhabitants* (Highland and Agricultural Society, 1877), 4.

⁶ Chart reproduced in *Scot. Geog. Magazine* LXXVII (1961), 40.

view, adding that the name was still more likely to be given "with reference to the manifold hardships and dangers connected with landing and living in this remote Isle".⁷ Spellings without the initial *H*- do in fact occur twice in the fifteenth and the sixteenth century; see Appendix A. From a distance the islands do in fact look awesome, grim and forbidding in the extreme. But I seriously doubt whether any island is likely to have been given a name which meant simply 'death'.

This doubt is shared by Professor Kenneth Jackson, who has been good enough to write to me about the name. He informs me that the Celtic word *irt* or *hirt*, which appears in Cormac's *Irish Glossary* c. 900, must have been a rare word and possibly an obsolete one in Cormac's own time; and he regards the meaning as far from certain. He also reminds us that no Irish or Scottish Gaelic word began with an organic *h*, although it appeared occasionally in early writings under the influence of Latin as an orthographic indication of a vowel to follow, and it also occurs in loan-words.

In view of all this, it would appear that *Hirt* is not a native Celtic place-name at all.

III Icelanders at Hirtir, 1202

An Icelandic saga tells of a perilous voyage from Iceland to Ireland in 1202 in the course of which the ship arrives at "the islands that are called *Hirtir*".

The story must be told a little more fully.

Guðmundr Arason (1161-1237) was brought up in Eyjafjörðr in the north of Iceland. He was of good family, courageous and devout. He was elected Bishop of Hólar towards the end of 1201. It was customary for a bishop-elect to go to Norway as soon as possible to be consecrated by the Archbishop of Nidaros. For Guðmundr the voyage was unexpectedly adventurous. Along with Hrafn

⁷ A. Macbain, *Place Names of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (1922), 73. W. J. Watson, *Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* (1926), 97.

Sveinbjarnarson and others he set sail from home in July 1202 along the north coast of Iceland, meaning to round Langanes and so set a course for Norway. But they were driven back twice and in the end decided to sail round Iceland in the opposite direction — by the west and south coasts. This they attempted to do, but they were driven southwards, passing the Outer Hebrides on the west side, and ultimately finding themselves off the coast of Ireland. They then struggled back north between the mainland of Scotland and the Outer Hebrides, rounded Cape Wrath, and at last made land in Norway near their destination. Guðmundr was consecrated by Archbishop Eiríkr in April 1203 and soon afterwards returned to Iceland to his see at Hólar.

The above is a summary of a much longer narrative spread over two sources:

(a) *Prests saga Guðmundar Arasonar*, written before 1249 and possibly as early as 1214-18, but not surviving as a separate work.⁸

(b) *Hrafns saga Sveinbjarnarsonar*, written perhaps 1230-40.

Hrafns saga is brief about the voyage south, but fuller and more detailed than *Prests saga* about the voyage north. The reference to *Hirtir* appears in *Prests saga* only — or at any rate in the three surviving versions of it — and in identical terms. I give a translation of the narrative of the voyage from the west coast of Iceland to the Irish coast from the version of *Prests saga* found in *Sturlunga saga*:

On the next day the Bishop-elect gave counsel: "It would be my advice to hoist sail, and sail west round the coast, because the north-east winds keep blowing and it is impossible to go round the land by the north."

This advice was taken. They sailed west round the coast, and so past Vestfirðir and south by Snæfellsnes, and so south by Reykjanes, then past Eyjafjöll. Then the north-east wind blew and they were driven south into the open sea. And they found they were at *Sudreyjar* [the Hebrides] and they recognised them, and they have come to the islands that are called *Hirtir*.

⁸ For the earlier dating see Jón Jóhannesson, *Skírnir* CXXVI (1952), 92-3.

Then they bore south into *Írlandshaf* [the Irish Sea], and south along the coast of Ireland, and had stormy weather and heard the breaking of surf on all sides of them.⁹

Is this voyage historical? There is nothing inherently improbable about it. The two accounts were written within the lifetimes of many of those who were in the ship. The voyage north in *Hrafns saga* is interspersed with contemporary verses composed to commemorate it. These verses record the place names *Staurr* for Ru Stoer Assynt; *Sandey* for Handa Island; and *Hvarf* for Cape Wrath. If places like these on the voyage north are referred to — and accurately — there is every reason to assume that *Hirtir* on the west side of the *Sudreyjar* refers to a real place also. And there is no more conspicuous place there than St. Kilda.

One can picture what might have happened as the ship drives southward. Land is seen on the port bow, and a course is set to avoid it. Someone, perhaps a migrant from the Hebrides, recognises the coast of Lewis and the distant hills of Harris. He advises shelter in what is now called Village Bay in *Hirtir*. They “come to *Hirtir*” and round the headland into the Bay. But the Bay, although sheltered from a north wind coming over the sea, may become dangerous without much warning from a landward gale resulting from a down-draught from the slopes of the highest hill, called Conachair. Because of this, or for some other reason, they leave the Bay and drive on southward to the Irish coast.

The saga narrative and the similarity of *Hirtir* to the

⁹ From *Prests saga Guðmundar Góða*, in *Sturlunga saga*, ed. Jón Jóhannesson and others (1946), I 159, lines 12-22. The other versions are in *Guðmundar saga* in AM 399 4to printed in *Biskupa sögur* (1858-78), I 483; and in AM 657 C 4to, fol. 31, lines 3-8 (unprinted). I am grateful to Miss Agnete Loth for a photostat of the relevant sections of that latter manuscript. There are no differences of substance in the three versions, except that the version in *Sturlunga saga* contains, after the reference to *Hirtir*, a sentence: “There they learned of the death of King Sverrir.” This sentence does not occur in the two other versions. Since the king died in March and it was now summer, it is unlikely that the news of his death reached the remote island of St. Kilda so soon. In any event, one of the verses of Grímr Hjaltason says that Guðmundr heard of the death of the king at Edø near Nidaros (*Biskupa sögur*, I 485). The sentence has accordingly been omitted from my translation.

early forms of *Hirt* seem to me to provide good evidence for equating the two names.

Unlike *Hirt*, *Hirtir* has an intelligible significance. It is the plural of *hjørtr*, 'a stag'. I suggest that "Stags" is a very suitable name for a seaman, on approaching the islands, to give to their jagged outlines, thrusting, as it were, against waves and winds.

After writing the above sentence, I encountered the following similar impression of the islands in words written by James Fisher in 1951:

In the morning twilight the islands hove up more than twenty miles ahead. I watched, for hours, the rocks and stacks slowly get bigger, and change their relative positions. They looked like huge and terrible animals, watching each other.¹⁰

Disappointingly, my inquiries have revealed no parallel name for any group of islands in Norway. There are five Norwegian rivers named from the singular *hjørtr*, but this is of limited significance. It is of more interest that *Lexicon Poeticum* gives four or five kennings using *hjørtr* in the sense of 'ship'. Animal names are also not uncommon for coastal topographical features.¹¹

It would seem, therefore, that the Gaelic name is borrowed from the old Norse and not the reverse. The early Scottish forms are consistent with this. They do not, it is true, have the ending *-ir*. But they have endings (*-e* or *-h* after the *t*) which are perhaps vestigial and suggest that Gaelic speakers gave some form of vocalisation to the old Norse ending.

It should be added that, as a plural, *Hirtir* must have been applied to the whole group — probably by Norse-speaking inhabitants of Harris or North Uist.

To sum up on the saga narrative, the St. Kilda group was called *Hirtir* and was known to seafarers as a shelter from a north wind by the year 1202; and an Icelandic ship took shelter therein that year. The saga narrative, however, does not of itself prove Norse settlement.

¹⁰ In *Portraits of Islands*, ed. E. Molony (1951), 28.

¹¹ O. Rygh, *Norske Elvenavne* (1904), 115. P. Hovda, *Norske Fiskeméd* (1961), 286.

IV Place-names in the islands

The first study of Norse place-names in St. Kilda as evidence of settlement was made by Captain F. W. L. Thomas — in a footnote — in 1876, and several writers have since commented upon a few individual names.¹² The field of study comprises about 200 topographical names — Gaelic, Norse or English — recorded in the O.S. map of 1928, together with half-a-dozen field-names recorded by Macaulay in 1764.

The topographical names may conveniently be dealt with first. For their form we have to depend for the most part upon the O.S. map which, like other O.S. maps of the Highlands and Islands, renders minor names into Gaelic orthography even if they are not of Gaelic origin. In a few instances, earlier and better forms have been found in preceding maps and writings, and account has been taken of these.

The great majority of the topographical names are Gaelic compounds consisting of a generic element followed by a defining element. Sometimes both the elements are Gaelic: *Mullach mór*, 'big top'. Sometimes the generic element is a loanword from Old Norse: *Geò nan Ròn*, 'the cove of the seals'; *Sgeir mhór*, 'big skerry'. Occasionally it is the defining term that is the loanword: *Beul na Geò*, 'mouth of the cove'. Occasionally both elements are loanwords: *Geò nan Scarbh*, 'cove of the cormorants'.

These hybrid compounds do not necessarily offer proof of Norse settlement in St. Kilda because they belong to the common stock of place-names in the north-west of Scotland. I propose, therefore, to leave these names aside altogether, along with several names of obscure origin. I shall concentrate on the names that are clearly Norse — with respect to their individual elements and with respect to the manner in which the elements are combined. The

¹² PSAS XI (1876), 472. Also J. Mathieson, PSAS LXII (1928), 131; G. Henderson, *Norse Influence on Celtic Scotland* (1910), 182-4; Macbain, 79; Macgregor, 21; Sommerfelt, 229-30, 375.

ordinary Norse method of compound name formation was by means of a generic term *preceded* by a defining term, and this method marks off native Norse names from Gaelic ones. By this criterion there are rather over a score of Norse names that can be clearly identified. They are listed in Table I, fuller notes being given in Appendix B.

The list of names is not a long one, but several inferences can be made from them.

Doublets. Several of the names — seven of them — are combined as defining elements with a preceding Gaelic generic term. With one exception (Rubha Bhrengadal) these are doublets of the *River Esk* type. Tobar Childa Chalda means 'Well of the cold well'. Gob Scapanish means 'Point of the point of caves'. New settlers have taken over a place-name that they did not understand. This is clear evidence of a Norse-speaking settlement preceding a Gaelic-speaking one.

Distribution. The geographical distribution of the Norse names is slightly uneven. On Hirta there are over a hundred names, and the features with clearly Norse names are only four hills, one well, two streams and two stacks. On Soay there is the name Soay and three coastal names; on Dun, three coastal names; but on Boreray the name Boreray and seven, or one-third, of the coastal names. There are, proportionately, more Norse names on Boreray than on Hirta or Soay, although of course the total number of names, Norse and Gaelic, on Boreray is small — 18 coastal names and 7 inland names, a total of 25.

Oiseval, 'Eastern hill', is a crucial name, for it lies east of the village, and this means that there was a Norse settlement in or near the site of the present village.

The spread of the Norse names on Hirta suggests that there may well have been more, possibly many more. One would have expected the three highest hills — Conachair, Mullach Mor, and Mullach Bi — to have Norse names like the lower hills of Oiseval, Ruaival and Scal, and it seems reasonable to assume that they once did. The presence of

TABLE I

Norse Place-names on St. Kilda

| <i>O.S. map form</i> | <i>Probable Norse name</i> | <i>Meaning</i> |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| <i>Hirta</i> | | |
| Ruaival | Rauða-fjall | Red hill |
| Oiseval | Eystra-fjall | Eastern hill |
| [Mullach] Sgar, for Sgal | Skalli | Bare top |
| Cambir, The | Kambr | Crest or ridge |
| Bradastac | Bratti-stakkr | Steep stack |
| Mina Stac | Minni-stakkr | Lesser stack |
| [Tobar] Childa | Kelda kalda, or Chalda | Cold well |
| [Abhainn] Gleshgil | Gles-gil | Shining stream |
| [Abhainn] Ilishgil | Íls-gil | Stream of the spring |
| <i>Soay</i> | | |
| Soay | Sauða-ey | Island of sheep |
| Glamisgeo | ? Gláms-gjá | Cove of Glámr |
| Scarpalin | ? Skarpa-hlein | Sharp projecting rock |
| Lianish | ? Hlíðar-nes | Ness of the slope |
| <i>Dun</i> | | |
| Giasgeir | Gjár-skær | Skerry of the cove |
| [Geò] Ghiasgeir | ditto | ditto |
| Seilg Geò | Sela-gjá | Cove of the seals |
| <i>Boreray</i> | | |
| Boreray | Borgar-ey | Island of the fortified place |
| Scarbhstac | Skarfa-stakkr | Stack of the cormorants |
| [Gob] Scapanish | Skalpa-nes | Ness of the caves or hollow places |
| [Rubha] Bhrengadal | Bringu-dalr | Dale of the breast or of the grassy slope |
| Coinneag | ? Konu-vík | Bay of the woman |
| Sunadal | . . . -dalr | Dale of . . . |
| Udraclete | Ytri-klettr | Outer cliff |
| Clesgor | Klifs-skör | Rift in the cliff |

doublets and the probable loss of many Norse names on Hirta suggests that a Norse-speaking community was replaced by a Gaelic-speaking one over a period of time. The presence of these coastal names on Boreray suggests that one or two Norse-speakers may have continued for some time to visit the island from Hirta to catch birds or shear sheep along with Gaelic-speaking neighbours who learned the names of the headlands and inlets from them. One of the landing places, for example, seems to have a Norse name — *Konu-vik*, 'the bay of the woman'

Parallels. One naturally looks for parallels to these names in other western islands, and most of the elements in them are in fact found there. This suggests that the Norse settlers came from these islands. One can perhaps go further and be a little more precise. A search in the index archive of the Place-Name Survey at the School of Scottish Studies has shown that four names have parallels in Harris and there only: Oiseval (22/1199); Loch a'Sgail (13/1308), cf. Mullach Sgal; Udraclete (22/1600); and Seilg Geò (22/1098). This points to a not improbable conclusion that the settlers came from Harris, from the hills of which St. Kilda is most clearly visible. But one must add a caution that the archive is based upon the one-inch O.S. Map only.

Date. Finally, these topographical names do not, to my knowledge, give any information about the date of the settlement. Other students of place-names may have observations to offer on this point.

The *field-names*, as has been said, are six in number and are first recorded by Macaulay. He gives a long account of them in an endeavour to explain how they might be derived from Latin and English, and I quote only the sentences which give the basic factual information that he supplies:

All the arable land is divided out into a great many unequal plots, and every one of these is in a manner inclosed and kept invariably within the same bounds, by the help of the stones just

now referred to: These are the boundaries . . . The names of the several divisions into which the land has been parcelled out, have been transmitted from one generation to another. These sound very strangely, and are not, it is plain, originally Gallic. For this reason there is not any one among the St. Kildans who will pretend to explain the meaning of them . . . Among the best of these are the division called *Multum agria*, *Multum taurus*, *Multum favere*, or *Multum fodere*, *Queen o Scot*, *Land dotteros*, or the *Doctor's ground*, *Lan-phalin*, or *Paul's division*.¹³

Sommerfelt regarded these names as of Norse origin, and gave etymological suggestions of his own and of C. J. S. Marstrander.¹⁴ I quote these suggestions in Table II without comment, and add some further suggestions of my own.

TABLE II

Field Names on Hirta

Multum agria

- (a) ON *mold* 'earth-mould', and ON *akri* (dat.) 'Tilled ground' (Sommerfelt).
 (b) ON *moldu magru* (dat.); *magr*, 'barren' (Marstrander).

Multum taurus

ON *moldu þurru* (dat.); *þurr*, 'dry' (Marstrander).

Multum favere or fodere

ON *moldu fagru*, *fögru* (dat.); *fagr*, 'fair' (Marstrander).

Queen o Scot

The first two words appear to be ON *kvín á*, 'enclosure at . . .' as in a number of farm-names in Orkney beginning *Queena-*, for which see H. Marwick, *Orkney Farm-Names* (1952). *Scot* remains obscure. It can hardly mean 'a Scot', and ON *skot* does not seem to help. (A.B.T.)

Land dotteros

ON *land*, 'land'. *Dotteros* can have no connection with 'doctor'. Derivation from ON *dóttir*, gen. *dóttur*, 'daughter' seems improbable, but this should not be excluded, for there is a possibility of a gen. in *-s*. There is evidence of a gen. *móðurs* as

¹³ Macaulay, 30-33.

¹⁴ Sommerfelt, 375-6.

a variant of the normal gen. *móður* in Middle Norwegian (A. Noreen, *Altisländische und Altnorwegische Grammatik* (1923), §421 Anm.) This would give a hypothetical form *Dótturs-land* (A.B.T.).

Lan-Phalin

Perhaps originally ON *Páls-land*, 'Paul's land' (A.B.T.).

Whatever the precise interpretations of these names, they are clearly Norse.

These fields, it is interesting to find, can be located with some degree of accuracy. Macaulay says at the point quoted above that all the cultivated land lay around the village of his own time. A few pages later he says that the village, consisting of two rows of houses, lay a quarter of a mile from the bay.¹⁵ Macgregor has discussed very fully the probable site it occupied. Without the advantage of excavation, but making use of the vestiges of buildings and paths, he places it on the slope above the present village street and on a line between Tobar Childa Chalda and the ruins of the Factor's House at the east end of this street.¹⁶ The mid-point of this line is about one-quarter of a mile from the landing rock in the bay. Not far from here the Norsemen's fields must have lain.

V A "wheelhouse" on Boreray

Boreray lies about four miles north-east of Hirta. It is about a mile and a quarter from north to south, and about half that distance across. The surface slopes upwards from the east to the west, where there are cliffs up to 1,200 feet. The grass on the slopes offers good grazing for sheep. Boreray, as has been said, is 'the island of the fortified place', and the only structure which answers to this description on the island is one high up on the western cliffs which resembles an early "wheelhouse". Wheelhouses survive in various parts of the Hebrides and at Jarlshof in

¹⁵ Macaulay, 42.

¹⁶ Macgregor, 24-7.

Shetland. They are beehive structures of dry stone, split up into sectors by walls set like spokes of a wheel. These walls stop short of the centre, leaving a space in the middle for a hearth.

According to Sir Lindsay Scott, they were first built in the Western Isles by Gallo-British settlers about the first century of the Christian era,¹⁷ but no date can be given to the Boreray structure. It was known to St. Kildans as *Tigh an Stallair*. Martin translated this Gaelic name as "Stallir's House".¹⁸ Macaulay called it "the Staller's House", and described it thus:

The house is 18 feet high, and its top lies almost level with the earth, by which it is surrounded; below it is of a circular form, and all its parts are contrived so, that a single stone covers the top. If this stone is removed, the house has a sufficient vent. In the middle of the floor is a large hearth. Round the wall is a paved seat, on which sixteen persons may conveniently sit. Here are four beds roofed with strong flags or stone lintels, every one of which is capable enough to receive four men. To each of these beds is a separate entry; the distances between these different openings, resembling in some degree so many pillars.¹⁹

A St. Kildan's description was quoted by Captain Thomas in 1870; but he says, "Twenty years ago the roof fell in."²⁰ Mathieson (1928) reported that the entrance was closed up and that it would take two men at least a week to excavate the part fallen in.²¹ J. Morton Boyd examined the surface features of the whole site and gave a detailed description of them in 1963.²² I quote a sentence or two:

I noticed a hole in the ground under a large stone . . . I lifted the stone to find a beautiful corbelled beehive vault. It was completely underground, being about five feet in diameter at the base (probably more if excavated) and about four feet high.

¹⁷ Sir Lindsay Scott, 'Gallo-British Colonies: The Aisled Round-House Culture of the North', *Proc. Prehistory Soc.* XIV (1948), 114.

¹⁸ Martin (ed. 1934), 422.

¹⁹ Macaulay, 54.

²⁰ F. L. W. Thomas, *PSAS* VII (1870), 173-4. Also 'Letter from St. Kilda by Miss Anne Kennedy, 1862', *PSAS* X (1875), 705; J. Sands, *PSAS* XII (1878), 189.

²¹ J. Mathieson, *PSAS* LXII (1928), 130.

²² Williamson (1963), 166-71.

The floor was occupied by a cone of debris which had fallen through the hole at the apex, through which I was peering. It looked as if the chamber had been untouched for centuries.

It would appear that the chamber as Macaulay saw it 200 years ago has become much filled up with debris and partly covered by later structures built on top of it. Only expert excavation — a very daunting task — will tell the whole archaeological story. What is so astonishing is that this vast chambered dwelling should be on this remote island at all. It must have been built by, or for, some exceptionally enterprising pre-Norse settler on Hirta who was familiar with wheelhouse construction in Harris or Uist and who decided that this would provide the best shelter on the windswept top of Boreray for a large visiting party who were liable to be marooned by a change in the weather.

This is my own surmise, for the recorded traditions do not go back so far. Martin says that the St. Kildans "have a tradition that it was built by one Stallir, who was a devout hermit of St. Kilda"; but the dwelling was clearly not a monastic one. Macaulay gives a different tradition; I quote:

At a distance of many ages back . . . a bold, public-spirited, or self-interested person, whose name was *Staller*, or *the man of the rocks*, headed an insurrection, or rebelled against the governor or steward, and at the head of a party engaged in the same disloyal conspiracy (or rather struggle for liberty) possessed himself of Boreray, and maintained his post there for some time. Here he built a strange kind of habitation for himself and his accomplices.²³

When Macaulay translated *Staller* as 'the man of the rocks' it was no doubt because Gaelic *stalla* means 'a craggy steep or precipice'. *Tigh an Stallair* thus might be held to mean 'the dwelling of the precipice', and this might be the explanation. But the terminal *-r* presents a difficulty, and

²³ Macaulay, 54.

another explanation invites exploration. Macaulay's story speaks of a governor or steward, and this leads me to suppose that Stallir or Staller might represent ON *stallari*, 'a king's marshal or similar officer'. The title was a Norwegian one, occurring first in the early eleventh century in the name of Björn Stallari, an officer of King Ólaf the Saint. It was derived, it would appear, through OE *steallere*, from Latin *stabularius*.

When King Magnus Bare-legs invaded the Western Isles in 1103 he had with him his *stallari* — Eyvind Elbow; but it is difficult to think of any reason for Eyvind visiting Boreray.²⁴ A more probable officer would be a steward of one of the Norse kings of the Hebrides, although it must be admitted that none of them is recorded as having an officer of this kind. In later times, it was customary for the Macleods of Skye to send a steward out to St. Kilda once a year to collect the annual dues and deliver various supplies.²⁵ If, as is possible and indeed not improbable, St. Kilda was subject to the kings of the Hebrides in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, it is also possible to suppose that they sent out an officer dignified with the title of *stallari* with similar duties. If he visited Boreray with a crew from Hirta, he would naturally take the wheelhouse — the best dwelling — for himself. Thus it might have become *stallara-hús*.

Macaulay's story has the appearance of a garbled account of a conflict between a steward and the local population.

All these possibilities are of course hypotheses. It seems reasonable to conclude, however, that Macaulay's tradition points to some form of suzerainty over St. Kilda possibly extending backwards to the later years of Norse rule in the Hebrides.

²⁴ *Heimskringla* ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson (Íslenzk fornrit XXVI-VIII, 1941-51), III 233-6. Other early references include: (1) A Swedish rune stone in memory of *stallare Hakonar iarls*, possibly to be identified with Hakon Hlaðajarl who was drowned in the Pentland Firth in 1029, cf. Otto v. Friesen, *Runorna* (Nordisk Kultur VI, 1933), 179-80; P. A. Munch, *Det Norske Folks Historie* I 2, 766-7. (2) A verse of the poet Sighvatr, d. c. 1045 (*Lex. Poet.*).

²⁵ Martin (ed. 1934), 447-50. G. Seton, *St. Kilda* (1878), 137-41.

VI Names of sea-birds

Martin gives the names he heard in St. Kilda for about half-a-dozen sea-birds, and these have been shown by Sommerfelt to be of ON origin.²⁶ The question arises, however, whether some or all of these names probably belong to the common stock of bird-names in the Outer Hebrides. I feel that this question must be left aside until a distribution of bird-names has been produced, perhaps in connection with the new *Historical Dictionary of Scottish Gaelic* recently initiated in Glasgow under the editorship of Kenneth D. MacDonald.

It may be useful to record here that there is a second list of St. Kilda bird-names in a note to a letter from Mr John Ross to Mr Campbell, November 1889, preserved in a manuscript volume of notes and letters about St. Kilda in the custody of the National Trust for Scotland.

VII Archaeology

For the present, archaeological evidence of Norse settlement is limited to one unexcavated site and one reported grave-find.

None of the numerous stone structures on Hirta has so far revealed a suggestion of Norse occupation except in one instance. In 1960 Macgregor wrote that the only material evidence of such occupation he had as yet discovered consisted of house foundations, two probable vestiges of which he had located to the north and within 50 yards of the Factor's House. Buildings of a later period had been placed on these foundations, but they had not been obliterated.²⁷ In the absence of excavation of this and other similar sites, however, I fear we must leave all "structural" evidence aside for the present.

The grave-find — of two Viking brooches — is of exasperating interest: interesting because the brooches

²⁶ Martin (ed. 1934), 420-35. Sommerfelt, 230-31, 375.

²⁷ Macgregor, 21.

were beautiful, and exasperating because they are now lost.²⁸

The Danish antiquary J. J. A. Worsaae visited Scotland in the year 1846-47, and in 1852 he wrote:

The Norwegians must even have visited the little island of St. Kilda At least, two of the often-mentioned and peculiarly Scandinavian bowl-formed brooches have been discovered on the island; one of them I have seen in the Andersonian Museum, in Glasgow.²⁹

In 1872 he published several engravings of Viking brooches, including one from St. Kilda, to illustrate an article on the spread of Norse culture throughout Europe.³⁰

The Andersonian Museum, which was housed in the Anderson College, was inherited by the higher technical college that has now become Strathclyde University. The archaeological items in the Museum, however, were dispersed in or after 1886, some to the Hunterian Museum in the University of Glasgow, and some elsewhere. When the brooches are next recorded, in 1949, they are reported as having "disappeared"; Sigurd Grieg listed them in *Viking Antiquities of Great Britain* in that year under the heading "Lost Grave Finds".³¹ Recent attempts to trace them in likely museums, including the National Museum of Copenhagen, have been unsuccessful.

Worsaae, therefore, is really our only authority for the provenance of the brooches, and he saw only one of them. It would be a happier situation to have even one early record of their being found or donated, but we shall have to be content with what we have.

On Worsaae's illustration of the brooch — an enlargement of which has been reproduced for this paper — I have had the advice of R. B. K. Stevenson, Keeper of the

²⁸ In the preparation of this account of the two brooches, I am indebted for information and advice to R. B. K. Stevenson and A. Fenton of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland; Mrs E. Frame, The Library, Strathclyde University; and Mr E. W. Mackie, Hunterian Museum, Glasgow University.

²⁹ J. J. Worsaae, *An Account of the Danes and Norwegians in England, Scotland and Ireland* (1852), 270-71.

³⁰ *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* (1872), 420.

³¹ In H. Shetelig, *Viking Antiquities of Great Britain and Ireland II* (1949), 78.



Plate II. "The St. Kilda Brooch". Reproduced with permission from an engraving in *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* (1872).

National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland. He considers Grieg wrong in classifying the brooch as Rygh 649, the common ninth-century type, and says it is the common tenth-century type, Rygh 652/4. This type has a double shell, open-work top, and five bosses with holes in them and four plain, whereas type 649 has a single shell, without open-work or holes in the bosses.³² Brooches of ninth-century types have been found in Barra; in Uig, Lewis; and in Sangay, Sound of Harris.

If Worsaae's account is accepted, the find suggests Norse settlement possibly as early as the tenth century, and indicates that one of the settlers had a female relative who had an expensive set of brooches and who was given a heathen burial.

VIII The name "St. Kilda"

This paper would not be complete without mention of the origin of the name *St. Kilda*. I have collected much evidence about this over the past fifteen years. But as much of this evidence is cartographical and as the end result does not tell us anything about the Norsemen in these particular islands, I shall deal with the subject in summary form here — in the hope that I shall find space elsewhere for fuller treatment.

St. Kilda has always puzzled students of place-names, both the amateurs and the professionals. There has never been a saint of this name. Macaulay refers, although without offering the name as an etymon, to a female saint called *Kilda* in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, lib. iii, cap. 24, 25. But here Macaulay was in error, for Bede's saint was not *Kilda* but *Hilda*.³³

Martin, who brought the name *St. Kilda* into use as a popular English name for *Hirta*, gives us some useful information as a starting point: "Sir John Narbrough and

³² O. Rygh's classification is in his *Antiquités Norvégiennes* (1885).

³³ Macaulay, 102.

all the seamen call it *St. Kilda*; and the sea-maps *St. Kilder*."³⁴

Working backwards from 1698 when Martin's book was published, I have searched maps and charts and sailing directions for these two names, and I give the results briefly.

As regards *St. Kilda*, this can be traced back to the form *S. Kilda* through numerous charts in the seventeenth century to 1592 — but no further. It occurs then in a set of Dutch sailing directions in L. J. Waghenauer's *Thresoor der Zeevaert* (Leyden 1592), 92, 93.

As regards *St. Kilder*, the tradition goes further back, through *S. Kilder*, as in Blaeu's maps of Scotland 1635, to a form beginning with *Sk* unseparated by space or full stop, of which there are three early examples:

Skilda(r) 1583 Nicolas de Nicolay's chart of Scotland in his *La Navigation du Roy D'Escosse Jacques cinquiesme . . . autour de son Royaume*, published in Paris that year. Reproduction in *Early Maps of Scotland* (1936), 48. The *r* in *Skilda(r)* is not clear.

Skildar Late 16th century. [Nicolay] *Charte de la Navigation du Royaume d'Escosse*. Berlin, Royal Library, MS Hamilton 38. Reproduction in *Imago Mundi* XIX (1965), 84.

Skaldir Late 16th century. Anon. *Carte of Scotlande*. BM Add. MSS 37024. Reproduction in *Scottish Geog. Mag.* LXXI (1961), 41.

There is evidence for the derivation of these three charts from a single archetype, probably by Alexander Lindsay, a Scottish pilot, about 1540.³⁵

The *Sk* form is thus the oldest, and it was always applied to an island much closer to Lewis than Hirt. Indeed, the

³⁴ Martin (ed. 1934), 409.

³⁵ A. B. Taylor, 'Name Studies in Sixteenth Century Maps', *Imago Mundi* XIX (1965), 81-99. E. G. R. Taylor, *Tudor Geography 1485-1583* (1930), 59-62. Also R. A. Skelton, 'Bishop Leslie's Maps of Scotland 1578', *Imago Mundi* VII (1950), 103-4.

third of the above three charts shows both *Hyrth* and the *Sk*-island in their separate places.

There is internal evidence that Waghenaer's *S. Kilda* was an error in copying *Skilda(r)* from the first of the above charts, that of Nicolay 1583. It is particularly significant that Waghenaer turned another of Nicolay's island names into a saint's name: *Skarbo*, now Scarba in Argyll, becomes *S. Karbo*.

The most important item in the evidence is the prior existence of forms beginning *Sk* unseparated. These forms confirm the view that the saint is an illusion. They also dispose of a theory by W. J. Watson and others that *Kilda* was a separate word derived from *Tobar Childa*, the principal village well.³⁶

Two final questions on the name. If the archetypal *Skildar* or *Skilder* was an island close to the west coast of Lewis, what was the origin of the name and what was the island?

The name has not survived locally so far as can be ascertained. It is not Gaelic, English or Dutch. But it sounds very like ON *skildir*, plural of *skjöldr*, 'a shield'. *Skjöldr* was also used for shield-like objects, including small islands on the west coast of Norway, modern Skjoldø.³⁷

This usage is singular, and I have been unable to find any example of the plural. But there seems no reason why the plural should not have been applied to a group of islands that look like shields lying flat on the surface of the sea when viewed from the western shore of Lewis, Harris or North Uist.

I have satisfied myself by a visit to these shores that there are in fact two groups of islands — the Gaskeir group and Haskeir Eagach — that could fit this description.

³⁶ Martin (ed. 1934), 414; Henderson (1910), 182-3; Watson (1926), 98; J. B. Johnston, *Place Names of Scotland* (1934), 71; Sommerfelt, 229. This and similar interpretations were made without knowledge of the sixteenth-century cartographers' island called *Skildar*.

³⁷ O. Rygh, *Norske Gaardnavne* XII 11, XVI 313, which indicate that Skjolden is found as a name of a farm or a skerry, and Skjoldø occurs as an island name.

IX Conclusion

A summary may now be made of the results of this survey of evidence:

(1) There can be no doubt that there was a Norse settlement on St. Kilda. This is established by a small number of Old Norse place-names and field-names, and is confirmed by a reported grave find of two Norse brooches.

(2) The settlers knew the island as *Hirtir*, meaning 'stags'. They probably came from Harris, perhaps as early as the tenth century, possibly earlier. There had been earlier inhabitants, but it is not known whether there were any families there when they arrived. An Icelandic ship took shelter in Village Bay in 1202. The Norse settlers were ultimately displaced by the infiltration of a Gaelic-speaking population; this probably took place at some period after the Western Isles were ceded to the Scottish crown in 1266.

(3) The Norse settlers at some period, and perhaps continuously, occupied a site east of the well, Tobar Childa Chalda, and above the present village street. They gave their own names to many topographical features and also to the little fields beside their homes. Their number cannot be clearly estimated, but there must have been enough able-bodied men to man a stout boat for tending sheep on Soay and Boreray.

(4) There is reported evidence of one heathen burial.

(5) There was probably some form of suzerainty over St. Kilda by Norse rulers of the Hebrides. During the later years of Norse rule there was possibly a steward who visited the island periodically like the stewards of the owners in historic times.

(6) The later Gaelic-speaking settlers learned to use some of the Norse place-names, including *Hirtir* which they adopted as *Hirt*.

(7) The name *St. Kilda* tells us nothing about the Norse settlement. It is not derived from Old Norse *kelda*, 'a well',

nor from a saint. It is a late name for *Hirt*, being an error made in a set of sailing directions prepared by L. J. Waghenauer in 1592 through faulty copying from a chart of Nicolas de Nicolay published in 1583. Nicolay's form was *Skildar* and this was applied to an island much nearer to the coast of Lewis.

It should be said in conclusion that this paper will not be the last word on its subject. Fresh facts may come to light, and there is room for further study and research. Excavation in the village area and in the wheelhouse in Boreray might be fruitful. A deeper analysis of the place-names might yield more information. And the lost brooches might even turn up with their original museum labels attached to them.

Acknowledgments

Plate I and Figure 1 (p. 118) are reproduced from *Scottish Studies* IV (1960) with the kind permission of the Editor. Plate II is reproduced from *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* (1872) with the kind permission of Det kongelige nordiske Oldskriftselskab.

APPENDIX A

Early Forms of *Hirt*

Note: Abbreviations in the names of the sources here quoted are those recommended in the Supplement to *The Scottish Historical Review*, October 1963.

Heryte 1372 Reg. Mag. Sig. I 412.

Hyrte 1372 Reg. Mag. Sig. I 551.

insula de Hert 1373 Reg. Mag. Sig. I 520.

Insula Hirth 14th (16th) Chron. Fordun I 44.

insula de Irte c. 1450 Chron. Bower I 5.

prisca lingua . . . *Hierth* 1526 Boece, *Historiae* xiii.

Hirht 1567 Coll. de Rebus Alban. 145.

Irt 1577-95 W. F. Skene, *Celtic Scotland* III 431.

Hyrth late 16th BM. Add. MSS 37024 map; 1590 W. Camden, Britannia 743.

by the inhabitants called *Hirt*, and likewise by all the Western Islanders 1698 Martin, 15.

Latin Forms

Hirtha 1526 Boece xiii; 1536 Bellenden, Chronicles (ed. 1821), I xlvii; 1546 Lily map; 1607 Reg. Privy Council VII 341, 427; etc.

Hirta 1541 Mercator globe; 1549 (17th) Monro, Western Isles, 77; 1566 Book of Dunvegan (Spalding Club), I 45; 1582 Buchanan, Historia 11; 1610 Reg. Mag. Sig. VII 259; etc.

Zirta 1615 Book of Dunvegan I 54.

APPENDIX B

Notes on Old Norse Place Names

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this Appendix in addition to those used in the paper:

Heathcote: Norman Heathcote, Map of St. Kilda, *Geog. Journal* XV (1900), 142-44.

Jakobsen: J. Jakobsen, *The Place Names of Shetland* (1936).

Kennedy: 'Letter from Miss Anne Kennedy, 1862', *PSAS* X (1878), 702-11.

Moray: Sir Robert Moray, 'A Description of the island of Hirta', *Phil. Trans. Roy. Soc.* XII (1687), no. 137, p. 927.

Murray: George Murray, MS Diary 1886-87. National Trust for Scotland, Bute Collection.

N.G.: O. Rygh, *Norske Gaardnavne* (1889-1936).

Ross: John Ross, MS notes on St. Kilda 1889. National Trust for Scotland, Bute Collection.

Seton: George Seton, *St. Kilda Past and Present* (1878).

RUAIVAL

Ruai-mhail 1764 Macaulay, 25; *Ruival* 1887 Murray, 11; *Ruaidh-bhal* 1889 Ross.

Hill ending in a headland, 444 feet, at southern point of Hirta. ON *Rauða-fjall*, 'red hill'. Cp. *Rauðafjall* east of Voss, Norway, *Fornmannasögur* VIII 364, and note on the name in Fritzner's *Ordbog*.

OISEVAL

Oterveaul 1698 Martin, 19, 23; *Ostrivaill* 1764 Macaulay, 23; *Oiseval* 1862 Miss Kennedy, 703; *Mullach-osterveaul*, or east top, sometimes written *Mullach-Oshival* or the top of Oswald 1878 Seton, 71; *Osevall* 1887 Murray; *Oshval* 1889 Ross; *Oiserbhal* 1911 *West Coast of Scotland Pilot II* 273.

Hill, 948 feet, on the east of the village, Hirta. This situation and Macaulay's form suggest ON *Eystra-fjall*, 'eastern hill'.

[MULLACH] SGAR

Mullach Scol 1887 Murray, 14; *Scal* 1887 Murray, 11; 1889 Ross; *Mullach Sgail* 1900 Heathcote; *Mullach Sgall* 1911 *West Coast of Scotland Pilot II* 273.

Rounded shoulder of a hill to the west of the village, Hirta. *Mullach* is Gaelic, 'hill-top'. The four forms quoted for the second element show that *Sgar* in the OS map is an error for *Sgal*, from ON *skalli*, 'bald head', 'bare hill-top'. Also in Shetland, Jakobsen, 96; and in Loch a' Sgail, Harris.

CAMBIR, THE

Camper 1764 Macaulay, 28; *Campar* 1764 Macaulay, 118.

A long ridge with a grassy slope on the east side, at the north west extremity of Hirta. ON *Kambr*, 'a crest or ridge'. Also in Shetland, Jakobsen, 64.

BRADASTAC

Brata Stac 1900 Heathcote.

A stack of rock, 165 feet, below the cliffs on the north side of Hirta. ON *Bratti-stakkr*, 'steep stack'.

MINA STAC

A stack of rock, 212 feet, at the north east extremity of Hirta. ON *Minni-stakkr*, 'lesser stack'.

TOBAR CHILDA CHALDA

St. Kilder's Well 1968 Martin, 24; *Tober Childa Chalda* 1764 Macaulay, 101; Watson, 98n.

This is the well (Gaelic *Tobar*) near which the settlement which gave rise to the present village grew up. It lies about 200 yards north of the present village street. Childa Chalda is ON *Kelda halda*, 'cold well', as Sommerfelt has shown, with lenition of the initial consonant as in Gaelic practice (*Norse-Gaelic Contacts*, 375). There is a photograph of the well in *PSAS LXII* (1928), 127.

The name has nothing to do with the name St. Kilda, the resemblance being accidental; see p. 137 above.

[ABHAINN] GLESHGIL

A stream (Gaelic *Abhainn*) in a deep gully on the west side of Hirta. According to *Norske Elvenavne*, 74, *Gles-* in Norwegian river names is connected with Norw. *glise*, 'to shine'; *glisa* meaning a cleft or opening upon which the light shines; cf. ON *glæsa*, 'to make shining'. The second element is ON *gil*, 'a ravine with a stream at the bottom'. Gleshgil would thus be 'shining stream in the gully'.

[ABHAINN] ILISHGIL

A stream on the east side of the village, Hirta. The first element *Ilish-* seems to be connected with an ON place-name element *Íla*, fem., 'spring' appearing in *Ile*, a farm name in Stavanger (N.G. X 278-9). Near this farm are two names with a masc. genitive, *Ilsvaag* and *Ilsnes*, both from a hypothetical nominative *Íll*. The same genitive would make sense here (although no parallel has been traced) — *Ílls-gil*, 'the deep stream of the spring'.

SOAY

Soa 1678 Moray, 927; 1968 Martin, 34, 36, 37; *Soay* 1764 Macaulay, 119.

ON *Sauða-ey* 'island of sheep'. Cf. Soay, Skye. The island is noted for its ancient breed of sheep. The name does not provide proof that the Norsemen placed the breed on the island. It is more probable that they named the island from the sheep they found there.

GLAMISGEO

On the east side of Soay. Looks like genitive of the ON personal name *Glámr* (which is rather rare), or ON *glam*, 'noise', and *gjá*, 'cleft in a cliff'.

SCARPALIN

On the south-east side of Soay. The first element is from ON *skarpr*, 'sharp'. The second element suggests ON *hleinn*, 'projecting rock', described by Cleasby-Vigfusson as frequent in western Iceland; or the ONorw. form *lein*, which means 'slope' and is found in Shetland; or possibly *hliðin*, 'the slope'.

LIANISH

This name appears on the O.S. map as that of an island near a not very prominent headland on the west side of Soay. The name might be from ON *Hliðar-nes*, 'ness of the slope', and if so should have been applied in the map to the headland. The first element appears frequently in the form *Lia-* in Norway; e.g. Liaskaret from *Hliðar-skarð*, Romsdalen (N.G. XIII 68).

GIASGEIR

ON *Gjár-sker*, 'skerry of the geo or cleft'. It lies at the north entrance to the channel between Dun and Hirta.

[GEO] GHIASGEIR

As above, with the addition of the loanword *Geo* preceding it as a Gaelic generic element. On the south side of Dun.

SEILG GEO

On the north side of Dun. ON *Sela-gjá*, 'geo of seals'. Also in Harris. Cf. *Selgjo*, Bressay, Shetland (Jakobsen, 148).

BORERAY

Burra 1678 Moray, 927; *Borera* 1698 Martin, 6, 7; *Boreray* 1764 Macaulay, 116.

ON *Borgar-ey*, 'island of the fortification'. Cf. Boreray, north of N. Uist, and Boreray, Duirinish, Skye; also Burra in Orkney and Shetland, which are probably from the plural *Borga*-. In these parallels the fortification was a broch. Here, however, the *borg* must have been the wheelhouse structure on the island which is described pp. 129-31 above.

SCARBHSTAC

Scarastac 1865 Admiralty chart.

On the south-west side of Boreray. ON *Skarfa-stakkr*, 'stack of the cormorants'. Cf. *Skarfastakk*, Unst, Shetland (Jakobsen, 148).

[GOB] SCAPANISH

The headland (Gaelic *Gob*) at the southern extremity of Boreray. The second element is no doubt ON *nes*. The first element appears to be the same as in *Scapa*, Orkney, ON *Skalp-eið* from earlier **Skalpa-eið*; and in *Scalpay*, Harris, and *Scalpa*, Skye. *Skalpeið* occurs several times, but with a long *á* which was an Icelandic development, in the thirteenth-century *Orkneyingasaga* (ed. S. Nordal, 1916); and until recently, for example in H. Marwick, *Orkney Farm-Names* (1952), 100, it has been taken to mean 'isthmus of ships'. It is doubtful, however, if this is the correct meaning of *skalpr* in this context. The more common meaning was 'sword-sheath'. De Vries (*Altnord. Etym. Wört.*) gives an alternative and probably more original meaning of 'something hollowed out or vaulted'. This suggests 'caves'. *Skalpa-nes* would thus be 'the ness of caves'; and there are in fact caves on either side of it.

[RUBHA] BHRENGADAL

A rounded headland (Gaelic *Rubha*) below a steep rounded slope on the south-east of Boreray. *Brengadal*, without the Gaelic lenition, is ON *Bringudal*, 'dale of the breast'; cf. *Bringedal*, Stavanger (N.G. X 32).

COINNEAG

The second element seems to be ON *vik*, 'bay'. The 'bay' is no more than a small indentation in the cliff on the south-west side of Boreray which forms the main landing place for the island. The first element might perhaps be ON *konu*, genitive of *kona*, 'a woman', although the significance of this is a matter for speculation.

SUNADAL

Sunedal 1900 Heathcote.

A broad grassy slope on the east side of Boreray. The first element, as in *Sunadale*, Kintyre, Argyll and *Sunardal*, Skye, is obscure. Similar names in *Norske Gaardnavne* have not proved helpful. But the structure of the name is Norse.

UDRACLETE

ON *Ytri-klettr*, 'outer cliff' — on the northern edge of Sunadal, Boreray. Cf. *Udraclete*, Harris.

CLESGOR

ON *Klifs-skor*, 'rift of the cliff'. There is a hollow in the cliff on the west of Boreray where this name appears, but there are numerous other rifts nearby to which the name might apply.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF SETTLEMENT IN SHETLAND AND FAROE IN VIKING TIMES

By ALAN SMALL

WITH the gradual accumulation of more and more detailed information about Viking life in the North Atlantic archipelagos a broader panorama of the population and settlement distributions can now be established. Although only a limited number of early Norse domestic sites have so far been excavated it is possible to construct a geographical model summarising the typical Norse farmstead. In any region of Norse colonisation the areas which meet the environmental conditions required for a farmstead can be mapped and correlated with the archaeological and historical data.

The characteristic primary farmstead in both Shetland and Faroe appears to have been the longhouse, usually more than 20 metres in length and at least 5 metres across at its maximum breadth; in the earliest examples, the long walls sweep in at the extremities to give almost semi-circular ends. These long walls were built of dry stone, locally collected, with courses of turf to give a more windproof structure. The internal arrangements of this house type vary considerably, as do the number and function of outbuildings associated with them, but the most common layout would seem to be three rooms — byre, living room and sleeping room. This pattern is close to what was common in rural Shetland until very recently. It is also the characteristic, regional, ninth-century house type in the North Atlantic Viking settlements, occurring on the Scottish mainland, in the North and Western Isles, Faroes, Iceland, Greenland, and even North America. Though its antecedents appear to be the Migration period farmsteads of Western Norway, there is no recorded Viking example

from that country; the only excavated farm of the Viking period there is at Ytre Moa in Årdalstangen and it has a rectangular shape.¹ The lack of recorded examples from the Norwegian homeland suggests that timber building was more common at this time in Norway and the insular type is the translation of a timber structure into stone, a translation reflecting the relatively treeless nature of the island landscapes.

A small area of land near the house was walled in and cultivated for the growing of grain — oats, barley and bere — either by the spade or by the plough. This “infield” appears to have been intensely cultivated: the dung which accumulated over the winter in the byres and stables was used for fertiliser, and a growing body of evidence suggests that the Norse farmers in these colonies were also well aware of the value of shells spread on the rather acidic soils. Further, these field strips beside the houses were probably used in rotation to maintain fertility and cattle were allowed to graze on the stubble in the autumn.

Pastoralism, however, was the main basis of agriculture with sheep and cattle as the most important animals. These islands must have appeared very satisfactory to early settlers because of their potential for the outwintering of sheep which in Norway is only possible on the coastal strand-flat areas. Outlying uninhabited islands were also used for grazing as they are today; the *Saga of the Faroe Islanders*, chs. 7, 37,² mentions the use of Lítla Dímun and there can be no doubt that the rocky flat-topped holms of Shetland were similarly utilised. The same *Saga*, ch. 54, also suggests that cattle could be outwintered and this may reflect the better climatic conditions of the “little climatic optimum”. Even so, great emphasis was placed on hay-making, the evidence of the ricks at Underhoull³ revealing

¹ See Egil Bakka, ‘Ytre Moa, eit gardsanlegg frå vikingtida i Årdal i Sogn’, *Viking* XXIX (1965).

² A convenient text of *Færeyinga saga* has recently been published in Reykjavík, edited by Ólafur Halldórsson (1967).

³ See Alan Small, ‘Excavations at Underhoull, Unst, Shetland’, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* XCVIII (1966).

that every possible source was tapped. Outwintering dispensed with the need for a large autumnal slaughter and resulted in a huge surplus of wool — the *Saga of the Faroe Islanders*, ch. 44, speaks of “stores full of wool waiting to be sold” — which gave both Shetland and Faroe an ideal trading base with Norway where the harsher environmental conditions dictated an annual slaughter resulting in shortages of both wool and cloth. This trade allowed the import of constructional timber which was lacking in both archipelagos. Some supplies of driftwood, much of which has been shown to be of American origin,⁴ were available, but most of this would be unsuitable for boat building or for roof supports for houses and would be used for fuel, supplementing the main source, locally cut peat. Other imports included metals, luxury goods and certain household requirements, soapstone, for example, which does not occur in Faroe, so where the Shetland farmer could manufacture his own household goods the Faroe Islander had to import either from Shetland or from Norway. The importance of the sea cannot be overrated in relation to the Norse farmsteads. Frequently it was the only means of communication between communities and numerous saga references show that those dangers well known to modern fishermen were of equal significance in Viking times. Wrecks are recorded several times as well as the interruption of communications by heavy seas.

The sea and its margins were also an important source of food. The bird colonies of the cliffs provided a valuable supplement to the diet and early references to the “Egg Time” of late May to mid June suggest its significance. At both Jarlshof⁵ and Underhoull, the two Shetland sites of the very early period which have been closely examined, there is no sign of fishing in the very first stages of settlement. Yet soon after the primary colonisation fishing

⁴ See Angus Graham in ‘Fourth Scottish Summer School of Archaeology’, *Archaeological News Letter* (1956).

⁵ J. R. C. Hamilton, *Excavations at Jarlshof, Shetland* (1956).

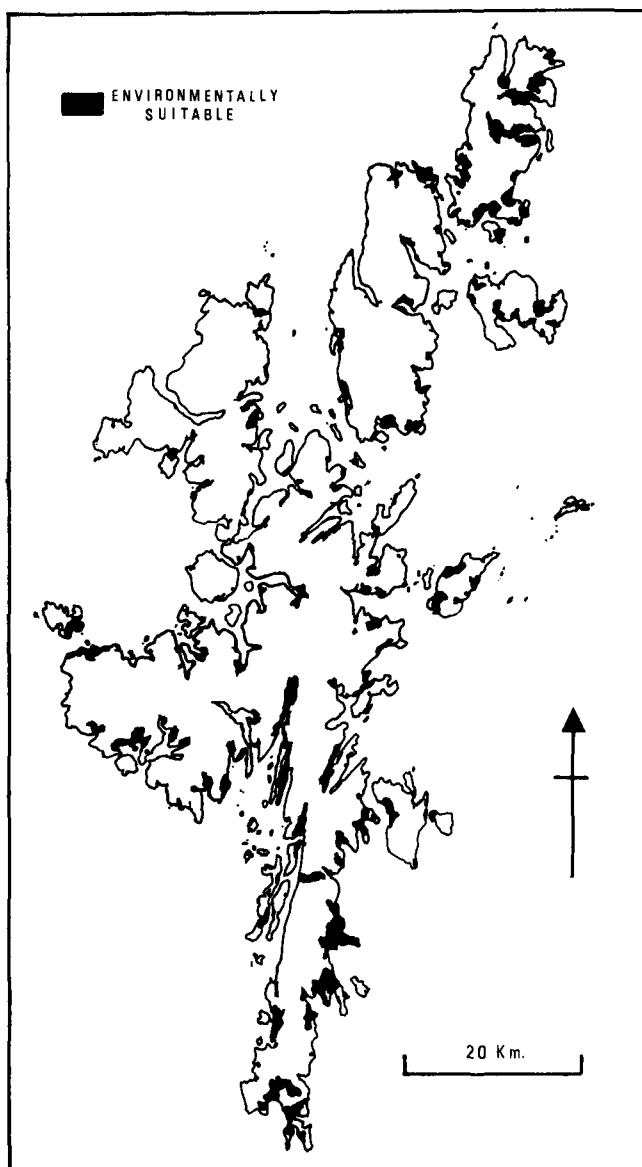


Fig 1. Environmentally suitable areas in Shetland.

seems to become of increasing importance, suggesting that the relative poverty of the insular environments in comparison to the Norwegian homeland, where there was considerably greater hunting potential for heavy game, forced the people to turn to the sea. The boat noost at Underhoull, the net weights and line sinkers from Jarlshof, Kvívík⁶ and other Faroese sites confirm not only inshore fishing but also deep water fishing in the rich tidal strings around the islands.

Thus the model settlement unit has certain specific requirements of which the most important are: (1) access to the sea, with a reasonable place to pull up a boat; (2) a patch of fairly flat, reasonably well drained land suitable for the construction of a farmstead and with the potential for some grain cultivation; and (3) extensive grazing areas, since the number of animals which the poor vegetation of the islands could support would be rather low.

These requirements of the typical community only occur at a restricted number of points in both the Shetlands and the Faroes. On Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 those areas which meet the demands of the farm buildings and the infield are plotted. Although these areas are extremely limited, they are the only situations which were ideal for the Norse Viking type of settlement. A useful check whether these maps present a true picture of the areas settled by the Vikings is provided by plotting the distribution of known Viking farmsteads. The very few Faroese and Shetland farm names mentioned in the sagas are easily located with the possible exception of the Sandvík on Suðuroy to which Sigmund swam, and there must also remain some doubt as to whether the major archaeological site at Jarlshof can be correlated with an incident in the *Orkneyinga Saga*.⁷ The distribution of these names (Figs. 3 and 4) correlates exactly with the settlement areas deduced in Figs. 1 and 2. The archaeological data must be interpreted with care since unstratified stray finds and even isolated graves do not

⁶ See Sverri Dahl, 'Fornar toftir í Kvívík', *Heiðursrit til Rasmus Rasmussen á 80 ára fæðingardegnum* (1951).

⁷ J. R. C. Hamilton, *op. cit.*, 96.

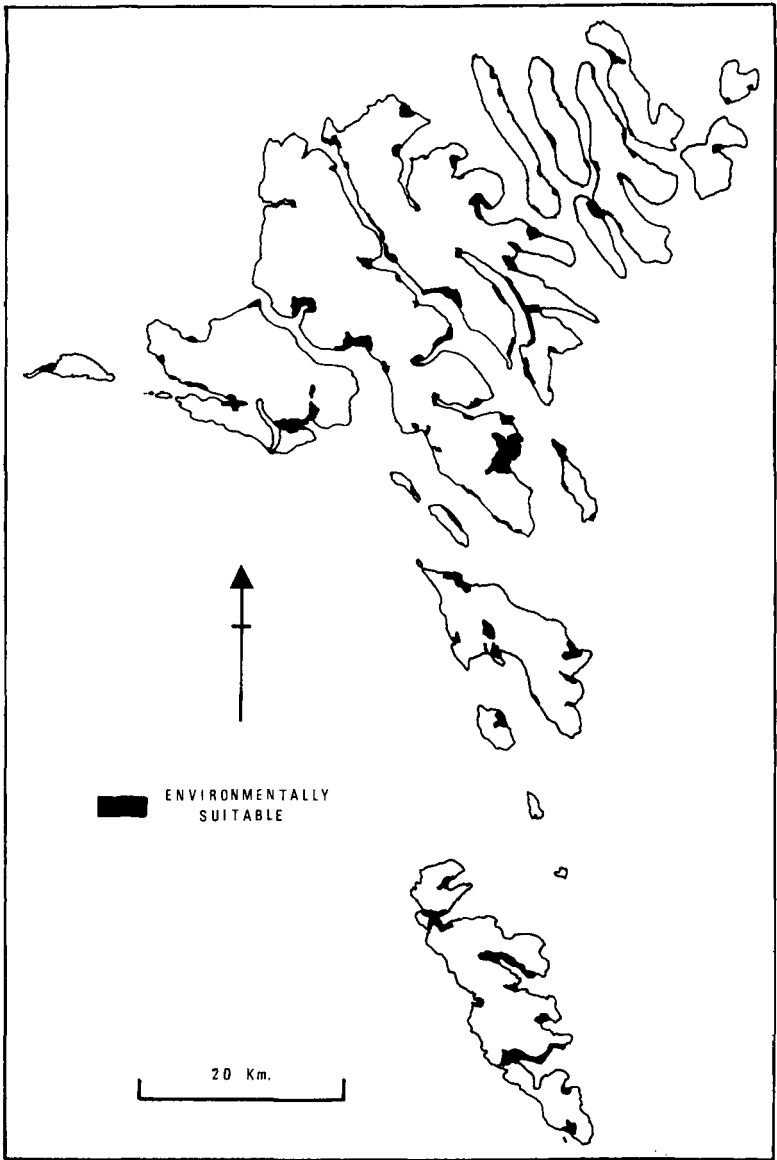


Fig. 2. Environmentally suitable areas in Faroe.

necessarily indicate the presence of a farming community. Consequently, although these stray finds do show an almost complete correlation with the environmentally suitable areas, they have been omitted and only proven domestic sites included in Figs. 3 and 4. These have an exact correlation which supports the hypothesis that Figs. 1 and 2 represent the probable distribution of Norse settlement areas in Shetland and Faroe.

The number of farmsteads in the individual areas must also be considered. The archaeological record now confirms that Shetland had a population of significant size immediately prior to the Norse colonisation, yet place-names in Shetland are ninety-nine per cent Norse. This apparently almost total submergence of the pre-Norse language must indicate immigration on a considerable scale. It is impossible to assess the total population of the islands in Viking times with any degree of accuracy but Brøgger's estimate⁸ of 22,000 towards the end of the Viking period does not seem unrealistic. Similar extensive migration to Faroe is established although their pre-Norse settlement is insignificant — at present it is represented only by a few Celtic cross-slabs belonging to isolated Christian anchorite groups and a possible *papa*-place-name element.

As a result of intensive Norse settlement and the limited number of settlement sites available owing to the nature of the insular environments, more than one farmstead must be envisaged in most of the suggested settlement areas. These settlement areas have a limited amount of arable land but extensive grazing potential, and this vast area of rough pasture meant that more than one family could be supported even in an area where the arable land was extremely limited. As a result of this the township unit would have developed, sited in close proximity to the arable land but probably not on the best land. The township concept, which is well known in other parts of Europe at this time, has the added advantage that it is less

⁸ A. W. Brøgger, *Ancient Emigrants* (1929), 7.

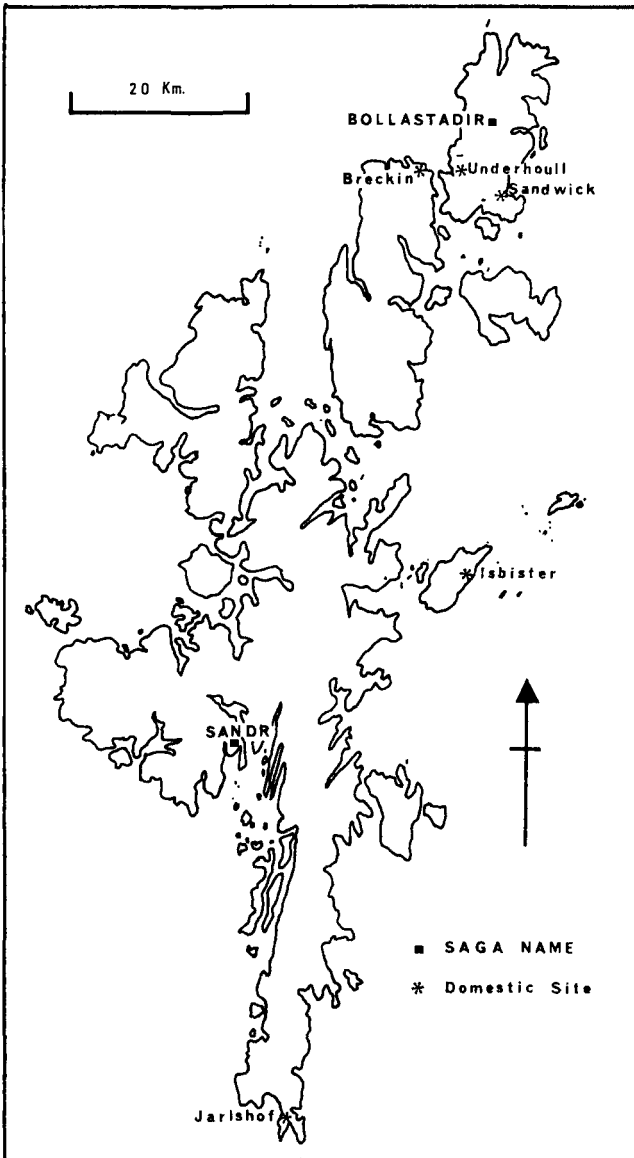


Fig. 3. Viking sites in Shetland.

vulnerable to attack than the isolated farmstead, and to judge from the number of burnings of property which are recorded in the sagas this was a very real danger. Unfortunately, for good reasons as we shall see later, there are no sites so far known in Faroe where this development can be demonstrated at an early stage and only at Jarlshof in Shetland has the classic evolution of this type been fully excavated.

As time passed the pattern was further complicated by the evolution within the township of individual units with a more specialised function. As some of the communities grew, some people appear to have developed specialised occupations such as fishing and gave up their agricultural pursuits, so that a more diversified occupation structure resulted. As time passed, merchant voyages between the North Atlantic Islands and from them to Norway became more and more frequent and gradually the more sheltered havens such as Tórshavn (and no doubt Lerwick, although there is no confirmatory evidence of this) became small ports. Throughout most of the Viking period, however, many of those who engaged in this merchant activity seem to have retained their agricultural interests. In fact, if one accepts the evidence of the *Saga of the Faroe Islanders*, e.g., chs. 32, 43, there was little movement away from the islands in the winter months because of the sailing difficulties, another factor which would have helped the development of integrated social units.

Wider geographical factors also played a part in density distributions. O'Dell has shown⁹ how the mediaeval Norwegian merklands in Shetland are not only distributed in a pattern similar to the shaded areas on Fig. I but are also particularly concentrated in south-east Shetland where the Old Red Sandstone rocks form the parent material for better soils than are found over much of the remainder of Shetland. The *Saga of the Faroe Islanders* (ch. 49) states categorically — "They went to Streymoy where there are the most inhabitants in all Faroe." This is as true today

⁹ See A. C. O'Dell, *The Historical Geography of the Shetland Isles* (1939).

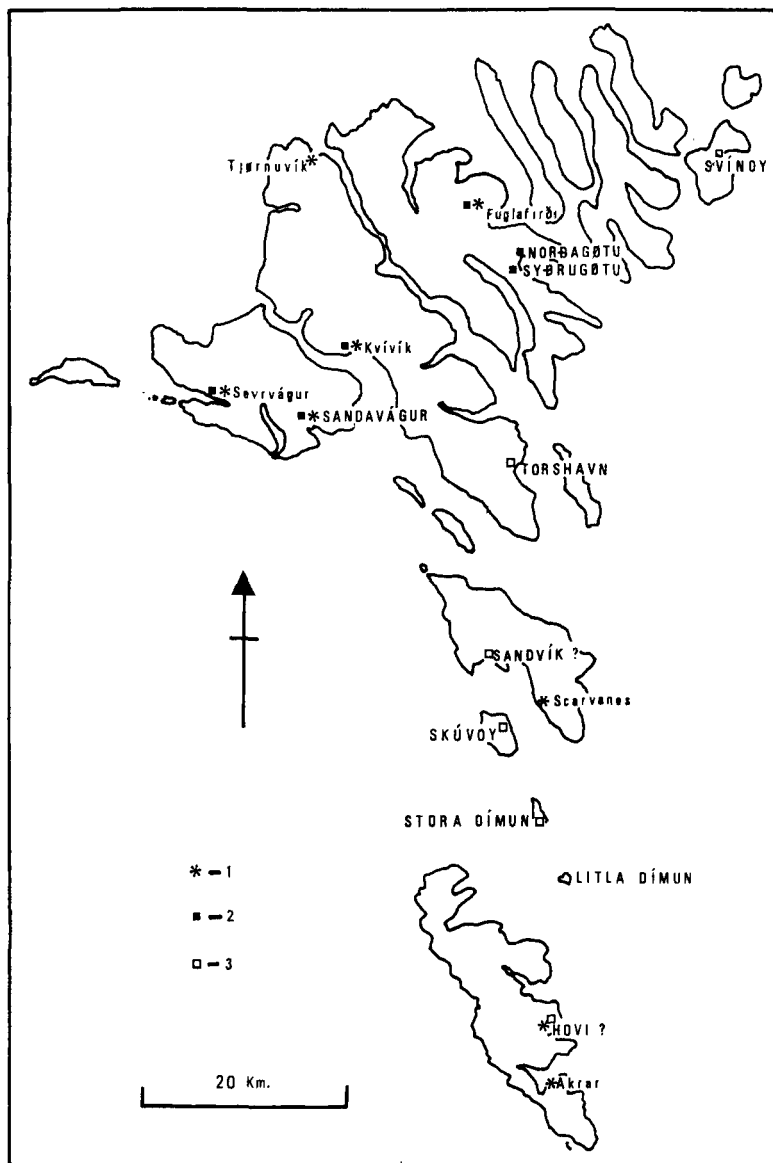


Fig. 4. Viking sites in Faroe: (1) Archaeologically proven; (2) Saga references; (3) Saga reference to a site not yet established but which the author suggests is the most likely on environmental theory. (See Appendix.)

as it was then and reflects the rather better environment of that particular island.

While the building style of the farm unit bears close resemblance to later buildings in both island groups, but more particularly in Shetland, the similarity between the nature of the Viking economy and that of the archipelagos right up to relatively recent times also deserves great stress. Since the environmental potential for subsistence agriculture remained more or less unchanged there is no reason to believe there was major alteration in the basic patterns of population distribution from Viking times until relatively recently. The obvious corollary to this is that many of the crofts and small farms of nineteenth-century Shetland and Faroe were on or very near sites which have been continuously utilised since Viking times, and herein lies the reason why such a relatively small number of Viking farmsteads have been discovered, despite the sizeable nature of the Viking colonisation. Since the majority of the environment areas indicated in Figs. 1 and 2 were utilised in Shetland and Faroe in the nineteenth century, it can be further argued that these maps give a fair representation of the distribution of settlement in these archipelagos in Viking times.

APPENDIX

I am indebted to Sverri Dahl for help in compiling the following data on which Fig. 4 is based.

1. Farms mentioned or inferred in the Saga of the Faroe Islanders.

(a) Site not yet established: Hovi, Dímun, Skúvoy, Sandvík, Gøta, Tórshavn, Svínoy.

(b) Site more or less certainly established.

Vága sýsla — Sandavágur — í Eingjartoftum

Vága sýsla — Seyrvágur — við Hanusá

Streymoyar sýsla — Kvívík — niðri á Toft

Eysturoyar sýsla — Fuglafjørður — við Gjógvará

Eysturoyar sýsla — Norðragøta — undir Keisarafløtti

Eysturoyar sýsla — Syðrugøta — norðuri í Forná.

2. Archaeological sites. Detailed reports of these appear in *Fróðskaparrit*.

THE EARLDOM OF ORKNEY AND LORDSHIP OF
SHETLAND: A REINTERPRETATION OF THEIR
PLEDGING TO SCOTLAND IN 1468-70*

By BARBARA E. CRAWFORD

FIVE hundred years ago the islands of Orkney and Shetland were handed to the king of Scotland in pledge for the dowry of a princess. For longer than five hundred years previous to that the islands had been a Norse settlement and belonged to Norway. When the feudal kingdom of Scotland took over these northern isles, whose historical background was so different from that of the mainland, a difficult situation was bound to arise. An attempt will

* The following abbreviations are used:

- (i) Unprinted sources.
1492 Rental: manuscript in Scottish Record Office, GD1/236/1.
- (ii) Printed sources.
APS: T. Thomson and C. Innes, *The Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland* (1814-75).
DN: *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*. References are to volume and document number unless a page number is specifically given.
Exch. Rolls: J. Stuart and others, *The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland* (1878-1908).
Kirkwall Charters: J. Mooney, *Charters and other records of the City and Royal Burgh of Kirkwall* (1952).
NgL 1R: *Norges gamle Love, Første Række* (1846-95).
NgL 2R: *Norges gamle Love, Anden Række* (1912-34).
Orkney Recs.: *Records of the Earldom of Orkney* (Scottish Historical Society, 1914).
OS: *Orkneyinga saga*. References are given to chapters in accordance with their numbering in the edition by Finnboði Guðmundsson in *Íslensk Fornrit XXXIV* (1965). The translation quoted is A. B. Taylor, *The Orkneyinga Saga* (1938).
Rentals: A. Peterkin, *Rentals of the County of Orkney* (1820).
RMS: J. M. Thomson and others, *Registrum Magni Sigilli Regum Scottorum* (1882-1914).
- (iii) Other works.
Clouston, *History*: J. S. Clouston, *A History of Orkney* (1932).
Huitfeldt, *Beskriffuelse: Historiske Beskriffuelse om huus sig haffuer tildraget under . . . Christiørn den første . . .* (1599).
Mooney, *Cathedral*: J. Mooney, *The Cathedral and Royal Burgh of Kirkwall* (1947).
Munch, *Historie*: P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie* (1852-63).
Torfæus, *Orcades*: Thormodus Torfæus, *Orcades seu rerum Orcadensium historiae libri tres . . .* (1697).

be made to investigate some aspects of this process and how it was carried out.

Firstly, a brief survey of the two groups of islands of Orkney and Shetland shows that they differed in their historical development more than is usually imagined. After they had become part of Scotland, the records refer to the two groups as the "earldom of Orkney and lordship of Shetland".¹ This indicates that the two were separate entities, and reflects what had been the situation under Norwegian rule. The earldom of Orkney had originally included Shetland,² but the two were separated in 1195 when Earl Harald Maddadsson lost the northern group after he assisted the rebellion of the *Eyjarskeggjar* against King Sverre, and as the *Orkneyinga Saga* says "the Orkney Earls have not held it since"³ It appears that this situation continued until 1468, for although it has been said that the Sinclairs were given a grant of Shetland when they received the earldom in 1379,⁴ there is no indication from the installation documents of the Sinclair earls that this was so.⁵ Shetland probably remained separate until 1468, although members of the Sinclair family certainly had influence there. After the transfer of the islands to Scotland, the lordship of Shetland was granted with the earldom of Orkney to a tacksman.⁶

The earldom of Orkney was distinct in several respects from both Norwegian and Scottish earldoms. Although in character it would be considered Norwegian, yet it was an anomaly in that alone of all Norwegian earldoms it

¹ *APS*, II 102.

² Harald Maddadsson is earl of Orkney, Shetland and Caithness prior to 1195-6. See *DN*, II 2.

³ *OS*, ch. 112.

⁴ Mooney, *Cathedral*, 185, quoting *OS* in the edition by Hjaltalin and Goudie, translated by J. Anderson (1873), says that Shetland was given to the Sinclairs in 1379. Clouston, *History*, 133, is the only authority to cast doubt on this.

⁵ *DN*, II 459; *NGL* 2R, I no. 74. The only time Shetland is mentioned in these documents is when the earl promises to defend Orkney *et eciam Hiel-landicam*. Throughout, the phrase "earldom and lordship" is used, but there is no evidence that the lordship should here mean Shetland and, as will be discussed later, it is very probable that it meant something else.

⁶ William Tulloch, Bishop of Orkney, received the first tack of the islands in August 1472, see *Exch. Rolls*, VIII 225.

remained hereditary. When in 1308 the title of earl was abolished in Norway,⁷ the earls of Orkney along with the king's sons were allowed to retain the title. This signifies its importance, and yet through the middle ages the power of the earls was considerably curtailed. The process did not start in 1195 (there was for example the visit of Magnus Barelegs to the earldom in 1098, when the earls were sent to Norway and the king's son was put in the Orkneys in their stead),⁸ but this occasion is the first of which there is firm evidence. Apart from losing Shetland, Harald Maddadsson's authority in Orkney was also curtailed, not only by the loss of income, but by the appointment of royal *sýslumenn* alongside him. Again in 1210 his sons, David and John, were reappointed to the earldom after having thrown off the authority of the kings and restored the position of before 1195,⁹ for which they had to pay a large fine and appoint hostages for their good behaviour. In 1267 fresh conditions were imposed on Earl Magnus Gillibertsson after his failure to support his Norwegian overlord in the struggle with Scotland of the preceding years.¹⁰ By the time of the next piece of direct evidence about the position of the earl, a century later in 1379, the earl had to acknowledge that he held the grant only so long as his behaviour was good, and that he and his heirs had no automatic right to a grant of the earldom.¹¹

By this date there is some indication of what was included in the earl's grant. There would be first of all the earldom estates and rights; but also, it is suggested, the royal estates with all royal appurtenances. The clearest statement of this comes from a grant of the earldom and

⁷ *NgL 1R*, III no. 25.

⁸ *OS*, ch. 39.

⁹ See Peder Clausson's translation of the longer version of the so-called *Boglunga sogur*, not otherwise extant. The text is printed by Guðbrandur Vigfússon in *Icelandic Sagas I* (Rolls Series, 1887), 231-3, and translated by G. W. Dasent in *Icelandic Sagas III* (Rolls Series, 1894), 234-6.

¹⁰ *Hirðskrá*, ch. 15, written in 1277 and thus nearly contemporary with the event mentioned; *NgL 1R*, III 403.

¹¹ *DN*, II 459.

royal rights to Alexander of Ard, one of the heirs of the previous earl, in 1375.¹² Although not created earl, it is said that he was to go before the king in a year's time to prove his right to the "earldom and lordship" It is clear that this meant the royal lands and rights as well as the earldom lands and rights, of which he would be given a permanent grant along with the title of earl. It was his cousin Henry Sinclair who succeeded, however, in getting a grant of the title of earl in 1379, which would again include not only earldom lands and rights but also royal lands and rights.¹³

The first evidence for the royal possession of estates in both Orkney and Shetland comes from 1195 when it is said that King Sverre would keep the estates forfeited by those who had fought at Florevaag, if they were not redeemed within three years.¹⁴ This is understood to be the formation of the royal estates in both Orkney and Shetland, which were in the charge of a royal *sýslumaðr* sent from Norway. But after the reigns of Harald Maddadsson (who killed Arne Lyrja, the *sýslumaðr* in Orkney, after the death of King Sverre)¹⁵ and his son John (who himself was killed by the royal *sýslumaðr* Hanef Ungi in 1231),¹⁶ there is no further evidence that there were Norwegian *sýslumenn* in the Orkneys during the reign of an earl for the rest of the thirteenth, fourteenth or fifteenth centuries. The evidence that there is comes from periods when there was a minority, before the young earl had received his

¹² *DN*, II 437 and 438.

¹³ As was mentioned in note 5 above, the phrase "earldom and lordship" appears in the installation document of 1379 just as in the grant of Alexander of Ard in 1375. That this meant the inclusion of the royal estates in the grant is probable from the fact that there is a special clause at the end of the document whereby the earl promises not to intrude with the king's estates or with his rights — meaning presumably that he would not treat the royal lands and rights as his own property, which was the danger that the kings had to contend with.

¹⁴ G. Indrebø, *Sverris saga* (1920), 132; J. Sephton, *The Saga of King Sverri* (1899), 156-7.

¹⁵ See the text referred to in note 9 above.

¹⁶ *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, ch. 171, in *Icelandic Sagas II* (Rolls Series, 1887), 150-1, and translated in *Icelandic Sagas IV* (Rolls Series, 1894), 156-7.

grant from the king.¹⁷ During the period of an earl's rule there is, however, no evidence for the presence of *sýslumenn* in Orkney. It may be suggested that this was because the earls were given an official grant of the royal estates and rights along with the earldom ones. As has been mentioned, this was most probably well established by 1375, and in 1425 the community of Orkney wrote to the queen of Norway about the young Earl William Sinclair, "for, as he is come of an illustrious, ancient, and noble stock and family, so he is our true, lawful, and naturally born earl and stands as most acceptable and full debtor for all and sundry things which are known to pertain to our said lord the king in our parts of Orkney".¹⁸

By the fifteenth century the earl had become in effect the king's royal official in Orkney, and the earldom they received was comparable with the great administrative *len* in Norway itself.¹⁹ In the installation document of Earl Henry Sinclair of 1379, it is acknowledged by the earl that he and his heirs have no prescriptive right to the earldom, and that on his death the earldom and lordship must return

¹⁷ Sir Bjarn Peff is mentioned as having been *sýslumaðr* in the Memorandum attached to the treaty of 1312 between Scotland and Norway (*DN*, II 114). This document is the first evidence that Earl Magnus had come of age, and it is known that the earldom had been in ward as late as 1309 (*APS*, I 459), so that Sir Bjarn may have been the royal official in the islands during the earl's minority. Similarly, the letter addressed to the royal bailiffs in Orkney in 1321 (*DN*, V 68) was probably written after the earl's death, which took place some time after he sealed the Declaration of Arbroath in April 1320. It is most unlikely that King Robert would address complaints to the bailiffs in Orkney if he could have complained in person to the earl, who was also one of his own earls. Thomas Sinclair, *ballivus* in 1365 (*Registrum Episcopatus Aberdonensis* (1845), 106), Hakon Jonsson in 1369 (*DN*, I 404), and Alexander of Ard in 1375 (*DN*, II 437), were all royal officials during an abeyance of the earldom.

¹⁸ *DN*, VI 423. Translated in *Orkney Recs.*, 47-8.

¹⁹ The *len* was granted out in much the same way as a fief, but it was in fact more of an administrative unit, and did not become hereditary. There were widely varying conditions of tenure however, so the fact that the Orkney earldom did remain hereditary is significant only from the point of view of its geographical situation in respect of Norway.

Although it is said in Mooney, *Cathedral*, 183, that the earldom of Orkney was a *len*, yet it is also said that the earldom lands were the earl's own hereditary property. Evidence for this is taken from the saga period, however, and so does not take into account the occasions in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries when restrictions were placed on the earls: then they had to agree to what were probably fresh conditions, and they held the earldom lands only if granted them by the King of Norway.

to the king, "with the lands and islands and with all right".²⁰ Further, on his return to Scotland, the earl issued a charter at St Andrews announcing that he had promised King Hakon not to alienate or pledge the lands and islands of the earldom away from the king.²¹ This must mean that he had received these lands from the king who thus had territorial superiority over them. They were therefore not the hereditary possession of the earls in the way that odal estates were. The earldom could even be granted as an administrative unit to people other than the heir, as can be seen in 1422 when Earl William's claim was apparently passed over, and Bishop Tulloch received a grant.²² This was therefore a grant of an administrative nature, of the same type as the Norwegian *len*, and it included both earldom estates and royal estates.

There is however evidence that the earls *did* possess their own private, odal estates, apart from their official grant of earldom estates. In 1391 Earl Henry Sinclair gave Newburgh in Aberdeenshire to his brother David *pro suo iure et clameo aliquali in partibus Orcadie seu Schetlandie sibi racione Isabella de Sancto Claro matris sue aliquo modo contingente*.²³ He also got his daughter and her husband to renounce all claims to "any lands or possessions belonging to the said earle or his aires lying within the kingdom of Norraway" in favour of the earl's male issue.²⁴ This is evidence of an attempt on Earl Henry's part to prevent his odal inheritance from being split up between all members of the family, which could reduce important estates to small holdings in a few generations. The last earl, William Sinclair, can also be seen gaining new territorial

²⁰ *DN*, II p. 355. The earl also acknowledges that he is liable to forfeiture of the grant on the non-fulfilment of any of the conditions, when he and his heirs would lose the right to claim the earldom.

²¹ *DN*, II 460.

²² *DN*, II 670. There is evidence from the Complaint of the people of Orkney a few years later that the earl had been to the king in an attempt to prove his claim to the earldom. He was not successful in getting a grant until 1434.

²³ *DN*, II 525.

²⁴ William Drummond, *Genealogy of the House of Drummond*, (1681), 91.

possessions from the amount of land that is described as "conquest" by him in the Rentals.²⁵ Earlier, in 1329, there is a reference to some estates which had been forfeited to the earl and which he had given to his wife, and which probably became private possession.²⁶ Such land would be inherited according to odal law and the family of Sinclair continued to hold such estates after they had given up the earldom to the Scottish crown, both of which facts can be seen from a charter of 1498 by which all the children of Earl William resign to their brother David all their brother and sister portions in Sumburgh and elsewhere in Shetland which they had inherited from their father.²⁷ These estates are different, however, from the earldom estates to be found in most Orkney parishes which the earls could not treat as their own private property because they were granted to them by the king on a lifetime basis only.²⁸

By 1468 several problems had arisen from this situation. There was the obvious danger that the earls would come to regard the lands which they received from the Norwegian king as their own. It can be seen from the 1425 letter from the community of Orkney that the earl considered it his right to be given a grant of the royal possessions in the islands.²⁹ Later this same earl was to cause trouble to the king of Denmark by withholding royal rents and taxes, and not returning them to Denmark.³⁰ There is also evidence

²⁵ The earliest rental printed in *Rentals* was compiled 1502-3, when Henry Lord Sinclair held the earldom on tack from the Scottish king, and it refers many times to estates acquired by Earl William. There is an earlier unprinted Rental dated 1492 (Scottish Record Office, GDI/236/1).

²⁶ *DN*, II 168.

²⁷ A. Peterkin, *Notes on Orkney and Shetland* (1822), Appendix, no. 1.

²⁸ It is said in the Genealogy of Earl William Sinclair (*Bannatyne Miscellany* (1855), III 79-80) that one of the sons-in-law of Earl Malise, Erngisl Suneson, "be law and resone of his wife josite ane part of the landis of Orchardie", and one of his grandsons "josit ane soum part or quantite of the landis of Orchardie, as partinant or belangand, efter the law of Norwege, to the eldest sister be jure of heritage". It is known that the first was created earl of Orkney for a short while, and also that the second was given a year's grant of the lands in 1375. It might be these grants which are meant, although it sounds more like the odal possessions of the earls which were divided among Earl Malise's heiresses.

²⁹ See p. 160.

³⁰ Huitfeldt, *Bescriffuelse*, 158.

that the earls had been alienating some of these estates. In the installation document of the first Sinclair earl there are clauses in which the earl promises not to assume the lands or rights which the king has in Orkney or to intromit with them, nor to alienate the lands or islands of the earldom or lordship.³¹ The earl further issued a charter when he reached Scotland again, announcing that he was unable to alienate, pledge, or give in wadset any of the lands or islands of the earldom of Orkney, because of his promise to King Hakon.³²

The question of rents and taxes, or *landskyld* and *skatt*, is an important and complex problem.³³ Although it is generally assumed that the skatts of Orkney went to the earl,³⁴ there are several pieces of evidence that indicate that the skatts really belonged to the king. Certainly, when the earls received a grant of royal lands and rights, which appears to have been the case from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (see pp. 159-60 above), then they would collect all the skatts and probably keep a certain proportion of them. It can be seen from the Rentals that sometimes the earl and the king are linked together as the recipients of the skatts,³⁵ but there are far more references to the skatts as the property of the king rather than of the earl.³⁶ Some of the skatts may have gone to the earl of right, for there is a bewildering variety of them, but the main butter and malt skatts would be the ones most likely to belong to the king. The last earl undoubtedly came to exercise complete

³¹ DN, II 459.

³² DN, II 460.

³³ "The word 'skattr' had a very wide connotation in Old Norse," — Arne Odd Johnsen in *Betalte Suderøyene og Man skatt eller lensavgift til Norges konge (1153-1263)?* (Avhandlingar utg. av Det norske Videnskaps-Akad. i Oslo. II. Hist.-Filos. Kl. Ny Serie. No. 10), 9. It could vary in meaning from a perpetual land tax to a feudal relief. Here it is used for the annual taxes paid by all the odallers in Orkney, as set out in the Rentals — payments chiefly made in butter and malt.

³⁴ Mooney, *Cathedral*, 171, 190 n.

³⁵ "The scats that the bishop and the Kirk takks that was the kings and the Erls of auld richt and use" (1492 Rental, 19).

³⁶ "Suthirquoy was ay to the King's skatts as his auld rental bears" (*Rentals*, 56). "The quhilk was evir payit to the king" (*Rentals*, passim). "The skatts hereof not in his auld Rentale where they are the kings" (1492 Rental, 58).

control over them, as has been mentioned,³⁷ but the legal right of the king to have them is finally proved by the record of a letter sent by King Christian of Denmark to the people of Orkney and Shetland in 1469 telling them to pay their annual tax to the king of Scotland until the islands were redeemed.³⁸

The situation was made more difficult for the Norwegian kings by the Scotticisation of the islands. The earls themselves had been half-Scottish since the days of Harald Maddadsson, although even the purely Scottish lines appear to have attempted to adapt themselves to the situation of this northern earldom. The Sinclairs were vigorous in prosecuting their interests in the earldom, but their advent must have meant an influx of Scottish friends and relations who expected grants of land and income.

Shetland remained almost purely Norse. A royal estate was formed there also after the battle of Florevaag, and it was closely connected with the Norwegian royal family throughout this period. From 1217 to 1223 Earl Skule held one-third of all the skatlands,³⁹ which may have included Shetland, and from 1273 to 1299 it formed part of the appanage of Duke Hakon Magnusson.⁴⁰ As king, he granted in his will the royal rents from Shetland and the Faeroes for the building of the Apostles' Church in Bergen.⁴¹ In 1350 Magnus Eriksson kept Shetland among other parts of the country for his own use, when he handed over the thrones of Sweden and Norway to his sons.⁴² During this period ducal or royal officials were appointed, but there appears to have been little contact with the earldom of Orkney to the south. It is in fact more probable

³⁷ See p. 162. There is also evidence from the Rentals that Earl William had sufficient control to grant quittance from scat if he wished (*Rentals*, 91).

³⁸ Huitfeldt, *Beskriffuelse*, 190. The phrase used was 'aarlinge skatt', which was translated by Torfaeus, *Orcades*, 189 as *tributaque, et quotannis pendenda imperata*.

³⁹ *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, ch. 22, in *Icelandic Sagas II* (Rolls Series, 1887), 28, translated (ambiguously) in *Icelandic Sagas IV* (Rolls Series, 1894), 30.

⁴⁰ Munch, *Historie*, IV i 547-8.

⁴¹ *DN*, IV 128.

⁴² Munch, *Historie*, V i 515.

that Shetland was in the same administrative sphere as Faeroe, for the *seyðabræv* which was sent to the Faroese by Duke Hakon in 1298 mentions Sigurd, lawman in the Shetlands, as having been sent to the Faroes and making representations on the people's behalf.⁴³ As has been mentioned, there is no evidence that Shetland was restored to the Orkney earldom in 1379 with the coming of the Sinclairs, and in 1418 it was granted to John Sinclair, brother of Earl Henry II, with all rights and on a distinct and feudal basis.⁴⁴

The situation in the two groups of islands when they were handed to Scotland in 1468 was this. In Orkney there was an earl, holding extensive earldom and royal estates, who was the powerful influence in the islands. But in fact his power came only from his grant, which gave him complete administrative and judicial authority, as well as a large income from skatts and rents. In Shetland the royal administration was in the hands of the official called the Foud, whose position in practice differed little from that of the Orkney earl, although he was not so powerful.

In 1468 King Christian I of Denmark and Norway was compelled, through lack of money, to give Orkney and Shetland to the Scottish king in pledge. The pledge was for the dowry money which Christian had promised to give with his daughter Margaret in marriage to James III of Scotland. Eight years before, the two countries had met to resolve their differences, which arose mainly from the annual payment of one hundred merks which Scotland was meant to pay in perpetuity to Norway for the acquisition of the Western Isles in 1266.⁴⁵ At this meeting at Bourges in 1460 Charles VII of France had recommended that a marriage be arranged between the two countries.⁴⁶ On that occasion Scotland had demanded that in addition to remittance of the "annual", Orkney and Shetland be

⁴³ *NgL 1R*, III 34-9.

⁴⁴ *DN*, II 647.

⁴⁵ *DN*, VIII 9.

⁴⁶ Huitfeldt, *Bescriffuelse*, 114-6.

handed over as part of the wedding dowry.⁴⁷ The death of James II delayed these wedding arrangements, but in 1468 negotiations were started again for a marriage between James and Margaret of Denmark.⁴⁸ On 8 September the marriage contract was drawn up in Copenhagen when Christian promised 60,000 Rhenish florins for a dowry in addition to remission of the "annual". He in fact acknowledged that he was able to pay only 10,000 of this and pledged the islands of Orkney for the remaining 50,000. However, when the time came for the Scottish ambassadors to return with the young princess in 1469, Christian could offer only 2000 florins, and so Shetland was pledged for the remaining 8000 florins.⁴⁹

Both the document pledging Orkney and the one pledging Shetland still survive. The first was incorporated in the marriage contract of 8 September 1468,⁵⁰ and the second was issued as a charter by Christian on 28 May 1469.⁵¹ The language used in the two is very similar; both "give, grant, pledge and mortgage and place under assured pledge and security all and sundry our lands of the islands of the Orkneys (*or* Shetland) with all and sundry rights, services and their rightful pertinents, pertaining or that in whatsoever manner may pertain to us and our predecessors, kings of Norway, by royal right".⁵² The same clause also appears in both concerning the redemption of the islands, which could be done by any of Christian's heirs or successors, kings of Norway, from any of James's successors, kings of Scotland; and the Shetland document adds

⁴⁷ *Diplomatarium Christierni Primi* (1856), 128.

⁴⁸ *APS*, II 90.

⁴⁹ Huitfeldt, *Bescriffuelse*, 168-74, followed by Torfaeus, *Orcades*, 187-8, relates events concerning the impignoration.

⁵⁰ Scottish Record Office, *Treaties with Norway, etc.*, no. 2. Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen, A2. A conflated text is printed in *Exch. Rolls*, VIII lxxxvii-lxxxvii, and a full text in *Kirkwall Charters*, 96-102, where there is also a translation.

⁵¹ British Museum, Royal MSS, 18B, VI, p. 13. *NgL 2R*, II 184. (See Appendix I.)

⁵² *Kirkwall Charters*, 107. The Shetland MS, adds *tam subtus terra quam supra terram*, which is perhaps relevant since the rest of the phraseology follows the Orkney document almost exactly. The geological features of Shetland are certainly likely to produce more valuable minerals than those of Orkney.

quandocumque, emphasising that this could take place at any time in the future.⁵³ King Christian followed the pledges up with a promise not to act against them in any way, and this is very much strengthened in the Shetland document with a whole new sentence of forceful promises not to act against this impignoration, which may imply that since the marriage contract of the previous September Christian had attempted to get round the clauses in some way.⁵⁴

These documents are completely non-specific in saying exactly what it was that the Danish king handed over to James III. No distinction is made between Orkney and Shetland and this agrees with what has been said about the situation in the two groups of islands varying little in practice. With the realisation that the kings of Norway possessed a royal estate in Orkney,⁵⁵ it has been said that it was in fact only these lands that the king of Denmark pledged to James III.⁵⁶ While this may correct a false impression that in handing Orkney and Shetland to Scotland superiority over all the odal estates was thereby handed to Scotland too (for in the odal society there was no territorial superior as there was in the feudal society of Scotland), yet the emphasis which is laid on it as a private transaction is erroneous. If (as has been said on p. 160) King Christian granted out both earldom and royal estates to the earl, his position as territorial superior was the same in respect of both these estates. The "lands of

⁵³ The Shetland document also signifies that payment was to be made in the Cathedral of St Magnus in Orkney, where so many monetary transactions between Norway and Scotland had taken place, including, apart from the "annual" payments, the six hundred merks damages mentioned in the Memorandum following the treaty of 1312 (*DN*, II 114).

⁵⁴ For a study of the King of Denmark's attitude towards the pledging of the islands, see a forthcoming article in the *Scottish Historical Review*, XLVIII (April 1969).

⁵⁵ J. S. Clouston, 'The Orkney Lands', *Proceedings of the Orkney Antiquarian Society*, II 62.

⁵⁶ Mooney, *Cathedral*, 14: "It is obvious that King Christian had mortgaged the sovereign rights of Norway and only such lands or isles, as belonged to the Norwegian Crown in Orkney and Shetland." Also 13: "He had pledged . . . the King's Lands — 'with all rights, services and *their* just pertinents', all of which belonged to him as King of Norway." See also W. C. Dickinson, G. Donaldson and I. A. Milne, *A Source Book of Scottish History*, II (1953), 58.

the islands" belonging to the king "by royal right" can therefore mean that the earldom estate as well as the royal estate was pledged. It could be said that the king's sovereignty over both earldom and royal estate was pledged, but this would not have been very meaningful to either Christian or James. What really mattered was who received the royal and earldom skatts.⁵⁷ Further, by handing his royal rights to James — one of which was the right to have skatt — Christian was pledging more than merely land, whether royal or earldom.⁵⁸ For skatt was paid by all the odallers, and whoever received the skatt received also an acknowledgement of his authority. The odallers certainly had complete possession of their land, but by paying skatt they were also tributary. By the transfer of skatt, the Scottish king's right to their tribute was therefore acknowledged by the odallers. The letter which Christian wrote to the inhabitants of Orkney and Shetland on 28 May 1469 tells them to be dutiful and obedient and to pay their skatt yearly to King James.⁵⁹ This makes it quite clear that Christian transferred, along with his landed possessions, the right to have skatt from the whole islands, and with this transference of skatt went the transference of allegiance to the Scottish king. Therefore when Christian pledged, in completely feudal terms, *omnes et singulas terras nostras insularum* of Orkney and Shetland with all dues and pertinents *ad predictas terras . . . spectantibus*, he pledged a great deal more than merely the royal estates. King James thereafter held in pledge superiority over both the "auld earldom" and *pro rege* lands of the Rentals, which together amounted to a large portion of Orkney;⁶⁰ he also had authority over the whole

⁵⁷ I am grateful to Dr T. M. Y. Manson of Lerwick for fruitful discussion of this point.

⁵⁸ Mooney, *Cathedral*, 196, acknowledges the importance of the sovereign rights, saying that they were "the more important clause of the deed of Mortgage", but does not investigate what their importance was.

⁵⁹ Huitfeldt, *Bescriffuelse*, 190.

⁶⁰ Following the totals given under each parish in J. S. Clouston, *The Orkney Parishes* (1927), there were over one thousand pennylands of these categories in the Rentals.

islands which was symbolised by the payment of skatt from every landholder. As there appear to have been no earldom lands in Shetland, the situation there was rather different, and it was only the king's own estates which were pledged; but the right to have skatt was likewise transferred to King James.

This interpretation affects the transaction which took place the year after between King James and Earl William Sinclair and which is known as the "excambion". On 17 September 1470 Earl William was granted the castle of Ravenscraig in Fife with the surrounding estates, in part recompense for his castle of Kirkwall *et toto iure eius comitatus Orchadie*.⁶¹ This is taken as proof that the impignoration did not include the earldom lands, otherwise there would have been no need of this transaction.⁶² If, however, the whole earldom estates and pertinents had been included in the exchange, then the castle of Ravenscraig with its surrounding lands was no equivalent for them. But there is in fact no mention in the document of earldom lands at all. There was no need, for, as has been suggested, superiority over them had already come into James's hands in 1468. What Earl William therefore resigned in 1470 was all "right of his earldom",⁶³ that is, his present grant of it from the king of Denmark and Norway, and the right which he and his predecessors had to claim the earldom.⁶⁴

This explanation would clarify what has appeared to be a puzzling situation. Because of the inequality of the

⁶¹ RMS, II 997.

⁶² Mooney, *Cathedral*, 15.

⁶³ In 1455 when Earl William Sinclair resigned his grant of Nithsdale and its appurtenances and was given the earldom of Caithness, this was *in recompensationem clamei, juris sui et haeredum suorum, domini de Niddisdale*, but he also resigned *omnium aliorum clameorum, jurium, redditum, terrarum, possessionum, officiorum et commoditatum quarumcunque*, which he had received in grant from the king (R. A. Hay, *Genealogie of the Sainteclaires of Rosslyn* (1835), 73).

⁶⁴ On 6 May 1471 an act of parliament was passed ratifying to the earl of Caithness the castle of Ravenscraig with its pertinents and an annual pension *pro iure suo comitatu Orcadie* (Crookston Writs, Misc. Writings, no. 3; Hay, *op. cit.*, 79). King James also gave seisin personally to the earl (*The Scots Peerage*, II 333).

exchange of the earldom for the castle of Ravenscraig,⁶⁵ it has been supposed that it was forced on Earl William, since he was apparently getting the poorer bargain.⁶⁶ But this explanation was on the face of it unsatisfactory. By 1470 William Sinclair had been an important magnate in the Scottish kingdom for fifty years and had held the highest positions of authority.⁶⁷ James III on the other hand was about seventeen, and never the most forceful of the Stewarts. It seems unlikely therefore that the earl would divest himself of all power and wealth in the north because the young king wished to hold the earldom. Moreover the tone of the series of charters granted to Earl William Sinclair on 17 September 1470 does not give the impression that he was being forced into a disadvantageous situation, but rather that he had dictated the terms of the charters. As well as the grant of Ravenscraig, there is a charter promising that this will not be revoked even though the king was under the age of twenty-five when it was made.⁶⁸ The earl got an annual pension,⁶⁹ he was granted licence to reside in whatever place he chose within Scotland or without, and his rents and farms could be taken

⁶⁵ Earl William's resignation of the castle of Kirkwall might be taken as implying that therefore the earldom lands were also included. But, in fact, it appears that the castle of Kirkwall was a private Sinclair possession, and not attached to the earldom lands. It was built by the first Earl Henry without permission from the king of Norway and strictly against his installation oath. This is stated in Earl William's own installation document of 1434 where he promises that on his death the castle will be resigned to the king (*NgL* 2R, I 139). If built illegally and not held on a grant from the king, the castle would not be included in the impignoration of the islands, because it was a private possession in the same way as the odal estates. In fact, the kings appear to have attempted to treat it as their own, for in 1422 a grant of the castle of Kirkwall and earldom of Orkney was made to Bishop Thomas Tulloch (*DN*, II 670). How ineffective this grant was can be guessed from the troubles between the earl and the Bishop in the following years. In 1434 the castle was left in the earl's hands on condition that he resigned it on his death; it was still in his hands in 1468 and was therefore resigned to James with his right to the earldom in 1470.

⁶⁶ Mooney, *Cathedral*, 187.

⁶⁷ He was Admiral of Scotland in 1436, and Chancellor from 1454-6 (*Handbook of British Chronology*, 175). He stood in high favour with James II and received a grant of the earldom of Caithness from him in 1455. During the minority of James III he was an important member of the Regency (J. Lesley, *The History of Scotland from . . . 1436 to . . . 1561* (1830), 33; *DN*, V 836).

⁶⁸ *RMS*, II no. 997.

⁶⁹ *RMS*, II no. 998.

to his place of residence without impediment for the rest of his life. He gained exemption from all parliaments, embassies and other public duties, unless he so wished,⁷⁰ and he also got confirmation of all previous grants of his offices in Caithness.⁷¹ Another charter granted him quittance of all debts or sums of money or claims of any kind which might be made upon him by the king of Denmark.⁷² These were certainly made at his request, as also must have been the final charter in which James promised that he would receive the resignation of the earl's lands and rents whensoever he wished to resign them, and to regrant them by charter and seisin, to be held as freely as they were before the resignation *absque quibuscunque domino regi inde faciendis*.⁷³

Further, the grant of Ravenscraig castle would appear to be the result of deliberate planning on the part of Earl William. This castle, with the lands of Wilston, Carberry and Dubbo, had been held by James III's mother who built the castle, the whole comprising half of the modern burgh of Dysart.⁷⁴ Sinclair connections with Dysart can be traced back to 1364 when William Sinclair, *dominus de Diserth*, witnessed a charter.⁷⁵ The Roslin branch of the family came to hold it, and Henry Sinclair, earl of Orkney, pledged his lands and collieries of Dysart.⁷⁶ In 1450 James II granted remittance of the custom on salt to the inhabitants of the town of Dysart which belonged to Earl William Sinclair.⁷⁷ Therefore, the acquisition of Ravenscraig and its surrounding lands meant a consolidation of present Sinclair holdings there and gave a very fine *caput* to the honour. Soon after, the barony of Dysart and Ravenscraig appears in the hands of Lord Henry Sinclair.⁷⁸

⁷⁰ RMS, II no. 999.

⁷¹ RMS, II no. 1002.

⁷² RMS, II no. 1000; DN, II no. 877.

⁷³ RMS, II no. 1001.

⁷⁴ RMS, II no. 746.

⁷⁵ RMS, II no. 90.

⁷⁶ RMS, II no. 6.

⁷⁷ RMS, II no. 543.

⁷⁸ RMS, II no. 2166.

There is further evidence of Earl William's planning, and this comes from the charter concerning the resignation of his lands. It is evidently relevant to his Orkney estates, for it concerns lands which he holds already, and which he apparently does not yet hold of the king in chief. It has already been seen that the Sinclairs had their own odal estates in Orkney and Shetland, but these private possessions in the islands were swollen in the years prior to the impignoration with estates acquired by Earl William by purchase or excambion and called in the Rentals "conquest". It can be seen that the earl acquired from the odallers a huge personal estate.⁷⁹ It has been thought that these lands came to the crown in 1470 along with the earldom lands.⁸⁰ But if, as has been suggested, Earl William only resigned his grant of the earldom in that year, it seems probable that he retained these "conquest" lands as family estates, which was what his intention must have been in acquiring them. There is no evidence from the Rentals that these lands had become crown property after 1470, but they are always distinguished from the rest by being "conquest". Again this is evidence of a deliberate policy on the part of Earl William to consolidate his personal estate in the islands which would be unaffected by any future demands of the king on the earldom. Some of these acquisitions had been made prior to 1460,⁸¹ and this raises the possibility of an understanding of James II's plans for Orkney and Shetland, before the king's death in the middle of the meeting at Bourges, when it can be seen that Scotland's aim was to get hold of Orkney and Shetland.⁸² These private estates of the earl would be held on odal tenure, and here the provisions of the final charter

⁷⁹ Approximately one-third of the whole odal lands of Orkney came into his hands (Clouston, *History*, 256).

⁸⁰ Clouston, *History*, 285, where it is also added that it may be "a moot point whether Earl William had intended to part with all these private purchases when he gave up the earldom".

⁸¹ There is evidence from the Rentals that some transactions had been made with Bishop Thomas Tulloch, who ceased to be Bishop of Orkney in 1461 (J. Dowden, *The Bishops of Scotland* (1912), 261).

⁸² See pp. 165-6.

come in. The advantages of odal tenure — complete possession and no territorial superior with all the attendant demands of services and feudal dues — would not be lost on the earl, a landholder in both types of society. But with the coming of the islands to Scotland, their overlord was changed to a king used to a feudal method of land-holding, and there was probably little doubt in the mind of the earl that this would come into use in the northern islands. He therefore prepared himself for the inevitable change so that, when he had to resign his lands and hold them by charter from the Scottish king, he might do this on the most favourable terms. This is just what the final charter says, and not only was a promise exacted that he might hold the lands that he resigns as freely as before, but also *absque quibuscunque domino regi inde faciendis*, which may indicate an attempt to avoid feudal dues. This charter is therefore remarkable in several respects. It shows that the series of grants was engineered by the earl, who was making sure that he lost as little as possible from the excambion. It also shows that the earl at least was aware of what was going to happen in Orkney, and the conflict there was going to be when a feudal régime took over an odal society.⁸³ It also implies that the earl considered that the situation was going to be permanent; that is, he did not envisage that the islands would be redeemed by the king of Denmark.

This series of charters of September 1470 would therefore appear to show that the erstwhile earl of Orkney was *not* forced to hand over the earldom to the crown,⁸⁴ but that he gained for himself useful privileges and a useful estate. Nor did it involve so important a piece of resignation as has been supposed, for superiority over the earldom estates had already come to the crown in 1468. Nevertheless, there is still the fact that Earl William Sinclair *did* resign his right

⁸³ This is well seen in the rule of the Stewart earls in the next century.

⁸⁴ Which is the usual interpretation: it first appears to have been stated in a family history of the Sinclair earls quoted in *The Scots Peerage*, II 332-3, where it is said that the earls fell badly out of favour with James III and were subsequently disinherited.

to the earldom, and the reason for his doing so is still not altogether clear. The alternative interpretation has been that he was glad to get rid of his troublesome northern earldom — “dissatisfied with some circumstances in the islands”,⁸⁵ willing to be released from “a position so irksome and unsafe”.⁸⁶ But this does not fit the facts either, for by the impignoration the very problem with which the earl had previously been faced — that of serving two masters — was removed. It therefore appears that the answer must lie in the Scottish crown’s attitude towards the islands; and this can be seen from the demands of the Scottish embassy at the 1460 meeting at Bourges, and which were most probably known to the earl. James II desired to extend his control over all corners of his kingdom, and to have the earldom of Orkney in the hands of the royal family was the most effective way of doing this in the northern isles. That is why the earl amassed an important private estate for himself in the north during the decades before 1468, for he realised that once the islands were under Scottish control he was going to have to yield his earldom up to the crown. As superiority over the earldom estates and their appurtenances came into James’s hands in 1468, the earl was left virtually powerless unless he received a fresh grant, and so he yielded up his theoretical right of the earldom and the main stronghold in the islands for the privileges which he demanded and a useful southern estate.

The process was completed sixteen months later, when, in the parliament of February 1472, “our souverain lorde with deliverance of his thre estatis annex an uniit the erledome of Orkney and the lordship of Scheteland to the croune, nocht to be gevin away in tyme to cum to na persoune nor personis except anerly til ane of the kingis sonnys of lachtfull bed”⁸⁷ This was the culmination of a successful crown policy; nor did the kings of Norway

⁸⁵ G. Barry, *The History of the Orkney Isles* (1867), 233.

⁸⁶ D. Balfour, *Oppressions of Orkney and Zetland* (1859), xvi.

⁸⁷ *APS*, II 102.

and Denmark ever succeed in regaining their sovereignty over the islands.⁸⁸

APPENDIX

A translation of the charter of Christian I by which he pledged the islands of Shetland to Scotland, 28 May 1469.

Christian, by the grace of God King of Denmark, Sweden, Norway, the Slavs and the Goths, Duke of Sleswig and Count of Holstein, Stormarn, Oldenburgh and Dalmenhorst, to all and sundry who shall see our present letters, greeting and royal good wishes for increasing prosperity.

Since in our other letters given at the town of Havn on the eighth day of the month of September, one thousand four hundred and sixty-eight, to the ambassadors of the most excellent prince James, King of Scots, we promised and undertook that we would fully pay the sum of ten thousand florins of the Rhine, and give effectual satisfaction thereon in counted money before their return to the kingdom of Scotland from our kingdom of Denmark; but because, hindered by the insults of our enemies and rebels and by other unlooked for events, we are unable conveniently to pay from our exchequer the foresaid sum as laid down within the limit agreed with the said spokesmen; therefore, having considered the convenience and advantage of our Norwegian kingdom and with the consent and assent of the prelates, magnates and greater nobles of the foresaid kingdom of Norway, we have granted, pledged and mortgaged and under assured security and pledge do grant, mortgage and pledge all and sundry our lands of the islands of Shetland with all and sundry rights and their rightful pertinents whatsoever, under the earth as above

⁸⁸ For succeeding attempts to redeem the islands, see *A Source Book of Scottish History*, II (1953), 57; and G. Goudie, *The Celtic and Scandinavian Antiquities of Shetland* (1904), 213-29.

the earth, not named as named, pertaining or that can pertain in any way to us and our predecessors, kings of Norway, by royal right; to be held and had all and whole our lands of the islands of Shetland foresaid, with all and sundry customs, profits, freedoms, commodities, easements and their other rightful pertinents whatsoever, pertaining or that can rightfully pertain in any way in the future to the foresaid lands of Shetland, by the most excellent prince James, King of Scots, our beloved son and ally and by his successors, kings of Scots whomsoever; until the foresaid sum of eight thousand florins of the Rhine outstanding in the aforementioned letters has been faithfully, fully and completely paid in the Church of St Magnus in Orkney whensoever in the future, and satisfaction effectually made by us, our heirs or successors, kings of Norway, concerning the same, to the foresaid most illustrious James, King of Scots, his heirs or successors, kings of Scots; and we, our heirs and successors, kings of Norway, shall warrant and forever defend against all mortals the foresaid lands of Shetland thus as promised, pledged and mortgaged to the said James, King of Scots, and to his heirs, kings of Scots whomsoever, firmly binding us and our successors, kings of Norway, to this by the tenor of these presents; and we promise and acknowledge on our word as a king that we will not come against the forementioned concession and impignoration, or make it to be contravened directly or indirectly by any designed pretext or scheme in any way.

In testimony of this impignoration, our private royal seal is appended; given in our castle of Havn on the twenty-eighth day of the month of May in the year of our Lord, one thousand four hundred and sixty-nine.

ASPECTS OF LIFE IN ICELAND IN THE HEATHEN PERIOD*

By JÓN STEFFENSEN

THERE is a fair diversity of opinion about the Icelanders' way of life in the heathen period, not least about their religious practices. We have extremely few contemporary sources from that time, and views vary as to their value and significance. Most scholars would probably say that the practice of writing in Iceland did not really begin until the winter 1117-1118, when the so-called *Hafliðaskrá*, the first codification of the laws, was made. Anything older than this must, it is thought, have been preserved orally until it was recorded in script adapted from the Latin. The best sources about the heathen period are thus *Íslendingabók*, written c. 1125, and *Grágás*, in so far as it is possible to decide which of its laws were also in force in pre-Christian times. It is easier to remember verse than prose, and in consequence the value of poetry about contemporary affairs is looked upon as correspondingly greater than that of inherited tales, but the age of many poems and stanzas (*lausavísur*) is a matter of dispute.

In what follows I abide in the main by these principles of source-criticism. I should add, however, that in the case of the poetry I do so not because I consider the oral preservation of heathen verse likely to be that much better than the preservation of information in prose — I am not inclined to believe that long strings of stanzas would have been orally preserved more or less without corruption in Christian times if they were originally composed in a

* This paper has also appeared in Icelandic as 'Nokkrir þættir úr menningu hins íslenska þjóðfélags í heiðni' in *Arbók hins íslenska Fornleifafélags* (1967), 25-44. Various small changes for the better have been made in the English version.

heathen world and finally recorded in a Christian milieu and in an age (the thirteenth century) when many pagan conceptions were certainly remote and incomprehensible to the writers. A poem which has become unintelligible to the person who has to learn it is hardly likely to live long in oral form. My faith in the much greater value of the heathen poems as sources in comparison with traditional tales rests on my assumption that the majority of them were recorded and preserved on rune-sticks until finally given permanence on vellum. And it seems to me likely that the same was true of the essential corpus of ancient laws. I shall not elaborate on the arguments in favour of oral transmission and those in favour of runic writing because they have no decisive bearing on the presentation of the matter in this essay. Final proof is forthcoming for neither theory, but I cannot refrain from noting that it would be a strange fate for such a competent alphabet as the runic series is if its only use was for those terse sentences and occasional personal names preserved on memorial stones and various other hard-wearing objects. It is hard to understand that men who had the intellectual and artistic ability to produce poems like *Hávamál*, *Völuspá* and *Sonatorrek* and were familiar with runes should not also have had the sense to make use of them for communication between themselves and others in their own and later generations.

But whatever we think about this, one fact stays certain, and that is that all our knowledge of the heathen period in Iceland has come to us through Christian hands and must be considered with this in mind. Anything in the early Icelandic sources concerning pagan times that is not supported by old poetry or twelfth-century records must be treated with the greatest caution, just like any other oral tradition or folktale. Agreed, there is generally some truth in an orally transmitted account, but most often it is impossible to separate the grain from the chaff.

The value of nicknames as a source of information about the pre-Christian period

There is one element in early Icelandic writings which seems to me to have as much value as a source of information about the heathen period as the old poems themselves, and that is people's nicknames. It is hardly possible to believe that the authors of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries invented many nicknames any more than they made up place-names — and these too have provided useful information about heathendom in Iceland. The information to be gleaned from nicknames is, of course, limited, but it can still be of great importance when other sources are so sparse, and comparison between the nicknames of pre-Christian and Christian people may shed some light on social changes that followed from the change of religion.

I have made *Landnámabók* and *Sturlunga saga*, the two Old Icelandic works with most personal names in them, the basis of a survey of nickname habits under the pagan and the Christian dispensation. I have made use of the indexes in standard editions of these works¹ and I have included all the forebears, male and female, of settlers (*landnámsmenn*), the settlers themselves and their descendants, and all men of Scandinavian stock, but omitted everyone from outside the Norse sphere (popes, papal legates, kings and so forth). To the heathen period are counted people who may be reckoned to have been brought up as pagans, even though they later became Christians, and also people who professed Christianity in the heathen society but who may be thought to have followed that society's practice when it came to the use of nicknames. In the case of some eleventh-century people we cannot tell for sure whether they grew up as pagans or Christians: decisions about them must consequently be arbitrary, but the number of nicknames involved is so small that the general results are not likely to be affected.

¹ Finnur Jónsson, *Landnámabók* (1900); Jakob Benediktsson, *Skarðsárabók* (1958); Jón Jóhannesson, Magnús Finnbogason, Kristján Eldjárn, *Sturlunga saga* (1946).

Snorri *goði* and his family may be mentioned as an example: he was brought up as a heathen but I have reckoned that all his children were reared as Christians, although of course one may have doubts how deeply rooted the new faith was in its first decades in Iceland. Both the sources investigated include heathen and Christian people, but while there is probably no heathen person named in *Sturlunga saga* who is not also named in *Landnámabók*, the latter work contains the names of a number of Christians who find no mention in the former, especially people who flourished in the eleventh and early twelfth century.

Titles of office or occupation like *goði*, *lögsgumaðr*, *lögmaðr*, *læknir*, *prest* are not counted as nicknames, and compound by-names in *goði* are not included when the first element is derived from a locality, as in *Ljósvetninga-goði*, for example. Similarly, place-names compounded with a proper name, as in *Höfða-Þórðr* or *Hvamm-Sturla*, are not counted as nicknames unless some further significance can be attributed to them, as in *Mostrarskegg*. Nicknames signifying age, e.g. *hinn ungi*, *hinn gamli*, are also omitted. No attempt is made here to consider every name among the great number recorded in *Landnámabók* and *Sturlunga saga* — reference may be made to the complete record in Lind's collection.² Instead, I hope to give a general survey of the use of nicknames in pre-Christian and Christian times on the basis of the two major sources mentioned and with the limitations outlined above.

The table contains the numerical results of the investigation. It shows at once that there are only a few nicknames that were used both of people brought up as pagans and of people brought up as Christians. This indicates that in general the heathen by-names are not likely to be the invention of the authors of *Landnámabók*, for one would then have expected the names to have been more in keeping with those used in the Christian age. It seems consequently safe to conclude that nicknaming habits really did

² E. H. Lind, *Norsk-isländska Personbinamn från Medeltiden* (1920-1).

undergo a great change after the introduction of Christianity. The table also shows that in both periods it is rather more common for men than for women to be given nick-names, and that the practice of giving such names was generally more common in heathen than in Christian times. Approximately one heathen man in four had a nickname, while the average among Christian men is only just on one in five. The ratio between the women with nicknames in the two periods is very much greater than between the men, because with Christianity the custom of giving nicknames to women disappeared almost entirely.

THE OCCURRENCE OF NICKNAMES IN THE HEATHEN AND CHRISTIAN PERIODS

| | <i>Number of people</i> | <i>Number of people with by-names</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>Number of nicknames used only in the heathen or Christian age</i> | <i>used in both the heathen and the Christian age</i> | <i>%</i> |
|-----------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------|--|---|----------|
| MEN | | | | | | |
| heathen | 2367 | 590 | 24.9 | 373 | 52 | 7.1 |
| Christian | 2429 | 460 | 19.3 | 307 | | |
| WOMEN | | | | | | |
| heathen | 761 | 43 | 6 | 38 | | |
| Christian | 542 | 11 | 2 | 7 | 3 | 6.3 |

The position of women in heathen society

Women's nicknames are so few that it is easy to take them all into consideration and a complete list is given below.³ What is particularly noticeable is that of the

³ Nicknames of women in the heathen (I) and Christian (II) periods; the figures in parenthesis give the number of occurrences:

- (I) in ljósa (1), brún (1), kolbrún (1), in mikla (1), in digra (1), in mjóva (1), stong (1), sløkidrengur (1), mosháls (1), rauðkinn (1), bláinn (1), skeiðarkinn (1), knarrarbringa (1), hringja (1), snúinbrók (1), elliðaskjöldur (1), katla (1), arnkatla (2), rymgylta (1), rjúpa (1), gröningjarrjúpa (1), hoggvinkinna (1), in auðga (2), hólmasól (1), árbót (1), bekkjarbót (1), dylla (1), sundafyllir (1), in kristna (1), in óborna (1), in spaka (1), in djúpuðga (1), mannvitsbrekka (2), vólva (1), spákona (1), in snarskygna (1), heidarekkja (1), allrasystir (1), hyrna (1), hestageldir (1).
- (II) stutt-(Lína) (1), knarrarbringa (1), Öngul-(Þóra) (1), in auðga (1), Auð-(Helga) (1), garðafylja (1), ysja (1), farkona (1), syrja (1), in lýgna (1), in spaka (1).

eleven nicknames used of women in the Christian period more than half — six to be precise — are of a derogatory kind: *Stutt*-(Lína), *garðafylja*, *ysja*, *farkona*, *syrja*, *in lýgna*, while in the pre-Christian period only one such name occurs, *rymgylta* or *rúmgylta*. Derogatory nicknames are somewhat more commonly applied to men in the Christian period too, but not to such a marked degree as with the women's names. A good number of the women's nicknames from the pagan period are laudatory and testify to a mental capacity fully comparable with what is witnessed of menfolk in their nicknames. Twelve men in the heathen age have by-names referring to wisdom or knowledge: *inn spaki* (7), *Spak-* (1), *fullspakur* (1), *inn draumspaki* (1), *inn fróði* (1), *viss* (1), making a percentage total of 0.51; four women have similar names: *in spaka* (1), *in djúpuðga* (1), *mannvitsbrekka* (2) — in all 0.53. Under the Christian dispensation the numbers are ten men: *inn spaki* (2), *inn fróði* (6), *Rita-* (1), *lagabætir* (1) — 0.41%, and one woman: *in spaka* — 0.18%. As we shall see, it must in fact be counted doubtful whether the names *inn spaki* and *in spaka* were not relics from pre-Christian times, which hung on into the new age, for all the Christian men and women with this nickname belong to the eleventh century. One attribute not attested in women's nicknames is the gift of poetry, while eight men in the heathen age and eight in the Christian have names relating to it. Evidence for the declining influence of women in Christian society as compared to that in the earlier period may finally be found in the mere numbers recorded: women make up 24.3% of the pre-Christian total, but only 18.3% of the Christian total.

It is clear from the foregoing that after the Conversion there was a complete change in the use of nicknames for women: the respectful nature of the earlier names is replaced by an overtone of opprobrium in the few cases nicknames were used at all. Behind this we can detect

nothing less than a complete change in the situation of women in society and in the attitude towards them following the Conversion. Christian teaching regarded a woman as impure at times of menstruation and after child-birth and introduced a number of other superstitions in connection with sex. This might explain the less well-disposed attitude revealed by the later nicknames, but it does not of course account for the great respect womenfolk appear to have enjoyed in the pre-Christian age. It is easiest in fact to connect this alteration with an alteration in the position of women directly occasioned by the change of religion — that is, to assume that in the old ritual women had an important role while in Christian divine service there was of course no place for them at all. Little is known in detail of the different roles of men and women in sacrifice to the pagan gods. Men seem to have superintended the more important sacrifices, while women are given prominence in connection with the cult of Freyr and various spirits (*vættir*).⁴ Spell-weaving women and sybils (*völur* and *spákonur*) must doubtless have been regarded with reverence in pagan times, and in the charm-stanzas of *Hávamál* it is evidently assumed that such charms were known especially to women, for in the first (st. 146) Óðinn is made to say:⁵

Lióð ec þau kann,
er kannat þjóðans kona
oc manncis mögr.

I know those songs
that no prince's wife knows
and nobody's son knows.

Here it is counted a telling negation that the charm is not known to a "prince's wife", and in the last stanza of the series (st. 163) it is evidently assumed that only women are taught such magic:

⁴ E. O. G. Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North* (1964), chs. XI-XIII.

⁵ Eddaic poems are quoted from *Edda* . . . Herausgegeben von Gustav Neckel . . . umgearbeitete Auflage von Hans Kuhn (1962).

Þat kann ec ip átiánda,
 er ec æva kennig
 mey né mannz kono
 — alt er betra,
 er einn um kann,
 þat fylgir lióða locom —
 nema þeiri einni,
 er mic armi verr
 eða mín systir sé.

The eighteenth I know
 which never I teach
 to maid or man's wife
 — all is better
 which only one knows,
 that slips in with the song's
 end —
 save only to her
 who wreathes me in arms
 and save only my sister too.

Special skill in specifically pagan matters is indicated by a number of by-names from the heathen period. The following are used of men: *Blót*-(Már) (1), *gandr* (1), *tjörvi* (1), with a general, magical application, and *þursasprengir* (1), *völubríótr* (1), *berserkr* (1), *inn hamrammi* (1), with a suggestion of supernatural physical strength or wizardry. To this latter group may be added *hálfröll* (1), *Jötun-* (1), *þurs* (2) and *svartiþurs* (1). Another qualifier which doubtless belongs here as well is *inn rammi*, for although *rammr* is glossed in the dictionaries as 'strong' with reference to physical and mental powers, it seems to me that it had a sense originally like that given in Cleasby-Vigfusson's *An Icelandic-English Dictionary* (1874), 'strong, mighty, with the notion of fatal or charmed power', and that the generalised sense of 'strong' is a secondary development. Seven pagan Icelanders had *inn rammi* as their cognomen, but it evidently lost its respectability with the Conversion, since it practically disappears in the new age. The twelfth-century Finnbogi Geirsson is called *inn rammi* in *Sturlubók* but in *Skarðsárþók* and *Þórðarbók* he appears as *inn fróði*, and this is doubtless the authentic form. When we recall that twelve pagans and seven Christians were given the nickname *inn sterki* or *sterkr*, then it appears very unlikely that *inn rammi* could have had just the same meaning, for otherwise there would have been no need to give up using it among the Christian population. The adj. *rammr* crops up frequently in poetry from the pagan period, but it is usually impossible to tell

whether it refers to natural or supernatural powers. The latter seems more likely in these contexts:

ramt gól Oddrún, / bitra galda (*Oddrúnargrátr*, st. 7)

ragna rǫc, / rǫmm, sigtýva (*Völuspá*, st. 44)

Ramt er þat tré, / er riða skal / ǫllom at upploki (*Hávamál*,
st. 136);

and it seems to me reasonable to think that Kormákr had magic-induced passion in his mind when he put together his words about *rammaðst í mínu jǫtuns snótar leiði*, seeing that the kenning he uses for 'mind' is just *jǫtuns snótar leiði*, 'wind of the woman of the giant'.⁶

We know so little about five of the men with the nickname *inn rammi* that we can have no idea what caused the dubbing (Án, Atli Eilífsson, Kollsveinn, Illugi Ásláksson, Þormóðr Haraldsson). Steinrøðr *inn rammi* was the son of Þórir *þursasprengir*, and of him *Landnáma* remarks:⁷ "who helped many people harmed by malignant spirits. Geirhildr was a witch of a woman and pernicious. People with second sight saw Steinrøðr come upon her by surprise, but she changed herself into the likeness of an ox-hide bag full of water" This is told of in a verse, and that is doubtless why something more than the mere name is preserved about Steinrøðr. There can be no doubt but that the nicknames of father and son in this case — 'giant-burster' and *inn rammi* — have closely related meanings. There is a whole saga about Finnbogi *inn rammi* and much is made of his enormous strength, but the work is not old and far from authentic, so it has no value as a source for the pre-Christian period. All that *Landnáma* says of Finnbogi is that he was the son of Ásbjǫrn *dettiáss*, son of the Eyvindr who settled Flateyjardalr up as far as Gunnsteinar and worshipped them (i.e. the Gunnsteinar). It is not clear what *dettiáss* signifies. Lind thinks it means 'slag-bom, fállbom' — '(movable) bar or boom' — but since his

⁶ *Kormáks saga*, ch. 3; in Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Vatnsdæla saga* (Íslenzk Fornrit VIII, 1939), 207. On this kenning see R. Meissner, *Die Kenningar der Skalden* (1921), 138-9.

⁷ Jakob Benediktsson, *Skarðsárbrók* (1958), 115.

father's peculiar pagan worship is remembered, it seems to me that the second element *áss* might well be the word for '(heathen) god'. In that case, we should have three generations, Eyvindr, Ásbjörn and Finnbogi, all connected in some way with pagan practices. It certainly appears from the sources that can be counted relevant to the heathen period that *rammr* first implied magic power, and it happened later that the supernatural association was lost and the word came simply to signify 'strong'. The male names from the Christian period that refer to witchcraft are: *inn fjölkunnugi* (1), *Skratta-* (1), *Grylu-* (1) and *hrakauga* (1). None of them is attested from the pagan period.

Ten men and one woman in the pre-Christian period have by-names formed from *spakr* 'wise', but in the younger period there are only two men (Gunnar *inn spaki* Þorgrímsson, Lawspeaker 1063-5 and 1075, Þórarinn *inn spaki* Þorvaldsson) and one woman (Þuríðr *in spaka* Snorrardóttir, c. 1026-1112). The name was thus in use until Christianity was firmly established, after which it gave way before *inn fróði*, used of six Christian men but only one heathen (Þórólfr, father-in-law of Þóðólfr, who settled Tjörnes). The fate of the nickname *inn spaki* seems very like that of *inn rammi*, so it is of interest to see whether any change of meaning can be discerned in the different stages. Finnur Jónsson glosses the word in *Lexicon poeticum* (1931) as 'vis, klog (bruges især om de medfødte ævner, modsat *fróðr*, samt om lovkyndighed)' — 'wise, discerning (used especially of inherent powers, opposed to *fróðr*, also of legal knowledge)' — and this distinction in sense between *spakr* and *fróðr* is what most people nowadays would recognise. But the gloss in Cleasby-Vigfússon reads: 'Wise, — by the ancients the word is used with the notion of prophetic vision or second sight' — and this seems to me nearer the mark. In *Fáfnismál* (st. 32) it says that Sigurðr will become *spakr* if he eats of Fáfnir's heart, and in *Völuspá* (st. 29) there is a reference to *spjöll spaklig ok spá*

ganda — reports that are *spaklig* are apparently equated with prophecies produced from wands of wizardry. In both these poems *spakr*, *spakligr* refer to the heathen wisdom which gives the power to foresee the future.

Five of the men with nicknames formed from *spakr* are so little known to us that we have no notion why they received this addition. They are *Spak-Boðvar*, *Hróðgeir inn spaki* of Hraungerði, *Ósvífr inn spaki* Helgason, *Þórarinn spaki* Þorvaldsson and *Þorkell fullspakr* who settled Njarðvík.

It seems likely that it was because of their legal knowledge that the adjective came to be used of *Þorleifr inn spaki* *Hörða-Kárason*, who collaborated with *Úlfjótr* to produce *Úlfjótslög*, of *Gunnar the Lawspeaker*, and probably also of *Bjarni inn spaki* *Þorsteinsson*, grandfather of *Markús Skeggjason the Lawspeaker*. It is noteworthy, on the other hand, that the Lawspeakers *Styrmir Kársson* and *Snorri Sturluson* in the thirteenth century both have the by-name *inn fróði*, not *inn spaki*, but of course it may well have been their status as historians rather than their status as lawyers that was the stronger influence in deciding the cognomen.

*Landnámabók*⁸ says that *Gestr inn spaki Oddleifsson* "gave counsel" to relieve the mortal grief which *Völu-Steinn* suffered for the death of his son *Qgmundr*. According to *Landnáma*, *Gestr* composed the beginning of *Qgmundardrápa*, but in *Snorra Edda* the whole poem is attributed to *Völu-Steinn*.⁹ In the same passage in *Landnámabók* *Ljótr inn spaki Þorgrímsson* asks *Gestr* to tell him the destinies of himself and his son, and *Gestr* does so, but nothing is reported in the dealings between him and *Gestr* to explain why he himself had the cognomen *inn spaki*.

Þorsteinn surtr is also called *inn spaki*. He invented the "summer-increment", so even if we are to read no more

⁸ Finnur Jónsson, *Landnámabók* (1900), 171.

⁹ Finnur Jónsson, *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar* (1931), 93.

into the name than 'intelligent, wise', it is still fully justified. We should, however, also recall that he was the son of Hallsteinn Þorskafjarðargoði, son of Þórólfr Mostrarskegg, and he was brought up by the latter. Both Þórólfr and Hallsteinn were great devotees of Thór, so there is reason to suppose that Þorsteinn was well versed in heathen lore.

Þuríðr *in spaka* lived at Hörgsholt (presumably a name connected with a heathen cult) and was the daughter of the *goði*, Tungu-Oddr. Her daughter Þórdís was the wife of Guðlaugr *inn auðgi*, son of the *goði*, Þormóðr; Jófríðr, the sister of Þuríðr, was the wife of Þorfinnr Selpórisson. Guðlaugr "challenged Þorfinnr to fight for his land and proposed a duel (*hólmanga*) to him. They were both laid low in the fight, but Þuríðr healed them both and reconciled them."¹⁰ We cannot avoid the conclusion that Þuríðr was a woman of remarkable skills and these could not have been unconnected with the old beliefs.

In *Íslendingabók* Ari *inn fróði* describes Þuríðr *in spaka*, the daughter of Snorri *goði*, as *margspök ok óljúgfróð* — 'wise in many things and reliable in her knowledge' — while in *Flateyjarannáll* she is called *spákona*,¹¹ rightly or wrongly we cannot tell.

The *speki* — 'wisdom' — of these last four characters is most naturally interpreted as implying an understanding of heathen lore and the means of acquiring prophetic powers. Finnur *inn draumspaki* must be counted in the same group. Three examples were mentioned above of men who might have been given the nickname *inn spaki* on account of their legal skill, but we cannot be sure that legal knowledge was of itself sufficient cause. Indeed, if it had been, then it is very surprising that Úlfjótr did not get the same name. On the whole, it seems more likely from the evidence that *inn spaki* in the heathen period implied prophetic wisdom, a supernatural gift, but that after the Conversion it came to mean no more than 'wise' on the

¹⁰ Finnur Jónsson, *Landnámabók* (1900), 147.

¹¹ *Flateyjarbók* (1860-8), III 511.

human level. We observed the same kind of change in the content of *rammr*, and I have elsewhere shown the probability of similar changes in some of the *heiti* of the ancient poetry.¹²

The following names referring to magical powers are used of women in the pre-Christian period: *árbót* (1), *sundafyllir* (1), *völva* (1), *spákona* (1), *in snarskyggna* (1). These names are more indicative of spiritual powers than the corresponding nicknames of men, where the idea of physical strength is on the whole predominant.

In concluding these notes on early nicknames to do with pre-Christian practices it is proper to consider the titles which have direct reference to the cult of the heathen gods, i.e. *goði* and *gyðja*. In the early period we know twenty men with the title *goði*, and ten with by-names consisting of a compound ending in *-goði*; two women are called *gyðja* and one *hofgyðja*. In the Christian period only one man is called *goði* and another is referred to as *Skeiðagoði*. Despite the fact that the *goðord*-organisation remained in being throughout the Commonwealth period, it seems clear that it was not counted seemly to use the name *goði* of a Christian, and this appears plainly in *Eyrbyggja saga*, where it says: "Everyone should pay dues to the temple and be obliged to accompany the *hofgoði* on any journey, just as thing-men are now obliged to accompany chieftains (*hofðingjar*)."¹³ The word *hofðingi* has replaced *goði*. I agree with Ólafur Lárússon¹⁴ that the political power of the *goðar* did not have religious origins, dependent on their officiating as temple-priests, as the name itself might suggest. There is nothing in the early sources to indicate that the role of the *goði* was anything like that of the priests who served in the temples of Greece or Rome. The only religious ceremonies which we know from good sources were performed by the *goði* were in connection with

¹² Jón Steffensen, 'Eir', *Nordisk Medicin* 67 (1962), 356.

¹³ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Eyrbyggja saga* (Íslenzk Fornrit IV, 1935), 9.

¹⁴ Ólafur Lárússon, *Lög og saga* (1958), 62-3.

the "hallowing" of assemblies and the swearing of oaths on a ring. It is true that we have no detailed information in ancient sources about the nature of these ceremonies, but they belong to the world of pagan belief and presumably contained a ritual, sacrificial element. That alone may have been ample reason for reluctance to use the name *godi* of a Christian.

Nicknames like *gyðja* and *hofgyðja* must certainly depend on religious practices, since there is no question of *godord*-authority in their case. What sort of religious practices is another matter. We must first consider what is implied by the word *hof*. Was it an institution or a house of the gods or both — just as the word 'church' can mean both an institution and God's house? Olaf Olsen's detailed study of *hof* and *hørgar*¹⁵ from all known sources, written and archæological, has shown that we have no certain relics of such buildings or of any of the ritual equipment which is said to have been used in heathen worship — bowls and some sort of aspergilla used for blood from sacrificial beasts and altar-like erections. Neither do we have any contemporary accounts of *hof* and *hørgar* accurate and full enough to give us a reasonably trustworthy idea of what these structures were like. Olsen consequently inclines to the view that a *hof* was not a special and magnificent building, big enough to hold images of the gods and all the company of people who took part in the sacrificial feast. In his opinion the sacrifices themselves took place in the open air, and if there was a special structure of any kind, it was merely a rudimentary shelter provided for the images of the gods. Even images of the gods cannot be counted certainly attested — perhaps in Iceland they amounted to no more than the representations of the divinities carved on the *gndvegissúlur* — 'highseat-pillars' — in the long-house of the farmer or chieftain, which is where Olsen thinks the actual cult-feasting took place. In support of

¹⁵ Olaf Olsen, *Hørg, hov og kirke* (1966; also in *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie*, 1965).

this conclusion he points to the unusually large long-house site at Hofstaðir in Mývatnssveit with its large, circular cooking pit outside the house. This pit, he thinks, was used when great companies were feasted, while ordinary domestic needs were satisfied by a small cooking place inside the house.

It does not seem possible to fault Olsen's conclusion in the main, and it straightway offers an explanation of the great changes which occurred in the position of women in Icelandic society with the change of religion. An important part of the heathen cult practices took place within her domain, in the home itself, and it is understandable that she played an important part in them, just as the recorded nicknames would lead us to suppose. With the Conversion the major part of religious activity shifted from the home to the church, and more important still, women were forbidden any kind of role in connection with divine service.

Cures and charms in pagan and Christian times

When Christianity was accepted in Iceland, the heathen party was allowed certain indulgences. One of them was that "people should sacrifice in secret if they wished, but a penalty of minor outlawry (*fjörbaugsgarðr*) was incurred if there were witnesses".¹⁶ It seems to me that this too may be attributed to the complete alteration in the women's religious role that was now introduced. It is an extremely odd arrangement, and it can hardly have been enacted out of thoughtfulness for old people deep sunk in pagan ways — if it had been, the obvious compromise was to give such obdurates the opportunity of being prime-signed, a well established means of allowing heathens to mix freely with Christians. The permission to sacrifice in secret must have been given for reasons which the Christians were prepared to take seriously, and which led them to reconcile themselves to it as a temporary measure. Few people are

¹⁶ Finnur Jónsson, *Íslendingabók* (1930), 29.

entirely self-reliant, and many have to seek the help of others when troubles surge upon them, in times of mental stress and illness. In the heathen society it was chiefly the woman's part to tend such sufferings, and where practical means to cure them were not available, they had recourse to charms involving divine powers. Christian forms of relief came with the Conversion, but these were only applicable through exorcists and priests, and there were not enough of these at the beginning to attend to all who needed such help. It was because of this that secret sacrifice was permitted even after Christianity became the law of the land. That it was just this kind of sacrifice that was covered by the indulgence may be deduced from the prohibitions pronounced by the Christian section of the laws in *Grágás*, for of all the elements in the pagan faith these were the hardest to get rid of. The laws say this: "People are to believe in one God and in his saints and not worship heathen creatures. A man worships heathen creatures if he signs his cattle to anyone other than God or his saints." "A man deals in witchcraft, if he utters it or teaches it or has it uttered over himself or his cattle." "People shall not have stones about them, or fill them with magic power in order to tie on people or on people's cattle. If people put trust in stones to ensure their own health or that of cattle, the penalty is minor outlawry."¹⁷

In connection with faith in stones "to ensure health" I may refer to various stones discovered in a good number of heathen burials in Iceland. It seems most likely that these were regarded as having particular power, like those forbidden in the laws. The burials are as follows: (1) Man's grave by Karlsnes: small, translucent, square stone, apparently in the man's purse.¹⁸ (2) Man's grave by Austarihöll: rounded zeolite with holes and scratches, 2.1 cm. across at its widest; found at the foot of the grave

¹⁷ Vilhjálmur Finsen, *Grágás* (1852), I 22-3 (cited as *Grágás* (1852) hereafter).

¹⁸ Kristján Eldjárn, *Kuml og haugfé* (1956), 50-51; referred to as *Kuml og haugfé* hereafter.

along with 6 stones for striking fire from.¹⁹ (3) *Sílastaðir*, grave no. 4, male burial: half-transparent stone (nodule or infilling), apparently contained in the man's pouch with a number of other small articles.²⁰ (4) Woman's grave by *Ketilsstaðir*: stalactite, light blue in colour and half-translucent, strangely like the shape of a human hand; positioned on a level with the pelvis.²¹ (5) *Hafurbjarnarstaðir*, grave no. 1, female burial: two curious stones, one egg-shaped, dark grey in colour, the other white with dark spots, shaped like a wooden clog; found with a comb at pelvis level.²² (6) *Selfoss*, grave no. 1, female burial: "Between the right hip-bone and the lowest vertebrae was a little heap of blueish, clay-like stuff and in this were some dark little stones, and with or on top of this stuff were a few small iron fragments, which made no recognisable shape, and were in any case thick with rust. Higher up, about halfway up the back, was another pile containing some insignificant iron fragments, a small semi-transparent stone with a hole in it, like a bead, a small sea-snail's shell, and two peculiar stones, one grey and oval shaped with a hole in it, like a tiny loom-weight, the other an infilling, formed like a cylinder or ring. All these items seem to be valueless trumpery, collected together for the sake of whimsy, superstition or curiosity."²³ (7) *Ytra-Garðshorn*, grave no. 3, female burial: "Small spherical stone of the kind we now know that people collected for some reason"; found with other objects at the foot of the grave.²⁴ (8) *Ytra-Garðshorn*, grave no. 9, female burial: a pile of pieces of quartz (chalcedony), 58 in all, most small but some bigger; a pair of tweezers and a fragment of beeswax were among other articles in the grave.²⁵ (9) *Ytra-*

¹⁹ Kristján Eldjárn in *Árbók hins íslenska fornleifafélags* (1965), 22-3; this work is abbreviated *Árbók* (1965) hereafter.

²⁰ *Kuml og haugfé*, 140-2.

²¹ *Kuml og haugfé*, 179-81.

²² *Kuml og haugfé*, 74-5.

²³ *Árbók* (1965), 10.

²⁴ *Árbók* (1965), 39.

²⁵ *Árbók* (1965), 46.

Garðshorn, grave no. 10, probably a woman's grave: a quartz piece of the same kind as those found in grave no. 9.²⁶

This makes a total of nine graves, three men's and six women's, and when one remembers that none of them came to light before 1932, it seems safe to assume that such stones were previously overlooked and never recorded, so that in fact they probably figured a good deal oftener among grave goods than these comparatively few finds might suggest. The stones are of various kinds but must all have been believed to possess special powers. They all have in common some peculiarity of shape or formation or both, just like the stones which we pick up here and there and keep for fun. They none of them have figurings on them that might have been made on purpose, but it is likely that they acquired their healing powers through some kind of heathen ceremony. Charms were perhaps recited over them, or perhaps their magic potency came through reddening in the blood of a sacrificial animal — perhaps other ritual was used. Generally speaking, there are only one or just a few such stones in any grave, but in Ytra-Garðshorn no. 9 there was a whole pile of them, as if it were a pagan drugstore. It is hard to avoid the thought that the woman buried there was a physician — as the fragments of wax and the tweezers might indicate too. Wax was a common element in many ointments in earlier times, from as far back as the second millennium B.C. in Egypt,²⁷ and it is mentioned in the same connection in the old Icelandic book of cures of the type derived from Harpestræng.²⁸

I regard the tweezers as a medical instrument, used for holding the edges of wounds and for plucking bone-fragments and debris from wounds. We have only one other pair of tweezers from a grave-find in Iceland. They are of bronze and come from a woman's grave at Kornská in Vatnsdalur.²⁹ That grave had been broken into and

²⁶ *Árbók* (1965), 47.

²⁷ H. E. Sigerist, *A History of Medicine* I (1955), 339.

²⁸ H. Larsen, *An Old Icelandic Medical Miscellany* (1931).

²⁹ *Kuml og haugfé*, 95-7.

disturbed long ago and when it was finally investigated, it was not done by specialists, so we shall never know whether any curious stones were also to be found in it. According to Jan Petersen's list of Viking Age tools from Norway,³⁰ nine pairs of tweezers have been found there from the Later Iron Age, two of bronze and seven of iron, but he does not say what they were used for. Many archæologists think that such small tweezers were toilet articles used for plucking eyebrows and other hair, and this is certainly appropriate in some cases, but not in all. Tweezers similar in make to those in Viking Age graves have for example occurred in medieval monastic sites in Denmark and Sweden, and these were indubitably used as medical instruments,³¹ just as I believe the Icelandic specimens to have been. Jan Petersen makes no reference to special stones in his catalogue, and as far as I know, they are nowhere mentioned among Viking Age grave-finds in any of the Scandinavian countries. It may be that no attention has been paid to such stones or that I have missed some references to them. From the earlier Bronze Age, on the other hand, especially in Denmark, such stones have been found; they occur in pouches carried on a waist-belt, and tweezers are found among the other small articles with them.³²

It is, of course, also well known that belief in stones with magical properties has lived in the Northern countries right up to the most recent times. In Icelandic sources³³ we meet stones to ease childbirth, stones to staunch blood, healing stones, stones that confer invisibility, wishing stones, stones of life and others — and it is no wonder. What is more remarkable is to find that, in spite of the ban in the Christian laws on belief in stones, a stone to ease childbirth figures in the inventory of the property of the

³⁰ *Vikingetidens redskaper* (1951).

³¹ V. Möller-Christensen, *The History of the Forceps* (1938).

³² E. Lomborg, 'Troldmandstasken', *Skalk*, 1966, no. 5, 3-8.

³³ Jónas Jónasson, *Islenzkir þjóðhættir* (1934), 410-11.

cathedral church at Hólar in 1525 and 1550.³⁴ It can hardly be doubted that the stone was used to help women in difficult labour, and in that case the Church had long since given its blessing to the use of stones believed to have unusual properties, as long as they had first been "signed to God and his saints"

Baptised — "born"

Íslendingabók says this of the Conversion: "It was then made law that everyone should be Christian and accept baptism who were not previously baptised in the country here. But the old laws should stand in the matter of the exposure of children and the eating of horse-flesh."³⁵ Baptism gave people entrance to Christian society, and because of this the Christian laws in *Grágás* have very detailed provisions about baptism, with the intention of ensuring that no new-born child should die unchristened — if he did, then he could not be buried in consecrated ground. And no one who was unbaptised had any rights as a citizen in Iceland after the country was converted to Christianity.

The following explanation of the dispensations about the exposure of children and the eating of horse-flesh is found in a text of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, where it makes part of Þorgeirr the Lawspeaker's speech ordaining the introduction of the new religion: "But because those men who have most opposed the Christian mission can hardly grasp that it is possible to bring up all the infants who are born, as well of poor as of rich parents, and possible at the same time to deny and forbid as human food those things in which the ordinary people have their chief resource — therefore they shall have their way over that, that the old laws shall stand in the matter of the exposure of children and the eating of horse-flesh."³⁶ This conjectural explana-

³⁴ Guðbrandur Jónsson, *Dómkirkjan á Hólum í Hjalladal* (Safn til sögu Íslands V, nr. 6, 1919-29), 399-400.

³⁵ Finnur Jónsson, *Íslendingabók* (1930), 29.

³⁶ *Fornmannasögur* II (1826), 242; Ólafur Halldórsson, *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* II (1961), 196-7.

tion is doubtless right in the main, but we are nowhere told what was contained in the old laws concerning the exposure of children.

The dispensation must naturally have been looked upon as an equitable arrangement pending the introduction of new maintenance laws to meet the changed situation that resulted from abandoning the practice of putting infants out to die. Poor people were a matter of concern to the Church, which was soon in a position to relieve the burden of their maintenance by gifts of food prescribed in connection with the legally imposed fasts, and this must have had such effect that it was possible to rescind the indulgences allowed at the Conversion. Final organisation of poor relief only came however with the tithe law of 1096, when the maintenance of the poor was made the duty of the *hreppar*. Some scholars believe that the *hreppar* already existed in some form in the tenth century.³⁷ That may be true, but in my view they can have played no part in the maintenance of the poor and incapable until after the Conversion. Their involvement in this was then a solution to the problem caused by the abolition of the practice of allowing new-born children to die.

The responsibility for keeping people alive in pagan times was entirely a matter for the family, and it seems reasonable to believe that the beginning of the *Grágás* section on dependent and incapable people (*ómagabálkr*) goes back to pre-Christian times. It reads: "It is said as the law that each man must maintain his own dependents here in the country. A man must first maintain his mother. If he can manage more, then he must also maintain his father. If he can do better still, then he must maintain his children. If still better, then he must maintain his brothers and sisters. If better again, then he must maintain those people whose heir he is and those he has taken in against promise of inheritance. If yet better, then he must

³⁷ Magnús Már Lárusson, *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder* VII (1962), 17-22.

maintain the freedman, to whom he gave liberty.”³⁸ “If he has not the means to maintain them [mother and father], then he is to go to their nearest kinsman who has the means to maintain them, and he shall offer to work off a loan as a bondsman in his service.”³⁹ Provisions such as these make it understandable that it was a matter of the greatest importance for every head of a household to take measures to prevent an intolerable number of dependents — and that it seemed essential to keep the practice of abandoning infants as one means of control.

But what were the old laws about the exposure of children, or rather, how was a child accepted into the heathen society? The Christian method was through baptism—a child thereby became a member of the Icelandic community from the year 1000 on, and the Church had some responsibility for the spiritual and material welfare of God’s children, just as they too had duties to perform towards the Church. When Iceland came under a foreign crown, then God’s children by baptism also became the king’s subjects by oath-taking. But it can nowhere be seen that the heathen faith in Iceland was ever supported by a definite institution with organised authority capable of giving its adherents protection and support in any way comparable to the Christian Church. The only institution that had any kind of influence and authority under the heathen dispensation was the family. That is the fixed point of departure, as may be seen from the sections in *Grágás* dealing with killing, atonement, inheritance, maintenance of dependents, and elsewhere. It is consequently most likely that “citizenship” in pagan times was connected with the family, as is also unmistakably implied by the expressions “legally come into a family” and “a man shall be in a family according to our laws”⁴⁰ In pre-

³⁸ *Grágás* (1852), II 1.

³⁹ *Grágás* (1852), II 2.

⁴⁰ *Kominn í ætt at lögum, Grágás* (1852), I 169; *skal maðr í átt vera at lögum várum, Vilhjálmur Finsen, Grágás . . . Staðarhólsbók* (1879), 192 (cited as *Grágás* (1879) hereafter).

Christian times a child was therefore accepted into its natural family, and doubtless this meant acceptance by the head of the family, the head of the household, if it was a child born in wedlock. And it may be thought probable that this was formally done at the same time as the child was given a name.

In the charm-stanzas in *Hávamál* there is mention of "casting water on a young man" (*verpa vatni á þegn ungan*, st. 148), but we hear most about this ceremony in *Rígsþula*, a poem thought to be at least as old as the tenth century.⁴¹ There it says (st. 7):

| | |
|--------------|------------------------------|
| Ióð ól Edda, | Edda bore a child, |
| ióso vatni | they sprinkled it with water |
| ... | ... |
| héto Þræl. | called him Þræll. |

It says the same of Amma save at the end where the verb *kalla* is used in "they called him Karl" (st. 21); and of Móðir it says (st. 34):

| | |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Svein ól Móðir, | Móðir bore a boy, |
| ... | ... |
| ióso vatni, | they sprinkled him with water, |
| Iarl léto heita. | they let his name be Iarl. |

Elsewhere (st. 12) it says of the offspring of Þræll and Þý:

| | |
|-----------------|------------------------------|
| Born ólu þau, | They brought forth children, |
| biuggo oc unðo, | lived and were content, |

and these make the race of slaves; the same expressions are used of the children of Karl and Snor (st. 24), who make the race of yeomen. But of Iarl and Erna it says that they "increased generations" (*ættir ióco*, st. 40), and of their sons: "born to Iarl, they grew up there" (*Uþþ óxo þar/Iarli bornir*, st. 42). Here the wording is changed: Iarl's sons are *bornir* to him, the children of Karl and Þræll were *alin*. The dictionaries take *borinn* in this context to be an adjectival past participle of *bera* in the sense 'give birth to', though they remark that *bera* in this meaning is chiefly

⁴¹ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Íslenskar bókmenntir í fornöld* I (1962), 287.

used of cows and sheep. It seems to me difficult to reconcile these facts, and we ought to consider more closely what was implied in the notion expressed by *borinn* in ancient times. I know of no example of *bera* 'give birth to' used of human women, but it is used of supernatural beings: "Álfrøðull bears one daughter" (*Vafþrúðnismál*, st. 47), Loki "has born children" (*Lokasenna*, st. 23, 33), nine maidens of giants bore Heimdallr (*Hyndluljóð*, st. 35), Rindr bears Váli (*Baldrs draumar*, st. 11). The form *borinn* is generally used either where it is said that a child is "born to the father" — þú ert, Óttarr, | *borinn* Innsteini (*Hyndluljóð*, st. 12) and *Guðrún Giúca borin* (*Hamðismál*, st. 2) — or, unspecifically, "born into the world" (*Helreið Brynhildar*, st. 4), "one alone was born | greater than all" (*Hyndluljóð*, st. 43), and "I remember giants | born long ago" (*Völuspá*, st. 2). Compound words like *høldborit* and *hersborit* (*Hyndluljóð*, st. 11) also indicate that a child was "born to the father". It is the word *óborit*, however, which has given rise to most speculation. The various attempts at interpretation are surveyed by Halldór Halldórsson in his essay on the subject.⁴² He himself comes to this conclusion: "It seems to me most probable that the cognomen *óborni* (*óborna*) means: 'not recognised by the father' ",⁴³ and he points out that the ancient expression for the ceremony of recognising a child was, literally, 'to bear into the family' (*bera í ætt*).⁴⁴ With this I fully agree, with the addition that someone who was *borinn* was in fact "borne" to his father to be given a name and to be received into the family.

In substance this heathen custom appears very clearly in the truce- and peace-formulae in the form they have in the *Staðarhólsbók* text of *Grágás*: "N.N. atones for himself and his heir, begotten and unbegotten, born and unborn, named and unnamed (*getinn ok ógetinn, borinn ok óborinn*,

⁴² Halldór Halldórsson, *Örlög orðanna* (1958), 93-110.

⁴³ *ibid.*, 109.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, 108.

nefndan ok ónefndan)'.⁴⁵ In the Codex Regius it reads: *alinn ok óborinn, getinn ok ógetinn, nefndan ok ónefndan*,⁴⁶ and it also appears like this in *Heiðarvíga saga*.⁴⁷ It is obvious that the order is wrong in these latter two texts: an heir is not *alinn* before he is *getinn*, and neither do *alinn ok óborinn* go together. The scribe of Codex Regius seems in fact to have been in some perplexity at this point, for he first wrote *alinn ok óalinn*, and then in this last word crossed out *al* and wrote *bor* above it. At any rate it seems evident that he looked on *alinn* and *borinn* as synonymous, so that the ancient sense of *borinn* had presumably been lost by his time, and there can be no doubt that it had been by the time of *Jónsbók*, for there we read: "Not only all those who swear this oath are obliged to take it upon themselves and keep it, but also all those who owe the king obedience, born and unborn (*alnír ok óbornír*) —", and, to make it quite clear, "All men also know that that child who was born in the last year of the king's life, to him the king is under the same obligation to give justice as to the man who pledged him his faith at his first assembly."⁴⁸

If *borinn* had from the start been used in the sense of 'born', 'delivered', then I can see no plausible reason why the verb *bera* is never used of women to mean 'bear, give birth to'. But if the pagan sense of *borinn* was 'carried to the father and so borne into the family', then it is understandable that this significance was soon forgotten when the earlier custom was replaced by Christian baptism.

If, as thus seems probable, the newborn child was brought to the father for formal reception into the family, then he doubtless at the same time received his name, probably "hallowed" by the sprinkling of water. We must pause to consider who brought the infant to the father. In pagan Greece there were two kinds of midwife, an

⁴⁵ *Grágás* (1879), 407.

⁴⁶ *Grágás* (1852), I 206.

⁴⁷ *Heiðarvíga saga*, ch. 33; in Sigurður Nordal and Guðni Jónsson, *Borgfirðinga sögur* (Íslensk Fornrit III, 1938), 313.

⁴⁸ Ólafur Halldórsson, *Jónsbók* (1904), 29-30.

ordinary kind and others who were looked on as having special medical skills. It was the latter's part to bring the newborn child to the father, and it was regarded as a very serious responsibility. If the father accepted the child, he took it up and afterwards returned it to the midwife, but if he rejected it, he turned away.⁴⁹ In Iceland it seems to have been the mother herself who brought the child to the father. This seems to follow from *Rígsþula*, in which the parents are said to sprinkle the child with water, from the compounds *þýborit*⁵⁰ and *frilluborit*, and from the following passage in *Landnámabók*. "Myrgjol was the earl's wife's bondmaid and served her faithfully. She had supernatural powers. She looked after the 'unborn' child of the queen (*barn dróttningar óborit*), while she was in the bath."⁵¹ I think that this means that Myrgjol took the child and looked after it while the lady washed herself after her delivery and before she herself carried the baby to the earl. None of the old sources says what was done when it was decided to expose a child, but if it was a child born in wedlock the decision obviously rested on the father because he had the express duty of maintaining his dependents. This article in *Grágás* seems to throw some light on this: "The child whose mother is legally wed (*mundi keypt*) has rights of inheritance if it comes alive into the world and food comes into its mouth."⁵² This is from *Codex Regius*; in *Staðarhólsbók* it says "and food gets down inside him".⁵³ This bit about nourishment must be pre-Christian, because under Christianity the law must have linked rights of inheritance with baptism, for only baptised persons had legal rights in Christian society. This comes out clearly in *Jónsbók* where it says: "A child inherits from its father and from others even though it is begotten and not born [when

⁴⁹ H. Graham, *Eternal Eve* (1950), 39.

⁵⁰ *Grágás* (1852), I 201; cf. the verse beginning *Þýborna kveðr þorna* by Egill, see Sigurður Nordal, *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar* (Íslenzk Fornrit II, 1933), 156.

⁵¹ Finnur Jónsson, *Landnámabók* (1900), 157.

⁵² *Grágás* (1852), I 222.

⁵³ *Grágás* (1879), 98.

the person to be inherited dies] and comes alive into the world and is baptised.”⁵⁴

From this we may conclude that in heathen times the rights of a newborn child of free parents depended on whether it was given nourishment or not. If it was, then the child obtained those rights in society which went with its status in other respects. If a free-born infant was to be put out to die, then it had to be done before it was given any nourishment — otherwise man-slaughter was involved. This provision made little difference to the situation of the offspring of slaves, for a master could kill his own thrall with impunity. The procedure must then have been like this: straightway after the child was born, the father decided whether it should be reared or abandoned; if the former, then the child was tended and given suck, and as soon as the mother was strong enough, she brought the child to the father to receive its name and acceptance into the family.

Not all children born of free parents were accepted into the father's family. *Grágás* says this: “Not all men have rights of inheritance even though they are free-born. That man has no rights of inheritance whose mother was not wed with payment of the legal price (*mundr*) of 8 ounces or more, or not wed with a marriage-gathering (*brúðhlaup*), or not wed with formal betrothal.”⁵⁵ In such an eventuality it seems likely that the same law applied as in the case of a mentally deficient person who married without the consent of the man legally responsible for him. The provisions relating to such a *heimskr maðr* follow immediately after the passage just quoted, and the law relating to his unrecognised children reads thus: “If that man marries without the consent of his rightful heir, then the child [he begets] shall not inherit him, and responsibility for its maintenance rests with the mother's family until it reaches the age of sixteen.”⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Ólafur Halldórsson, *Jónsbók* (1904), 79.

⁵⁵ *Grágás* (1852), I 222; *Grágás* (1879), 66.

⁵⁶ *Grágás* (1852), 223; *Grágás* (1879), 67.

In this connection we should consider what the position of illegitimate children was in the heathen period. *Grágás*, especially the section on betrothal and marriage, shows that two sorts of case could arise from unlawful intercourse: a case could first be brought for fornication, and if a child was born a man could then also be prosecuted on grounds of paternity.⁵⁷ It seems to me likely that in the heathen period it was the fornication which was the chief offence — very heavy penalties are prescribed for it — while the paternity question would seem of less importance, as long as the exposure of children was permitted. With Christianity the matter of paternity became the central issue, because on that depended the responsibility for maintaining the child for the first sixteen years of its life. Another point is that the Church was especially interested in the truth in questions of paternity because of the strict rules governing marriage within the forbidden degrees, though this, of course, was something that applied equally to fornication. It is probable that the legal process in the case of unlawful intercourse in the heathen period was on the following lines: As soon as evidence of fornication was forthcoming, the legal guardian of the woman summoned the man in question to answer this case. If he admitted the case and offered atonement, then agreement was probably most often reached; full atonement would be paid for the unlawful intercourse, but the treatment of the couple's child would depend on circumstances. The father could say that the child should be abandoned at birth, so refusing to accept any further responsibility for it. Whether it was actually abandoned or not would then depend on the decision of the woman's legal guardian. If it was decided to rear the child, then responsibility for it rested entirely with his mother's people, and its position is made clear in this article from the *Grágás* section on killing: "If a man is killed who has not been legally introduced into a family, even though he is acknowledged as

⁵⁷ *Grágás* (1852), II, chs. 157-8.

some man's son, then the prosecution for the killing rests with his mother's kin, and theirs is the atonement, and the same applies in matters of inheritance."⁵⁸ This must also have covered the case of the illegitimate child who was born before the father could be contacted or who was not accepted by the father, whenever the woman's guardian decided that it should be reared. There seems little doubt but that all children in the heathen period who were in this position could be called 'unborn(e)', i.e. 'not carried to the father and accepted by him as a member of his family'. If the father of an illegitimate child decided that the child should be brought to him when it was born, then he formally admitted his position as its father at the same time as agreement was reached on the case brought on grounds of unlawful intercourse. Doubtless this could also happen at a later date if it proved impossible to get in touch with the father before the birth of the child, but in that case the legal guardian of the mother had to face the possibility of the father's refusal to accept the child — if he did refuse, the mother's family had to shoulder the responsibility of bringing it up.

⁵⁸ *Grágás* (1852), I 169.

THE STORY OF *ÆTTERNISSTAPI* IN *GAUTREKS SAGA*

By JAMES MILROY

THE strange story in *Gautreks Saga*, chapters I and II, has attracted comment in various works on Norse literature and religion, and its central point, the account of *Ætternisstapi*, 'The Family Cliff',¹ over which members of a remarkable family of exiles throw themselves, has naturally received most attention. Ranisch, in his edition of the saga, cites examples collected by Grimm of the killing of the aged, and considers that the saga may preserve a memory of some such practice.² Similar conclusions are reached by de Vries, who stresses the importance in primitive society of leaving this life "in ungeschwächter Lebenskraft" and points out that the practice of killing the old is attested from many Indo-European peoples:³

Wenn die Gautrekssaga berichtet, dass auf diese Weise, die alten Menschen ohne jede Krankheit sterben und zu Odin fahren, so schimmert noch der Gedanke durch, dass man in voller Kraft ins andere Dasein übergehen sollte.

Miss Hilda Ellis is also inclined to see in the story the misunderstood remnant of an ancient ritual: "a parody or misunderstood echo of the tradition of dying by fire" connected with an Óðinn cult. M. Olsen uses the account to support evidence he adduces suggesting rituals of horse

¹ I am grateful to Dr Ida L. Gordon for helpful criticisms of an earlier draft of this paper.

Ætterni- (a rather rare word for "family") appears consistently in the longer version MSS, A, b and C. The shorter versions commonly have *attina*- and other variants (e.g. *attmanna*-), which suggest that *ætterni*- was not understood or not original. The oldest fragment, E (AM 567, XIVγ), has *attar*-.

² W. Ranisch, *Die Gautrekssaga in zwei Fassungen* (Palaestra N1, 1900), lxxvii-lxxviii. J. Grimm, *Deutsche Rechtsalterthümer* (fourth edition 1899), I 669-75.

³ J. de Vries, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte* (second edition 1956-57), I 189. Examples of self-immolation amongst non Indo-European peoples are given by J. G. Frazer, *The Dying God*, 10 ff.

sacrifice and cliffs sacred to horses in Norway. Recently, Professor Turville-Petre has alluded to the story again:⁴

The *Gautreks Saga* (I-II), which certainly incorporates some valid traditions, describes a form of ritual suicide. In times of famine, men and women of Gautland would hurl themselves over the Family Cliff (Ætternisstapi), believing that they would go to Valhöll. Remarkably strong support for this is found in later Swedish traditions.

The traditions here referred to were investigated early in this century by J. Götlind, and recently by Mr Davið Erlingsson. These researches have uncovered local traditions about *ättestupor*, over which old people are said to have been thrown at one time, extending from Hälsingland in the north to Skåne, the great majority being in Västergötland. They are so widespread that it is now difficult to attribute their origin solely to the influence of the publication of *Gautreks Saga* in 1664 — as Ranisch did.⁵ On the other hand, it is wise to be sceptical about the evidence of modern folk tradition.⁶ Traditions of punishments, suicides and tragic accidents on cliffs and rocks are ancient and widespread throughout Europe.⁷ There is no reason why traditions already existing in Sweden should not have been influenced in details by the publication of the saga, and perhaps strengthened and

⁴ G. Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North* (1964), 254; H. R. Ellis, *The Road to Hel* (1943), 74; M. Olsen, 'Røis og Rysseberg', *Maal og Minne* (1923), 182 ff.

⁵ I am grateful to Mr Davið Erlingsson for letting me see a typescript of his unpublished folklore study of *Ætternisstapi*. See also J. Götlind, *Saga, sägen och folkliv i Västergötland* (1926), e.g. nos. 91 and 92. For the views of Ranisch and Noreen, see Ranisch, *op. cit.*, lxxxii-lxxxiii.

⁶ The tendency for popular lore to become stereotyped or "mythologised" is emphasised by M. Eliade, *Myth of the Eternal Return* (1954), e.g. 39-48. The unreliability of folk tradition is the main argument of Lord Raglan, *The Hero* (1936). J. de Vries, 'Contributions to the Study of Othin, especially in relation to . . . modern popular lore' (Folklore Fellows Communications XCIV, 1931), 62 f., warns against placing too much reliance on modern "survivals". Some Scandinavian scholars have been rather credulous as to the reliability of folk traditions.

⁷ Consider the overt connection with the Tarpeian Rock made in the following: "Within the precincts of the stronghold [Dundonald Castle, Kintyre] the Lord of the Isles administered, they say, the rude laws of the times, and from the height as from the Tarpeian Rock in Rome persons convicted of certain offences were hurled." Sydney Smith, *Donald Macfarlane of Gigha and Cara* (1925), 30-1.

given a new lease of life. However this may be, the tendency exhibited by all these scholars to regard the account of *Ætternisstapi* as an example of ritual suicide or sacrifice in time of famine is open to certain objections — and these are based ultimately on the text.

Gautreks Saga has come down to us in a number of manuscripts, which can be divided into MSS of a longer version and MSS of several shorter versions. Ranisch believed — with good reason — that the longer version (MS traditions A, b and C) represented a late expansion of a shorter original. And it is noteworthy that the main allusions to Óðinn, Valhöll, famine and old age (those which occur in Snotra's conversation with the intruding king) are found only in the longer account.⁸ The main difference between AbC and the shorter accounts is the incorporation of entirely new material in the middle of the saga — the *Víkars Þáttr*, and it is only in MSS where this *þáttr* has been included that we find the expanded form of chapters I and II (*Gauta Þáttr*) with these pagan and explanatory allusions. The shorter version accounts edited by Ranisch (MS traditions L, E and K) appear to be nearer an original form, for if they were condensations of the AbC traditions, it is hard to believe that they would so completely excise all trace of the *Víkars Þáttr*, or that they would so pointedly eschew the explanatory allusions in *Gauta Þáttr* with which we are now concerned. This is not to say that the shorter versions are in all respects original: it is entirely possible that these accounts represent condensations of a more verbose original; but they do not appear to be condensations of the longer version which we now possess.

A summary of the shorter version account may help to make the outlines of the story clear:⁹

⁸ Ranisch, *op. cit.*, xviii ff. The only mention of Óðinn in the shorter versions MSS L and M (*tíð Valhallar til Óðins kóngs*) occurs late in chapter II (Ranisch, *op. cit.*, 58-59) at a point where a change in the order of events may have been made in these MSS. See note 11 below.

⁹ Ranisch, *op. cit.*, 50-71. The summary is based on MS L (AM 194c, fol.).

A king, Gauti, out hunting, chases a deer and becomes separated from his companions. The weather clouds over, and he loses his way. He throws off all his clothes except his underclothes. The barking of a dog attracts him to a settlement, where he sees a man outside. The man kills the dog, and the king makes a forced entry. The inhabitants fear him. The *bóndi* addresses the thrall and says that he will reward him for killing the dog. The king sits down to the table, but no one speaks. Then they all go to bed. A woman comes to the king and tells him that she is Snotra and her father Gilligr¹⁰ (the rest of the family have whimsical names). Nearby, she says, stand *Gillingshamarr* and *Ætternisstapi*, the latter so called because members of her family go over it when any strange event takes place. Her father and mother now intend to do so because a stranger has visited them. The king says that she must be a virgin and sleeps with her.

The next morning the *bóndi* announces that he and his wife and thrall are going over the cliff (this is the thrall's reward), and he divides his property. To one son he leaves his ox, to the second his gold and to the third his corn. The three sons are to marry the three daughters and are not to have children so that the property may be maintained intact. Then the father, mother and thrall go over the cliff. The children resort to drastic contraceptive measures by covering themselves with cloth so that they cannot touch one another. Snotra finds she is pregnant (by Gauti) and deceives her brother-husband into touching her face. He believes he has made her pregnant, and (in one version) he immediately goes over the cliff¹¹ (in other versions he waits until the young Gautrekr kills his ox). One by one the rest of the family follow suit for trifling reasons. Snotra and Gautrekr then join King Gauti in Gautland.

On the bare bones of this shorter account (which is not much longer than the foregoing summary), the reviser has grafted a good deal of additional information. He introduces *Gauta Þáttr* as a "merry story" (*Þar hefjum vér eina kátliga frásögn . . .*) — an indication that we are not to take it seriously. He then launches into a long

¹⁰ Gilligr appears elsewhere as the name of a giant in *Skáldskaparmál* and Snotra as the name of a goddess in *Gylfaginning* (Finnur Jónsson, *Édda Snorra Sturlusonar* (1931), 82, 39.) The other names do not appear elsewhere.

¹¹ The brother's death at this point is unique to the MS tradition represented by L. One would expect him to remain alive until Gautrekr grows up, as he does in other traditions.

digression which contains inaccurate geographical information and an explanation of how these strange people came to live in exile. They had committed crimes or behaved in a peculiar manner and wished to escape the ridicule of other men. In addition to this, there are many small expansions, the details of the hunt being more circumstantial (the longer version adds that the king's legs were scratched and torn in the chase), and psychological motivations tend to be explained. Conversations too are expanded, and from our present point of view, the most important additional material is in a conversation — that of Snotra and the king. In the shorter version, after she has told her family's names, she merely adds that *Gillingshamarr* and *Ætternisstapi* are near the house, the latter so called because her people jump over it when wonders happen such as have not been experienced before. Her eldest relatives intend to go over the cliff as a result of the king's visit, for it is not usual for guests to come there.¹² With this we may compare the detail of the longer version, which I now quote in full;¹³ it can be seen that the reviser was labouring to make sense of the strange events and behaviour of his original. It can hardly be doubted that his paganism is spurious:

The king said: "I ask you to let me know what your people are called."

"My father is called Skafnǫrtungr,"¹⁴ she replied. "He has that name because he is so stingy about his provisions that he cannot bear to watch his food diminishing, or anything else he possesses. My mother is called Tǫtra because she will never wear any clothes but such as are already tattered and worn to shreds, and she thinks that a great distinction."

¹² Ranisch, *op. cit.*, 52: "Hjer eru á bæ vorum Gillingshamar og ætternisstapi, og fyrir það heitir það svo, segir hún, að þar er ofan fyrir gengið, þegar að verða nokkur fádæmi, þau sem ei hafa fyr til borið í vorum minnum. Og munu mín eldstu syskin tynast fyrir það, að þú ert hjer kominn; því það er ekki vani, að hjer komi gestir, og munu þau ganga fyrir ætternisstapa." For *mín eldstu syskin*, MS K (AM 164h, fol.) has *faðir minn ok móðir*. The association of *Gillingshamarr* and *Ætternisstapi* is reminiscent of the association of the Tarpeian Rock with the Capitoline Hill in Rome.

¹³ My translation of Ranisch's text, *op. cit.*, 4-6.

¹⁴ On the transference of this name from the son to the father, *Gillingr*, see Ranisch, *op. cit.*, lxxix-lxxx, and below p. 213.

"What are your brothers called?" asked the king.

She answered: "One is called Fjólmoðr, the second Imsigull and the third Gillingr."

The king said: "What are you called, and your sisters?"

She answered: "I am called Snotra. I have that name because I am considered the wisest of us all. My sisters are called Hjǫtra and Fjǫtra. Here by our settlement there is a crag which is called Gillingshamarr, and at the side of it the cliff we call the Family Cliff. It is so high and there is such a precipice down over it that no living creature survives that falls down there. It is called the Family Cliff because by means of it we reduce the numbers of our family when we think great wonders come to pass, and all our old folks die there without any sickness, and then they go to Óðinn. We need not be burdened with our old folks nor suffer their obstinacy, because this happy place has been equally free to all men of our race, and we need not endure deprivation of money or loss of food or any other wonders or omens, though they should come upon us. Now you must know that my father thinks it a very great wonder that you have come to our settlement. It would be a great marvel if an untitled man had eaten a meal here, but it is wholly astounding that a king, cold and naked, has come to our place, since this is unprecedented. So, in the morning, my father and mother intend to share the inheritance among us brothers and sisters, and afterwards, accompanied by the thrall, they will go over the Family Cliff and so proceed to Valhöll. My father will reward the thrall no less generously for his goodwill in seeking to drive you from the door, than to let him enjoy bliss along with him. He also reckons that he knows for certain that Óðinn will not come to meet the thrall unless the thrall is in his company."

The kind of expansion seen in this passage is typical of the reviser's treatment of the *Gauta Þáttr*; the references to poverty, starvation, old age, Óðinn and Valhöll appear to be his additions. It may be argued that these allusions, although not original to *Gautreks Saga*, are nevertheless "genuine" traditions. In this event it is clear, I think, that the onus of proof must be on those who argue that the traditions are genuine. There is no very good reason to expect a writer working around 1300 to know reliable *oral* traditions preserving undistorted accounts of

paganism as it really was. And *literary* traditions are notoriously subject to contamination by copyists and authors changing an original account to improve its literary qualities, and drawing on general knowledge from their reading. And, in the case of *Gautreks Saga*, there is a twofold problem: one must prove not only that the traditions of Óðinn cults and suicides are in themselves genuine (which they may not be), but also that their association with the story of *Ætternisstapi* is genuine. The investigation so far has tended to show that they are not originally part of the *Ætternisstapi* story.

Since the expanded form of *Gauta Þáttr* appears only in MSS which also incorporate *Vikars Þáttr*, it seems that the reviser's decision to add Odinic allusions in the early chapters of the saga may be in part attributable to the subject-matter of *Vikars Þáttr*. The high point of this remarkable story is the sacrifice of King Víkarr to Óðinn by Starkaðr, and this is preceded by the powerfully written prose account of the council of gods at which Óðinn and Þórr pronounce the destinies of the grotesque hero Starkaðr. The prominence of Óðinn and supposed pre-Christian rites in the *Vikars Þáttr* may well have given a reviser the idea of producing some superficial thematic unity in the longer *Gautreks Saga* by presenting the main event of *Gauta Þáttr* as if it too were an Óðinn rite. It is at any rate likely that he thought he was dealing, in *Gautreks Saga*, with a work of antiquarian importance and wished to make it seem authentic.

Apart from the differences of detail between the shorter and longer accounts, it must be noted that there is also a considerable difference in theme. Where miserly behaviour is emphasised throughout the longer version of *Gauta Þáttr*, the atmosphere of the shorter is predominantly one of illogical and unexplained *hostility* to the intruder. Miserliness in the shorter account is a subsidiary theme, most clearly developed in the behaviour of the brothers and sisters in chapter II, but not apparently the

main motive for the father's suicide. The reviser's shift of emphasis is seen very clearly in his transference of the name *Skafnǫrtungr* to the father. In the shorter version this whimsical name belongs to one of the brothers, and it is *Skafnǫrtungr* who demonstrates meanness to Gauti when the barefoot king asks for a pair of shoes. *Skafnǫrtungr* gives him the shoes, but removes the laces.¹⁵ The reviser, anxious to demonstrate the farmer's meanness, has transferred the name to him in place of *Gillingr* (which is likely to be his original name in view of its occurrence in *Gillingshamarr*). In the longer version, therefore, it is the father who removes the shoe-laces; it is also the father who pulls a hood over his eyes so that he will not witness the intruder eating. This too is an elaboration of the longer version, as are Snotra's remarks about her father's meanness. It is, in fact, reasonably clear in chapter I of the shorter version that the basis of the story is not fear of *poverty*, but fear of *progeny*. It is this that motivates the farmer's hostility and his orders to his children, and fear of progeny is the basis of a well-known class of tales found in many parts of the world from ancient times to the present — stories (or myths) of the birth of heroes.¹⁶

These conception stories exhibit a number of standard features, many of which appear to be present (or implied) in the *Gauta Þáttr*. In such stories it is customarily prophesied that the daughter of a king or giant will bear a son who will grow up and kill his grandfather. The king or giant therefore isolates his daughter, but a young man or a disguised god gains access to her and begets on her a son. The giant attempts to kill the intruder or his pregnant daughter or his grandson, but is in the end killed

¹⁵ A similar action is attributed by Saxo (ed. Holder, 185-6) to Hugletus, possibly historically a king of the Gautar and identical with the Hygelac of *Beowulf*. He is presented by Saxo as mean and cowardly.

¹⁶ On the conception story see E. S. Hartland, *The Legend of Perseus* (1894-5), I *passim*; Otto Rank, *Der Mythos von der Geburt des Helden* (second edition 1922), chapters I-II; Lord Raglan, *op. cit.*, especially 177-89. In ancient sources the birth is usually a supernatural one and the mother a virgin. On medieval (Celtic) variants, see W. J. Gruffydd, *Math vab Mathonwy* (1928).

by the intruder or by his grandson. It is usually emphasised that the daughter is a virgin, or that she wishes to be regarded as one.

That this pattern underlies the *Gauta Þáttr* is indicated by a number of features. It is the conception story of a hero, and in it fear of progeny is carried to an extreme. Hostility to the intruder is emphasised, and we are told (for no obvious reason) that the daughter is a virgin. In addition to these basic features, however, a number of other motifs tend to become associated with the conception story, particularly in Celtic and other medieval sources, and some of these are also found in the *Gauta Þáttr*. In folklore and medieval literature, this kind of adventure is frequently prefaced by a hunt.¹⁷ The loss of clothes (and laceration of the hero's body, as in the longer *Gautreks Saga*) is very common, and as old as Homer.¹⁸ The guard-dog motif is found in Celtic stories of this general type, and in them the giant's castle may be guarded by a dog and by a "Monstrous Herdsman".¹⁹ The evil-eye motif (which is strongly suggested by the longer version's account of the *bóndi* pulling his hood over his eyes so that he will not witness the intruder eating) is found in a more or less clear form in Celtic stories of the type.²⁰

But integral to the conception story is the giant's attempt to kill the intruder or the girl or her son, and the ultimate slaying of the giant himself.

¹⁷ Amorous adventure preceded by a hunt in medieval romance is discussed by G. L. Kittredge, *A Study of Gawain and the Green Knight* (1916), 231 ff. For folktale occurrences see Arne-Thompson, *The Types of the Folktale* (1928), 401, 425; W. Stith Thompson, *Motif Index of Folk Literature* (1932-6), 771, 774; Grimm, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, no. 49 (Die sechs Schwäne). An introduction with points of similarity to the present one is found in the Welsh *Pwyll Pendwic Dyfed* (ed. R. L. Thomson, 1957). Egil's adventure with the ox (*Ynglinga Saga XXVI*) is prefaced by a similar story.

¹⁸ *Odyssey* V-VI (the introduction to the adventure with Nausicaa). The wording of *Hjalmsþers Saga ok Ólvis* (*Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*, ed. Guðni Jónsson *et al.*, III 361) is similar to that of *Gauta Þáttr*: "Þá hlaupa þeir bæði á fæti eftir dýrinu; urðu þeir nú skjótt móðir ok kasta öllum klæðum af sér nema skyrtum ok línbrókum."

¹⁹ See for example Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones, *The Mabinogion* (1949), 108-9.

²⁰ See for example W. J. Gruffydd, *op. cit.*, 69 ff.

The attempted slaying of the girl or her son can take many forms: exposure on a mountainside, casting adrift in a boat; but in one variant an attempt is made to kill the child or the girl by propulsion over a cliff or high place. An early example is Ælian's account of Gilgames.²¹ He relates that when Seiechorus was king of the Babylonians, it was prophesied that his daughter's son would take away his kingdom. He therefore imprisoned her very cruelly. But his daughter conceived and bore a child secretly to someone unknown. In fear of the king, the guards hurled the baby from the Acropolis. But an eagle saw the boy while he was still falling and rescued him in mid-air. He was brought up by the keeper of the lace and became Gilgames, king of the Babylonians. A much later variant of the type in a Christianised form is found in Jocelin's *Life of St Kentigern*.²² A certain Thaney was the daughter of a savage king. She was a devout Christian, and wished to be like the Virgin Mary in her virginity and child-bearing. She was so holy and virtuous that her prayers were granted. Her father was furious when he discovered her pregnancy and ordered that she should be executed. She was first of all cast down from a high hill, but came to the foot unhurt. Afterwards she was set adrift in an open coracle, in which she was washed up on the sands at Culross, where she gave birth to St Kentigern. Mother and son were adopted by St Servanus, who brought the child up in his monastery.

These two examples have been recounted at some length, since many features in them show that they belong to the story-type with which we are concerned, and they do suggest the existence of a variant in which propulsion from a high place was of some importance. It is of course a medieval commonplace for the maiden in the conception story to be imprisoned by her father in a castle or tower,

²¹ Ælianos, *De natura animalium* (Loeb's Classical Library, 1958), XII 21.

²² *The Historians of Scotland* (1874), V especially 128-9. I am indebted to Professor John MacQueen for this reference.

which is sometimes stated to be on an island or promontory, as in the Irish tale of Balor. It is easy to see that the location of the maiden in a high place may lead to accounts of the maiden or the child being thrown from that high place.

Death in a high place is actually fairly common in folktale and mythological story. In another Celtic source it appears as the punishment for an unfaithful wife (a motif sometimes for obvious reasons associated with the conception story). I quote here W. J. Gruffydd's account of the death of Bláthnait:²³

Cúchulainn and Bláthnait fell in love with each other, and plotted how best to kill her husband. At the appointed time, Cúchulainn stationed himself at the bottom of the hill waiting for Bláthnait's signal . . . When he saw the signal, Cúchulainn rushed into the fort and slew Cúrói . . . He took away Bláthnait with him to Ulster, but in time, Cúrói's poet, Ferceirtne, went to Ulster, and his opportunity came when he found Bláthnait standing on a high cliff. He suddenly clasped her in his arms, broke her ribs, and flung her down the cliff.

In this account, the victim is pushed from the cliff, but it is interesting to note that there are Classical accounts of what appear to be suicides on cliffs.²⁴ When Theseus returns to Athens, his father Ægeus watches for his ship from a cliff. Theseus forgets to hoist the white sails of victory, and Ægeus, believing that his son is dead, plunges from the cliff. The story of Ino is also of some interest, for like the *Gautreks Saga*, it is full of unnatural family behaviour. Maddened by the Fury, Tisiphone, Ino's husband kills one of her sons. Ino, herself in a frenzy, seizes her other son, Melicertes, and flees to a cliff. She climbs to the summit and, with no fear, throws herself and her child into the sea. These stories are, of course, late

²³ Gruffydd, *op. cit.*, 266.

²⁴ Smith's *Smaller Classical Dictionary* (ed. E. H. Blakeney, second edition 1937), s. v. Ægeus; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (Loeb's Classical Library, 1916), IV lines 512-30. Ovid also recounts (*Metamorphoses*, VIII 250-5) that Dædalus in envy threw a boy from the citadel of Minerva. Pallas rescued the boy as he was falling and transformed him into a lapwing.

literary treatments of myths and folktales, and it is unlikely that we should accept them as reliable accounts of early religious customs.

Death in a high place is a recurrent feature of hero myths, and the hero himself (with whose conception story we are concerned) is often destined to disappear from a mountain or fall from a cliff.²⁵ The hostile grandfather too may perish in a high place. In one version of the death of Balor, the giant is pierced through the eye when standing on Muin Duv with the intention of burning all Ireland with his evil eye.²⁶ In short, death in a high place (sometimes stated to be suicide on a cliff) is a widespread motif in folklore and mythological literature, and there is nothing very surprising in the occurrence of it in the conception story with which we are concerned.

The striking fact about the *Gauta Dáttr* is that the grandfather goes voluntarily to his death at a point in the story where we should expect an attempt to be made on the life of his daughter or grandson. But if the story is a variant of the conception story, it is probable that the cliff is original to it. The ways of folklore and mythological literature are very intricate; transference of events from one place to another, condensations, reversals and reinterpretation of an original story by a teller or copyist to whom the earlier significance was lost are familiar to the student of folklore and medieval literature. And there is sometimes a tendency "to make the punishment fit the crime". If one character turns another into an animal, he may himself later be turned into an animal;²⁷ we may surmise that if the giant throws his daughter over a cliff, a later variant of the tale may represent the giant himself as being thrown over a cliff. It is therefore suggested that the *Gauta Dáttr* is a variant of the widespread conception

²⁵ Raglan, *op. cit.*, 179 ff. Œdipus perishes on "The Steep Pavement". Theseus falls, or is pushed, from a cliff. Moses and Herakles disappear from the top of a mountain.

²⁶ Gruffydd, *op. cit.*, 72, 87, etc.

²⁷ *ibid.*, 281-2, and the references given there.

story in which the death of the hostile grandfather has been brought forward and made to take place at a point where, in the original tale, he made an attempt on the life of his daughter or her son — by throwing him, or her, over a cliff. The story has in its pre-history absorbed other motifs, which obscure the original conception story, but the second chapter, in which the whimsically named family take their fear of progeny and poverty to ridiculous extremes, is in large measure a humorous extension of notions implicit in the conception story. This part of the story is just as likely to be the product of a creative imagination working on the old material as it is to be a tradition of some ancient ritual.

The probable association of the account of the Family Cliff with a widespread story type does not in itself disprove its validity as evidence for a specific Germanic custom. It must, however, be pointed out that evidence for ritual suicide is extremely thin in Germanic sources, and that this account is its main support. Accounts from early Latin writers cited by Grimm and others deal mainly with the exposure of infants and killing of the old in times of famine, but as we have seen famine is not the basis of the story of the Family Cliff. The words of the missionary Hjalti may also sometimes be quoted as evidence for cliff sacrifice. They are:²⁸ "The heathen sacrifice the worst men and push them over cliffs and headlands, but we will choose the best of men and call it a victory-gift to our Lord, Jesus Christ." This may refer to an old practice of cliff sacrifice or to the punishment of wrong-doers, but it is not an account of ritual suicide, nor is it necessarily a reliable historical account of an authentic practice. Local traditions of execution on cliffs are widely found from the Tarpeian Rock in ancient Rome to modern Scotland and Iceland. In stories of this kind appearing in medieval literature we have to reckon with the antiquarian notions of the writers (which would be based on their reading),

²⁸ *Kristnisaga* (ed. B. Kahle, 1905), 40 (ch. 12).

with their pro-Christian bias and with their literary purposes. In other words, Christian writers may have introduced into their work spurious accounts of heathen customs, based on unreliable literary and antiquarian knowledge, the purpose being to give a ring of authenticity to the story's *milieu*, or to draw attention to the strange, amusing and disgusting practices of the heathen.

The reviser of *Gautreks Saga*, then, seems to have had antiquarian interests, and no doubt he believed that his story originated in Gautland. The modern Swedish evidence may suggest that he was right, but there are obvious objections to using modern folklore as primary evidence in establishing the origin of a medieval literary work. There are probably few steep rocks anywhere that do not have folk traditions associated with them, and folk beliefs and stories tend to become stereotyped in certain patterns. They should not be expected to preserve pagan customs intact over many centuries. Moreover, local traditions and even place-names occasionally prove to be derived from literature. The *ättestupa* traditions may not actually have originated in *Gautreks Saga* (some of them are unlike it), but the first publication of the saga,²⁹ intended as it was to glorify the "Gothic" past, is very likely to have influenced them. Who knows what other influences may also have affected them?

As for the shorter version of *Gauta Dáttr*, it is an open question whether it originally had anything to do with Gautland. We have seen that the author paid no attention to ritual, famine or the fate of the old. He cannot be said to have shown much more interest in overt connections with Gautland. In nearly all MS traditions³⁰ (including the longer version) the name Gauti is mentioned only two or three times in the whole account — usually at the beginning and at the end of the *þáttr*; he is otherwise

²⁹ O. Verelius, *Göthreks och Rolfs, Westgöthe Kongars, Historia pa gammal Götska . . .* etc. (Uppsala, 1664).

³⁰ The fragmentary E (AM 567, XIV γ 4to) — the oldest — uses the name more frequently.

referred to as "the king". It looks as if the references to Gauti have been added at the most convenient places to a story that was not originally about him. As Ranisch pointed out, the story's most evident literary connections are with a series of Icelandic folktales, the *Útilegumanna-sögur* of Jón Árnason's collection.³¹ In these stories, an intruder often gains access to a farmer's daughter — a feature which relates them as well as the *Gauta Þáttr* to the widespread type with which we have been dealing.

An examination of some of the story's literary features — the introductory hunt, the hood episode (in the longer version) and the guard-dog episode, arouse a strong suspicion of Celtic influence somewhere in its history. It is the general tone of the story that is most like Celtic — the mad logic, the exaggerated events. The hood motif, in which the *bóndi* pulls his hood over his eyes so that he will not see Gauti eating, looks like a rationalisation of the evil eye — a common possession of Celtic giants.³² It reminds one of the heavy eyebrows of Ysbadadden Pencawr, which had to be lifted up so that he could see his future son-in-law and throw poison darts at him, and the seven shields of Balor of the Evil Eye.³³ The barking of dogs introduces Pwyll to his other-world adventure (originally the conception story of Pryderi) in the first branch of the Mabinogi,³⁴ and in *Culhwch and Olwen*, the court of Ysbadadden is guarded by a "shepherd . . . and a shaggy mastiff which was bigger than a nine-year-old stallion". When Culhwch enters Ysbadadden's court he has first to slay nine gatemen and nine mastiffs "without one squealing".³⁵ It was the custom for Celtic heroes to enter halls with a great deal of commotion.

It is not, however, my main purpose to suggest that

³¹ *Íslenskar þjóðsögur og afintýri* (1862-64), II 175 ff., 253 ff., 260-96.

³² This motif occurs only in the longer version, where it seems intended to emphasise the *bóndi*'s meanness; it may not be original to *Gauta Þáttr*.

³³ Jones and Jones, *op. cit.*, 111-13; Gruffydd, *op. cit.*, 85-7.

³⁴ Jones and Jones, *op. cit.*, 3.

³⁵ *ibid.*, 108, 111.

Gauta Þáttr has been subjected to Celtic influence. What is important is that there is no clear evidence to connect its subject-matter with Gautland any more than the stories of Starkaðr and Refr which follow it.³⁶ To seek *their* origins in Gautland merely because they appear in *Gautreks Saga* would be widely regarded as ridiculous.

From the present study a number of conclusions emerge regarding the story of the Family Cliff, and these appear to have more general implications about the use of late literary accounts as evidence for pre-Christian practices. The conclusions regarding *Gauta Þáttr* may be summed up as follows. First of all, a comparison of the two versions shows that references in the longer version to early custom and religious practice are additions by the antiquarian reviser, possibly prompted by the incorporation of the Starkaðr story in the longer version. Where the author of the shorter *Gautreks Saga* seems to have been interested in telling a comic story for its own sake, the reviser was fascinated by the strange and the unusual, and was much addicted to giving pedantic explanations for the peculiar happenings in the story. The *Gauta Þáttr* itself is based on the very ancient and widespread motifs which commonly form the conception stories of heroes, and in such stories death on a cliff or high place often plays a part. It is suggested that the account of the suicides on the cliff grows out of such elements of the conception story, and that it is therefore a literary variant, not necessarily historically connected with any specific practices amongst the Germanic tribes. Modern traditions from Gautland, which appear to support its authenticity, are considered unreliable, since such traditions may very well have been influenced by the publication of *Gautreks Saga* by Olaus Verelius in 1664 and by other things. There is little

³⁶ Aspects of the composition of *Gautreks Saga* and its relation to *Hrólfs Saga Gautrekssonar* are discussed by L. M. Hollander 'The Gautland Cycle of Sagas', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* XI (1912), 61-81, 209-17. See also Hollander, 'The Relative Age of *Gautreks Saga* and *Hrólfs Saga Gautrekssonar*', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* XXIX (1913), 120-34.

reason to connect the story of the Family Cliff with Gautland, and some reason to suspect Celtic influence. But above all, this remarkable story, fascinating as it is to the modern researcher with interests in Germanic religion, is quite unreliable as evidence for pre-Christian practices in the Germanic area.

It is clear, therefore, that evidence adduced from thirteenth-century literature in general must be subjected to careful investigation in terms of its literary context, purposes and relationships before conclusions are drawn about its relevance to supposed pre-Christian practices. We must be careful, for example, not to be misled by the literary skill of the writers. It is salutary to remember that *Hrafnkels Saga* was generally thought to be historically reliable until it was shown that many of its main characters never existed. In the same way, it may be that the moving and fascinating account in *Gautreks Saga* of the sacrifice of King Víkarr to Óðinn owes more to the literary skill, wide reading and imagination of its author than to authentic pagan tradition. The fact that parallels to such accounts may be found in Norse literature, and possibly in medieval Christian, biblical and Classical sources, may argue as strongly for their spuriousness as for their authenticity. Certainly a sceptical attitude is healthy. We may wonder, for example, if heathens really did make the sign of the hammer (*hamarsmark*), or whether the idea of it was suggested to the author of *Hákonar Saga góða* by his familiarity with the sign of the Cross.³⁷ In its context in *Hákonar Saga góða* it is certainly a most effective literary device, and its very effectiveness creates a strong presumption that it is only a literary device with no basis in fact and no necessary basis in actual custom. We must be prepared to accept that medieval Christian and even Classical literature had considerable influence on heroic and mythological sagas. We shall be wise to regard the

³⁷ *Heimskringla* (ed. Finnur Jónsson, 1893-1900), I 192.

Prose Edda, for example, as better evidence for a sophisticated thirteenth-century approach to paganism than for paganism itself. We should expect Old Icelandic heroic and mythological writings to tell us more about literature than about ritual and custom, and more about the literate mind than the illiterate.

BRUNHILD AND SIEGFRIED¹

By R. G. FINCH

THE old question, "Does Brünhilt show love for Sifrit and jealousy of Kriemhilt in the *Nibelungenlied* (NL) as we know it?", has been answered most recently and perhaps most vehemently in the affirmative by Gottfried Weber: "(She) is even less able to admit to her own heart than she is to the other that she loves Sifrit, that she ought to shout aloud, 'it was he for whom the games were meant, it was by him I wished to be vanquished — he and none other can be my husband'. And yet she says all this clearly enough, though admittedly in a different way . . ."²

The question is raised by Weber, and by most others who think as he does, in connection with Brünhilt's tears at the double wedding. Her own explanation that she is weeping because her sister-in-law in marrying Gunther's supposed vassal, Sifrit, is marrying below her station, so reasonable in a mediaeval setting, has seemed so weak to so many. Few scholars appear to have sufficiently distinguished between interpretations of a mediaeval work possible for

¹ A revised version of a paper read at the Institute of Germanic Studies, University of London, on 19 May 1966 with the title 'Some reflections on love and death in the differing Brunhild traditions'. My thanks are due to Mrs Ursula Dronke for her helpful comments.

² "(sie) vermag sich dem eigenen Herzen noch weniger einzugestehen als dem anderen, daß sie Sifrit liebt, daß sie es herausschreien müßte: 'er war gemeint mit den Kampfspielen, von ihm wollte ich besiegt werden — er, er ganz allein kann mein Mann sein'. Und doch sagt sie alles das deutlich genug, nur freilich anders . . .", Gottfried Weber, *Das Nibelungenlied, Problem und Idee* (1963), 37 f. Other scholars who defend a position similar to Weber's include G. Baesecke, *Vor- und Frühgeschichte des deutschen Schrifttums* I (1940), 228, H. Schneider, *Die deutschen Lieder von Siegfrieds Tod* (1947), 27, more hesitantly H. de Boor, *Das Nibelungenlied* (1956), xiii. A. Heusler thinks the question justified but does not consider Brunhild's love and jealousy to be a live motif in the extant *Nibelungenlied*, see his *Nibelungensage und Nibelungenlied* (5th ed., 1955), 91. Other scholars who oppose Weber's position include W. Grimm, *Die deutsche Heldensage* (4th ed., 1957), 417 f., even though he believes that a prior betrothal between Brunhild and Siegfried belonged to an early stage of the material, E. Tonnelat, *La chanson des Nibelungen* (1926), 59, F. Maurer, rather tentatively, *Leid* (1951), 17, K. Wais, *Frühe Epik Westeuropas und die Vorgesichte des Nibelungenliedes* (1953), 55, and A. T. Hatto, *The Nibelungenlied* (1965), 332.

the modern critic, and those natural to mediaeval poet and audience, especially when modern psychological theory is brought to bear. Does Isolde love Tristan before drinking the philtre? Is the peasant girl in Hartmann's *Armer Heinrich* an adolescent masochist motivated by erotic love hidden even from herself? And are we permitted to conclude that Brünhilt's tears necessarily signified to a mediaeval audience dissatisfaction with her marriage because she knows that Sifrit is meant for her, and she has to make do with second-best?

An important discussion of inner significance and symbolism in the *NL* is to be found in J. Bumke's article on the sources of the Brünhilt story in the *NL*.³ His belief that the final poet's true achievement lies in the symbolic presentation of certain "high-lights" of the action has much to commend it — and interestingly enough he denies any symbolic content to the double-wedding scene.⁴ He would certainly seem to be more convincing than Weber, whose contention is made the less plausible by his general approach. In the space of a few pages Weber insists that a mediaeval poet could observe a markedly independent attitude towards his sources,⁵ that there is a love element in the Brünhilt-Sifrit relationship,⁶ and that the audience were probably acquainted with the tradition explaining why Sifrit alone knew about Brünhilt,⁷ thus implying that they needed no clearer indications of the love motif than those supplied by the poet. But if the poet meant to indicate such a relationship, and if such had existed in his sources, then why did he remove every indisputable trace of it? Why should he merely hint⁸ at Brünhilt's love for Sifrit when this would have thrown the love of Sifrit and

³ J. Bumke, 'Die Quellen der Brünhildfabel im *Nibelungenlied*', *Euphorion* 54 (1961), 1 ff.

⁴ J. Bumke, *ibid.*, 38, n. 80. For an interesting structural interpretation of this scene see D. R. McLintock, 'Les Larmes de Brünhilt', *Studia Neophilologica* 33 (1961), especially 312 f.

⁵ G. Weber, *op. cit.*, 42, note.

⁶ *ibid.*, 37.

⁷ *ibid.*, 33.

⁸ Is this technique found anywhere in the *NL*?

Kriemhilt for each other, a main concern of the poet, into still greater relief without offending against German *minne* traditions. These by no means invariably denied to the lady some expression of her emotions, witness, e.g., the ladies of the early der von Kürenberc and the later Reinmar von Hagenau respectively.⁹

It is very far from clear that German tradition knew a loving, jealous Brünhilt, or that the poet so conceived her. It seems on the contrary to be more feasible and less subjective to assume that Brünhilt, far from ever having loved Sifrit, shares with Hagen a hearty dislike of him, and not because he had jilted her in a supposedly current tale not included, but alluded to, by the poet. Before Brünhilt even sees Sifrit she clearly rejects him as a suitor (st. 416)¹⁰ — Weber's belief that in her heart of hearts she desires to be won by him seems ill-founded. Moreover, her words of greeting to this unwelcome suitor (st. 419) are hardly expressive of what Weber calls "freudige Gespanntheit".¹¹ It is very likely that they are emotionally neutral: a straightforward request for information such as Gunther makes when he first meets Sifrit (st. 106), but in view of Brünhilt's defiant response to the news of Sifrit's arrival, K. C. King's description of her "welcome" as truculent¹² is surely right. Weber seems to include Brünhilt's "sit willekomen, Sifrit, her in ditze lant" in the words which express "freudige Gespanntheit", and J. Bumke calls them a "liebenswürdige Begrüssung".¹³ It may well be that these words, too, are no more than emotionally neutral, a mere formula such as Kriemhilt uses when she formally greets Sifrit and Gunther who have come formally to ask her to help them with their wardrobe for the Iceland venture (st. 349); a formula such as Gunther uses even towards his enemies, Liudegêr and Liudegast (st. 249). On the other

⁹ See Kraus, *Minnesangsfrühling*, 7 and 178.

¹⁰ The references are to H. de Boor, *Das Nibelungenlied* (1956).

¹¹ G. Weber, *op. cit.*, 36.

¹² See K. C. King, *Das Lied vom Hürnen Seyfrid* (1958), 93.

¹³ See J. Bumke, 'Sigfrids Fahrt ins Nibelungenland', *PBB* 80 (1958), 253.

hand, towards his friends and kinsmen, Sifrit and Sigemunt, he uses, on a happy occasion, the words "grôze willekomen" (st. 789), as does Rüedegêr's daughter to her father on his return (st. 1167), and Sifrit's and Kriemhilt's whole entourage are also described as "grôze willekomen" on their arrival at Xanten (st. 709). Dietrich von Bern, although the Burgundians are his friends, wishes profoundly that they had never come to Etzel's court, and there is no "grôze" when he welcomes them on this unhappy occasion (st. 1724). And Kriemhilt, in her anything but affectionate greeting to her kinsmen on that same occasion (st. 1739), seems to make a point of not using the word "grôze". There is certainly no "grôze" in the words Brünhilt addresses to Sifrit in st. 419, nor any reason to suppose that there is the slightest hint of affection. It is clear that in the context of Brünhilt's pronounced antipathy to marriage with anyone, Sifrit is being given a very cold reception indeed. And Sifrit gives as good as he gets! He answers that without Gunther's express command he never would have visited her (st. 422); and when he appears after Brünhilt's submission to Gunther (st. 474), he is thoroughly rude to her, taunting her that now she must go with them to the Rhine. Upon this she refuses to leave before summoning and consulting her *mâge unde man* (st. 475): her original anger at having been defeated (st. 265. l. 3) is now increased by Sifrit's insolence which provokes further defiance on her part. If her new resolve were directly due to her defeat, then she would surely have summoned *mâge unde man* before Sifrit's rudeness.

Admittedly the situation is illogical:¹⁴ Brünhilt has no need of reinforcements to subdue the handful of Burgundians; most would agree that the poet is providing an excuse for Sifrit's journey to Nibelungenland and thus for the utilization of a lay on how he won his treasure. But

¹⁴ Though perhaps not quite as contradictory and implausible as J. Bumke believes, *ibid.*, 254.

this structural consideration does not invalidate the interpretation — how else would a mediaeval audience have seen it?

Later, Brünhilt sees more warriors arriving (st. 508). Gunther says they are his — and she sees Sifrit at their head! She asks Gunther for instructions, treating him as her lord again, presumably because she perceives that resistance is now vain — and who is responsible for this? Sifrit! No wonder she greets him differently (st. 511) — not with marks of distinction because he is the captain, as A. T. Hatto suggests,¹⁵ nor yet, as de Boor would have it, disdainfully, because she considers him Gunther's vassal,¹⁶ but hostilely because he has frustrated the evil designs feared by Hagen (st. 478). Small wonder that Brünhilt weeps when she sees her new sister-in-law as the bride, not merely of any vassal, but of a vassal who has insulted, angered and provoked her. Small wonder that she nags Gunther to tell her the reason for Kriemhilt's seeming *mésalliance* to a feudal inferior (st. 622, 635) whom Brünhilt actively dislikes. And the fact that Gunther's son is given the name Sifrit (st. 718) is certainly no indication of any personal affection for Gunther's friend on Brünhilt's part — she is all too conscious of Sifrit's supposed inferiority for that — any more than is Brünhilt's desire to see Sifrit at Gunther's court again after a lapse of years (724 ff.). And when at the later feast in honour of Sifrit's visit Brünhilt sees him resplendent as never vassal was, we hear that she was still so *wage* towards him that she was prepared to let him *genesen* (st. 803), i.e. "still well-enough disposed towards him that she was prepared to put up with his existence". At its face value this hardly implies any sort of a romantic attachment, still less if the full force of the double-entendre of *genesen* (pointed out by A. T. Hatto¹⁷)

¹⁵ A. T. Hatto, *The Nibelungenlied* (1965), 73, n. 1.

¹⁶ H. de Boor, *Das Nibelungenlied* (1956), note to st. 511, l. 4. A. T. Hatto, *loc. cit.*, points out the flaw in this interpretation.

¹⁷ A. T. Hatto, *op. cit.*, 109. Protagonists of the theory that Brünhilt loves Sifrit would support D. G. Mowatt's rendering of this passage: "her affection for him was still so strong . . ." (D. G. Mowatt, *The Nibelungenlied* (1962), 76).

is felt: "still well-enough disposed towards him that she let him be". Such was her affection for him that she preferred to leave him alone!

So Brünhilt's discovery that this insolent upstart's wife is in possession of her own ring and girdle, that there is a shameful secret, seemingly bragged about by Sifrit, intensifies her dislike of Sifrit into hatred. No wonder at all that she wants him dead and that she afterwards shows neither remorse nor sorrow, caring nothing for Kriemhilt's grief, but sits "enthroned in her pride" (st. 1100). She has little cause for gloom, let alone for the suicide of her Eddaic counterpart.

It is high time that the whole conception of Brünhilt's love of Sifrit and jealousy of Kriemhilt in the *NL* should be finally laid to rest. The text revealed no such love to mediaeval audience or reader, nor does it to the modern reader who knows nothing of the Scandinavian tradition of a prior betrothal between Brynhild and Sigurd, Sifrit's Norse counterpart. It may rather reveal the exact opposite.

But was there an earlier native German tradition that Brünhilt had once been betrothed to a faithless Sifrit, a tradition that the *NL* poet may have been consciously suppressing and which accounts for the supposed traces of her love and jealousy in the *NL*: for her coolness towards Sifrit in Iceland, for her tears at the first feast, and for the supposed traces of affection in her attitude towards him at the second?

Most of those who think there was cite the well-known "hints"¹⁸ in the *NL*: Sifrit's knowledge of Brünhilt and hers of him, seen against the background on the one hand of a prior betrothal in the *Völsunga saga* (*VS*) which tells how Sigurd awakens the valkyrie Brynhild from an enchanted sleep and how they exchange solemn oaths to marry each other, and on the other hand of a prior acquaintance in the *Þiðriks saga* (*ÞSS*), an episode which is

¹⁸ St. 330, 344, 378, 382, 393, 407, 419.

believed by some to be derived from a German source, and which tells of a visit Sigurd makes to Brynhild, before he has met his future wife, in order to ask for a horse from her stud. But many see the "hints" in a different light. F. Panzer claims that Sifrit's knowledge is the "transzendentes Wissen des Märchenhelden"¹⁹ and defies rational explanation. Others²⁰ stress that on similar occasions in heroic literature there is often someone who knows about everything and everybody: Hôrant or Wate in *Kudrun*, Hildebrand in the *Hildebrandslied*, or Hagen on the arrival of Etzel's embassy (*NL*, st. 1178 f.), and still more significantly Hagen, again, on Sifrit's arrival at Worms (st. 86), for he knows all about Sifrit, though he insists he has never seen him before, and no one has thought fit to doubt him. Why, then, must we ascribe Sifrit's knowledge of Brünhilt and hers of him to their prior acquaintance or betrothal, and why should we doubt Brünhilt's own statement that she had never seen Gunther and Sifrit before they visited Iceland (st. 820)?

In addition to the motif of the "knowledgeable warrior", there is also the fact that everyone knew about Sifrit: the audience listening, and with them the characters in the poem who were felt to be equally in the picture. Sifrit's fame went before him, and everyone, including Brünhilt, was in this sense acquainted with him. These contentions are too well known to need any elaboration here. Suffice it to say that the so-called "hints" are perfectly explicable without recourse to a lost prior acquaintance or prior betrothal motif. Yet some remain unconvinced, and the idea that Sifrit had once been betrothed to Gunther's wife still leads at least a phantom existence. M. O'C. Walshe speaks of "obscure traces of a third motive, of the former betrothal of Siegfried and Brünhild",²¹ and A. T. Hatto refers to a "hint of prior acquaintance between Siegfried

¹⁹ F. Panzer, *Das Nibelungenlied. Entstehung und Gestalt* (1955), 250.

²⁰ See R. G. Finch, *The Saga of the Volsungs* (1965), xxii, n. 4.

²¹ M. O'C. Walshe, *Medieval German Literature* (1962), 227.

and Brünhild",²² though he is far from giving unqualified support to the theory.

In recent years the ablest and most convincing exponent of the prior acquaintance theory has been J. Bumke.²³ He, too, falls under the fatal spell of the "hints", but his main arguments are attractive and deserve close attention. He builds his theory on H. de Boor's belief²⁴ that the earlier meeting between Sigurd and Brynhild in the *ÞSS* is based on a German treasure adventure in which the Norse Brynhild of the prior betrothal tradition is substituted for the treasure. J. Bumke's main contentions are:

1. There were two versions of the treasure adventure, one told by Hagen (st. 87 f.), one the source of Sifrit's Nibelung heroics in Av. 8.

2. This latter is garbled and was already garbled in the source.

3. Thus, being garbled, it did not form a complete, independent adventure in itself, but was conflated with other elements.

4. These elements consisted of Sifrit's first visit to Brünhilt which was thus present in the German source, and not secondarily introduced into the *ÞSS* from Norse tradition.

5. Brünhilt's supposedly friendly greeting to Sifrit when he arrives with Gunther (st. 419) is a relic of their first friendly encounter when Sifrit was alone, which is preserved in the (allegedly German based) *ÞSS* account of that meeting (*ÞSS* I, p. 317, ll. 8 f.²⁵), her words there being practically identical, he says, with those in the *NL*.

6. Her words in the *NL* st. 511, addressed to Sifrit on his return from Nibelungenland, are held to be the original unfriendly greeting she bestowed on Sifrit when he arrived with Gunther to woo her on the latter's behalf (as preserved in *ÞSS* II, p. 38, ll. 20 ff.).

7. The story of their first meeting was just as garbled in the source of Av. 8 as the treasure adventure and had "zu einem folgenlosen Besuch abgesunken".²⁶ Thus there had earlier still existed a much fuller account of the first meeting, perhaps with a betrothal.

²² A. T. Hatto, *op. cit.*, 328, cf. also 305.

²³ In his 'Sigfrids Fahrt ins Nibelungenland', see n. 13 above.

²⁴ H. de Boor, 'Kapitel 168 der Thidrekssaga', *Edda-Skalden-Saga* (Göteborg, 1952), 157 ff.

²⁵ The references are to H. Bertelsen, *Þidriks saga af Bern* (1905-11).

²⁶ J. Bumke, *op. cit.* (n. 13 above), 266. On p. 260 we have the seemingly conflicting statement that the *ÞSS* account of their first meeting, which he holds to be derived from the same garbled source as Av. 8, led in the North "zu den komplizierten Konstruktionen der Vorverlobung".

Tempting though these arguments are, there are a number of possible objections to them.

The grounds for supposing that a garbled treasure adventure had been conflated with a garbled story of an advance meeting between Sifrit and Brünhilt are by no means firm. Wherein lies the garbling in Av. 8? J. Bumke admits that it consists (partly) in the omission of the actual treasure from the *âventiure* because the poet had already put a variant of the story into Hagen's mouth; yet not every missing element, he thinks, can be so explained.²⁷ An examination of the two parallel versions in *ÞSS* and *Hürnen Seyfrid* shows, he believes, a similar garbling of the treasure adventure which can only imply that their assumed common source itself contained no more than a mutilated treasure story, that some of the main motifs had already been lost and that, since the story was no longer a complete, independent entity, conflation had taken place with the story of the advance meeting, retained, minus the treasure, in *ÞSS*, but omitted along with the treasure by the author of the *NL*. Yet the three versions are very different and it is not at all clear what the lost motifs are. Nor can it be at all certain that the account of the rescue of a princess in *Hürnen Seyfrid*, where a dwarf treasure adventure is linked with a dragon who holds captive the princess to be freed by Seyfrid, is anything but a late accretion²⁸ — Bumke himself seems to wonder just how weighty the evidence is that it provides.²⁹ As for the *ÞSS*, the fact that ch. 168 (ch. 273 in H. Bertelsen's edition) may seem to occupy structurally the position³⁰ where one might expect to find a treasure adventure in German tradition, since the dragon in the *ÞSS* episode, as in the *NL*, has no gold and Sifrit in the latter wins a treasure guarded, amongst others, by the dwarf Alberich in a separate adventure, does not necessarily mean that it must *be* a German treasure adventure — indeed, the fight between Sigurd and

²⁷ J. Bumke, *ibid.*, 259 f.

²⁸ See K. C. King, *op. cit.*, 95 f.

²⁹ J. Bumke, *op. cit.*, 257.

³⁰ See H. de Boor, *op. cit.*, 164.

Brynhild's serving men and knights seems to some³¹ more reminiscent of a suitor's tests of fitness than of a treasure situation. It will be suggested below that the advance meeting in *DSS* is in fact derived essentially from Norse, not German, tradition, and that the obstacles to be overcome by the suitor were transferred from the original scene in which Sigurd and Gunnar are together (*DSS* contains no mention of such obstacles) to that of the Norse account of a prior betrothal between Sigurd and Brynhild. And there really is no trace of Brünhilt in the relevant section of *NL* Av. 8. That the treasure, and not Brünhilt, did, in fact, form the central motif of the source of that *aventure* seems suggested by st. 484, l. 4: *daz hiez Nibelunge, da er den grôzen hort besaz*. No useful purpose is served in the context of the *NL* by mentioning that Nibelungenland was where Sifrit kept his *hort* — it would have been far more appropriate to mention the many men he kept there, but the poet lets the reference to the kernel of the original tale slip through.³² The winning of the treasure was certainly no subsidiary theme and it is hard to see how a Brünhilt adventure would have fitted in here. Are we to understand that this supposedly garbled source told of a captive Brünhilt in the power of giants and dwarfs who was won by Sifrit as part of the booty? It would seem to be the only possible result of the postulated conflation — but what a strange contrast to the princess's actual situation in *DSS* and *NL* Av. 7! Again, it is difficult to see how Brünhilt's words of greeting to Sifrit when Gunther was present could really belong to the story of the earlier meeting, as J. Bumke holds, if that earlier meeting is seen in the context of a maiden rescued from dwarfs and giants — *waz meinet iuwer reise?* seems odd on the lips of a liberated, or to be liberated, heroine, as in the postulated garbled source she surely must have been. Moreover, by what strange process could this friendly greeting on Brünhilt's part (if Sifrit had visited her alone

³¹ See e.g. D. von Kralik, *Die Siegfriedtrilogie im Nibelungenlied und in der Thidrekssaga* (1941), 526 f.

³² It may be noted that the words *da er den grôzen hort besaz* could, in an undisguised treasure adventure, possibly connote "where he took possession of the great treasure" — or is this an over-strained interpretation?

in a German story as he does in *ÞSS*) have been transferred from what would have been its original position in the treasure adventure *cum* rescued maiden tale to the scene of the joint expedition with Gunther, and the unfriendly greeting of the original second encounter (preserved in *ÞSS*) postponed to the end of the tale? That it was deliberate on the part of the poet makes no sense: that it was due to misunderstanding in oral transmission seems most unlikely. What of the near identity of the wording of the first greeting in the *NL* with that in the *ÞSS*? In the *NL* Brünhilt says: *waz meinet iuwer reise?*, i.e. "what is the purpose of your journey?" Brynhild in the *ÞSS* says *hvert hevir þu ætlað ferð þína?* i.e. "where are you bound for?" In Icelandic, *ætla* is often found with *hvert* or *ferð* — there is nothing striking about it, any more than there is with *waz meinet iuwer reise*. Two common, by no means identical, phrases in two similar, by no means identical contexts — there is scant justification for finding the vague parallelism especially significant.

There seems little reason to doubt that Av. 8 simply contains an exciting, uncontaminated variant of the treasure adventure which the poet was loath to drop, and he inserted it at a less inappropriate point in the story, in view of the above remarks on the interpretation of the situation in Iceland, than J. Bumke believes. His theory is ingenious, but probably erroneous, being based on the mistaken belief that Brünhilt's first greeting to Sifrit in *NL* st. 419 is a friendly one.

There is still no compelling reason to assume that Gunther's wife in German tradition was betrothed, or even known, to Sifrit as the result of a previous encounter, and that he jilted her.³³

³³ The famed "Lectulus Brunehilde" in the Taunus, attested since 1043, has been cited as evidence of the existence both of a German prior betrothal tradition (e.g. G. Baesecke, *Vor- und Frühgeschichte des deutschen Schrifttums*, I (1940), 37, 227), and of a German tradition of Brünhilt's suicide (D. von Kralik, *Die Sigfridtrilogie im Nibelungenlied und in der Thidrekssaga* (1941), 835). In fact, it could just as well refer to the scene of Brünhilt's deception by Sifrit and Gunther (cf. de Boor, *Das Nibelungenlied* (1956), xxv), though on the other hand it may have nothing at all to do with the Nibelung legend, as F. Panzer has so ably demonstrated (*PBB* 73 (1951), 95 f.).

It has been suggested, however, that Brünhilt's supposed feelings of thwarted love and jealousy are due to a worse fault on Sifrit's part than having "jilted" her through forgetting their betrothal, as in *VS*, because of a magic potion, a fault which has nothing to do with a betrothal to a "Sleeping Beauty" figure who was originally almost certainly a different person from Gunther's wife. Detter and Heinzel³⁴ suggest that, contrary to the account of the incident in *VS*,³⁵ Sigurd originally wooed Brynhild for Gunnar without the aid of magic and in his own shape as Gunnar's proxy, the sword Sigurd lays between them being the symbol of a proxy marriage, and that Sigurd deceived Brynhild by pretending to be marrying her on his own account, afterwards handing her over to Gunnar. If so, Brunhild would indeed have had from the earliest times cause for action against Siegfried for having trifled with her affections.

But there is a fallacy. What would Brynhild have made of the sword, the symbol of a proxy marriage, in such circumstances? Could Sigurd have fobbed her off by saying, as he does in *VS* when in Gunnar's shape, that he was fated so to marry or else die? Hardly, for in Detter's and Heinzel's belief there was originally no flame barrier such as we have in *VS* which there provides the guarantee of her suitor's genuineness, so that in *VS* her suspicions are largely allayed.

So much is recognized by Klaus von See in his two studies which deal with this and related matters,³⁶ but far from abandoning the proxy idea, he revives it in a different form. His contention is that originally Sigurd alone and in his own person³⁷ openly seeks Brynhild's hand on Gunnar's behalf; she goes with him, but her pride is wounded and she brings about his death.³⁸ Reason enough here for a display

³⁴ F. Detter and R. Heinzel, *Sæmundar Edda mit einem Anhang* (1903), II 460 f.

³⁵ 48 f. References are to R. G. Finch, *The Saga of the Volsungs* (1965).

³⁶ Klaus von See, 'Die Werbung um Brünhild', *ZfdA* 88 (1957-58), 1 ff., Klaus von See, 'Freierprobe und Königinnenzank in der Sigfridsage', *ZfdA* 89 (1958-59), 163 ff.

³⁷ Von See, 'Die Werbung . . .', 11.

³⁸ Von See, 'Freierprobe . . .', 167.

of coldness and for a tearful outburst such as we have in the *NL*. The arguments are ingenious, but are they compelling? They rest essentially on an interpretation of the Eddaic *Brot* and *Sig. in skam.* in the first place, and in the second place on supporting evidence derived from an examination of the relevant sections of *VS*.

Brot and *Sig. in skam.*, in his opinion, witness to the truth of his contention in that both include references to Brynhild's shared bed and the naked sword, but that in neither, as he sees it, is there any mention of a test of suitability for Brynhild's suitors, or of any exchange of shapes, or of the ring that Gudrún (= Kriemhilt) flaunts in Brynhild's face.³⁹ In short, the original tale would have been one of jealousy and wounded pride on Brynhild's part, the whole complex of Brynhild's deception by Sigurd and Gunnar being a later development, and not vice versa.

Brot st. 18⁴⁰ is cited as evidence⁴¹ that Sigurd was alone and not with Gunnar when he rode to seek Brynhild's hand for his friend, which would thus seem to exclude the flame barrier scene with the exchange of shapes known from *VS* ch. 29. It is necessary to quote the stanza in full:

| | |
|----------------|--------------------|
| Þá reyndi þat, | er riðit hafði |
| móðigr á vit | mín at biðia, |
| hvé herglötuðr | hafði fyrri |
| eiðom haldit | við inn unga gram. |

Admittedly, Brynhild does not expressly mention that Gunnar accompanied Sigurd, but Brynhild is here actually talking to Gunnar who hardly needs to be reminded of the fact. Nor do the words *mín at biðia* in themselves imply that the man who sought her hand openly stated that he was proxy for another, but rather that he was there ostensibly on his own behalf.

Moreover, the poet's essential concern in this stanza is with Sigurd's unbroken oaths. He begins "Then (he)

³⁹ Von See, 'Die Werbung . . .', 1.

⁴⁰ References are to G. Neckel, *Edda, Die Lieder des Codex Regius* (4th ed., by Hans Kuhn, 1962).

⁴¹ Von See, 'Die Werbung . . .', 2, 12.

showed it" — and so he must indicate just who showed what, viz. "the courageous man who had ridden to me to pay court to me (showed) how he kept his oaths". It is natural that the singular Sigurd rather than the plural Sigurd and Gunnar should have been uppermost in the poet's mind, especially when it was after all Sigurd, and he alone, who eventually rode *all the way* to Brynhild, viz. over the last stretch through the flame barrier that so effectively excluded Gunnar; but the stanza by no means presupposes Gunnar's complete exclusion from the expedition as such.

At any rate, the *Brot*, as the name shows, is but a fragment, all that is left of *Sigurdarkviða in forna* (*Sig. in forna*), the earliest of the Norse poems that tell of Sigurd's visit to Brynhild on Gunnar's behalf, however that visit be conceived. The first part of *Sig. in forna* was, of course, lost with the other poems in the missing section of the Codex Regius, and although the essential content of the lost material is preserved in the prose version of *VS*, it is very far from clear how the original poems should be reconstructed. Von See denies that the verses in *VS* (st. 22, 23, 24) which refer to Sigurd's ride through the magic fire and to the exchange of shapes belonged to *Sig. in forna*,⁴² though A. Heusler thought they did⁴³ and H. Schneider thought they might.⁴⁴ There can be no certainty either way.

The ring scene in *VS* ch. 30, in which Brynhild learns of how she has been tricked, is usually thought of as belonging to *Sig. in forna*, but if *Sig. in forna* told of a proxy marriage, then such a scene must have been absent from it, and von See contends that *VS* derived it, not from the lost poem, but from the *PSS*⁴⁵ (here implicitly the representative of comparatively late German develop-

⁴² *ibid.*, 3 f.

⁴³ A. Heusler, 'Die Lieder der Lücke im Codex Regius der Edda', *Germanistische Abhandlungen Hermann Paul dargebracht* (1902), 62 f.

⁴⁴ H. Schneider, 'Verlorene Sigurdichtung', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 45 (1929), 4.

⁴⁵ Von See, 'Die Werbung . . .', 4 f.

ments). The factors that are said to show this dependence of the *VS* version on the *ÞSS* need some examination. The words *bóndi* (husband) and *frumverr* (lover) are said to be rare (*bóndi*, we hear, occurs nowhere else in *VS* but cf. below); but they do occur in the corresponding section of the *ÞSS* (II, p. 260, l. 3, l. 12 respectively), and thus there must be a connection between the two scenes. *Frumverr* is admittedly infrequent, but it happens to occur in *VS* just a few lines earlier (p. 50, l. 12) than the instance in question, in a passage which is certainly not dependent on the *ÞSS*. *Maðr* is admittedly the usual word for husband, but *bóndi* does in fact appear earlier in *VS* (p. 7, l. 5) and is thus no more absent from the vocabulary of the Saga than is *frumverr*. That the author of *VS* occasionally substitutes a different word for that of his source, even when there is no obvious reason for his doing so, is clear,⁴⁶ and he may have done so here. On the other hand the very few, not especially striking passages in *VS* (excepting ch. 23) and *ÞSS* which are verbally close enough to each other to suggest a direct connection, defy any attempt to explain why such a haphazard borrowing should have taken place, and they may very well be derived from a common source, the non-extant *Sigurðar saga* (in the case of *VS* perhaps mediately via a prose passage, similarly derived, in the poetic Edda and associated with *Sig. in forna*), a hypothesis which von See, of course, would have to reject. He does so explicitly in connection with his discussion⁴⁷ of the significance of the words *i þyðværskri tungu* (*ÞSS* II, p. 268, l. 16), "in the German tongue", which are also seen as evidence of the dependence of the ring scene in *VS* on the *ÞSS* since they are thought of as natural to the German-based *ÞSS*, but not to the *VS*. They occur in a brief panegyric at the end of *ÞSS* ch. 391 which tells of Sigurd's murder and contains a brief reference to his obsequies.

⁴⁶ See R. G. Finch, 'The Treatment of Poetic Sources by the Compiler of *Völsunga saga*', *Saga-Book* 16 (1962-65), 328.

⁴⁷ Von See, 'Freierprobe . . .', 169, n. 1.

Von See suggests that the author of *VS* slightly adapted the passage and used it, first for the opening lines of his ch. 34 (*VS* p. 61, ll. 17-20) which follow on a brief description of Sigurd's and Brynhild's obsequies at the end of ch. 33, and second, though abbreviating it and omitting the words *i þyðværscri tungu*, for the opening of Gudrún's angry retort to Brynhild's denigration of Sigurd in the river quarrel scene (*VS* ch. 30, p. 50, ll. 29-30).

The omission of the vital words from the scene concerned hardly helps the argument. But a more important consideration than this is the fact that although the author of *VS* combines differing versions of the same situation — that was after all the task he set himself — there is absolutely no evidence to suggest that he ever took elements from one situation and used them in a totally different context, as would be the case here, where an impersonal statement following Sigurd's death has allegedly become part of a heated conversation before Sigurd's murder was even mooted.

Moreover, the panegyric on Sigurd, supposedly borrowed from the *ÞSS*, at the beginning of ch. 34 which tells of Gudrún's fortunes after Sigurd's death, belongs in fact to the last paragraph of ch. 33 (*VS* p. 61), with which it forms a natural unit. The source of that paragraph, which contains a reference to Brynhild's self-immolation, is not extant, but it was certainly not the *ÞSS*, for in that saga there is no such reference. It would thus seem very likely that *VS* does not derive the passage from *ÞSS*, but from a source also used by the *ÞSS*, though less fully since it had to discard the Norse tradition of Brynhild's death. The scene would then have remarked on Sigurd's fame among Germans, as well as among Scandinavians, such a remark being by no means necessarily the prerogative of *ÞSS*, for Sigurd's German affiliations were known, and the *Poetic Edda* itself refers to the Sigurd traditions of *þýðverscir menn*.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Prose passage after *Brot*, l. 4.

Von See cites further parallels in support of his contention, but such correspondence between the climax of two narrations of essentially the same story is only to be expected; *Brynhildr sér nú þenna hring ok kennir* (*VS* p. 51, l. 3) does not necessarily depend on *Oc nu er brynhilldr ser þætta gull þá kennir hon at hon hæfir átt* (*ÞSS* II, p. 261, l. 8 f.), nor *mælti ekki orð* (*VS* p. 51, l. 4) on *mæliv ækki orð* (*ÞSS* II, p. 261, l. 17). Brynhild's recognition of the ring is basic to the plot and in both versions it is stated in the simplest fashion possible, as is her consequent reaction: she is, not unnaturally, speechless. Indeed, the further details of the reaction, because they are expressed in each case by a simile, are also taken to show dependence, though it is at least as likely that they show the opposite, for in *VS* Brynhild turns deathly pale (*Þá fylnar hon, sem hon dauð væri*, *VS* p. 51, l. 3 f.), but in *ÞSS* as red as fresh blood (*hænnar licame . . . sua rauðr sem ny dreyrt blóð*, *ÞSS* II, p. 261, l. 15 f.). Again, Brynhild's description of Sigurd as a *þræll Hjálpreks konungs* (*VS* p. 50, l. 27) is said to have been suggested by and substituted for *hælldr mattu nu fara of skoga at kanna hindar stiga eptir Sigurði þinom bonda* (*ÞSS* II, p. 260, l. 1 f.). But here, too, some such derogatory remark regarding Sigurd's origins (and the two remarks are rather different) is a basic constituent of the basic plot, designed to evoke Gudrún's angry response which culminates in her producing the ring.

Against the contention that the ring episode in *VS* is derived from the *ÞSS* speaks the lack of stylistic correspondence: that the somewhat pedestrian author of *VS* should have had the desire or the skill to construct his concise, tense and dramatic scene out of bits and pieces taken from the ponderous and tedious account in *ÞSS*, arranging them in a totally different (river) setting of his own inspiration in order, as it would seem,⁴⁹ to avoid the *machtmotif* overtones of the *ÞSS* setting, is quite incredible — that is simply not how he went to work.⁵⁰ The ring

⁴⁹ Von See, 'Freierprobe . . .', 171.

⁵⁰ See R. G. Finch, 'The Treatment . . .', 353.

scene must surely have existed in the early Scandinavian tradition, here the representative of the original story.

Von See admits that Brynhild's statement to Gunnar in *VS* (p. 57), "Sigurd betrayed me (or "tricked me", perhaps a better rendering of *vélt*) and he betrayed (or "tricked") you no less when you let him sleep with me", did belong to *Sig. in forna*, but he believes that only Sigurd's alleged betrayal of Gunnar has to do with the shared-bed scene, whereas Sigurd's betrayal of Brynhild is a reference, he contends, to the broken vows of Sigurd's earlier betrothal to Brynhild,⁵¹ which means that a prior betrothal must have been an integral part of the original plot. If the general viewpoint of this paper is accepted, then the prior betrothal must be seen as a late development, certainly later than the *Brot*, in which case both betrayals can only refer to one and the same occasion, viz. the sharing of Brynhild's bed by Sigurd in Gunnar's shape. Brynhild's concluding remark that Sigurd has told Gudrún everything, and that Gudrún taunts her with it, confirms this, but these words, too, we are to believe, come from *ÞSS* since the infrequent *brigzlar* ("taunts", *VS* p. 57, l. 6) must depend on the *brigzli* of the latter (*ÞSS* II, p. 262, l. 13). The above arguments concerning *bóndi* and *frumverr* apply equally here, as does the argument of style: Brynhild's words in *VS*, concise and dramatic as they are, could hardly come from her more prolix, anything but dramatic statement in *ÞSS*, which may well be thought of as a "padded" version of her words in a source common to both sagas.

There is in particular one hitherto largely neglected circumstance that would seem to support the traditional view that *Sig. in forna* did tell of how Brynhild was tricked into marrying Gunnar with Sigurd's help. That is the fact that to ensure Gunnar's acquiescence in Sigurd's murder she falsely accused Sigurd of having broken his oath of bloodbrotherhood to Gunnar in that he had behaved

⁵¹ Von See, 'Die Werbung . . .', 5.

unchastely when he had visited her in Gunnar's place. Gunnar thus acted against Sigurd quite unjustifiably and so became guilty of breaking his own oath to Sigurd, and was therefore in pagan belief a doomed man. This is the situation in *Brot* and so must have been that of *Sig. in forna*. It is difficult to see why Brynhild, to secure Gunnar's cooperation, should have used a device which could only lead to his undoing, unless he himself had been guilty of some crime against her. This could only have been his complicity in her deception: Gunnar, as well as Sigurd, must fall to her vengeance. Her grim elation (*Brot* st. 16) and the note of mockery in her words (*Brot* st. 17) when she reveals the lie and tells Gunnar of his impending downfall are not otherwise explicable. Brynhild's lie clearly goes hand in hand with Brynhild's vengeance. Had there been no plot against her, and thus no need for vengeance, there would have been no need for a lie aimed at Gunnar's ruin. It may also be significant in this context that in *Sig. in skam.*, where the deception motif is almost entirely suppressed, together with the flame barrier, exchange of shapes and Brynhild's need for vengeance (see below p. 248), since her actions are now motivated by jealousy, Brynhild does not lie to Gunnar, for here she has nothing to avenge on him, and she gets him to move against Sigurd by threatening to leave him if he does not (*Sig. in skam.* st. 10-11). The lie was clearly felt to be an integral part of the deception theme, and was lost, along with so much else, when that theme became eclipsed by another.

The *Brot* (and *Sig. in forna*) is a much earlier poem than *Sig. in skam.* If the former did contain the theme of Brynhild's deception at the hands of Gunnar and Sigurd, then it is hardly likely that the latter would incorporate a more archaic rather than a more developed version of the basic material. In the *Sig. in skam.* the one seemingly obvious reference to Brynhild's deception occurs in st. 57 where the dying Brynhild says to Gunnar, "I have much to remember of how ye (they?) treated me when ye had griev-

ously deceived me' (*hvé við mic fóro, þá er mic sára svicna hofðot*). But what deception is this, if Sigurd had appeared openly acting on Gunnar's behalf? Von See points out⁵² that *svikja* can mean "to cheat someone out of something" (*sára* is seen as an adjective, not as an adverb, the sense being "mich, die schmerz erfüllte"); he suggests that the expression here is elliptical and that the context is not one of deception, but of deprivation, the reference being to the situation of *Sig. in skam.* st. 36-38 where Brynhild's brother, Atli, forces her to marry Gunnar, and she is thus "cheated out of" Sigurd, whom she prefers. In von See's view, this Atli scene, although not part of the original plot (the idea that Brynhild was thought of as Atli's sister before the linking of Sigurd's murder with the fall of the Burgundians is quite unacceptable), was a motif earlier than the exchange of shapes, and invented to explain why Brynhild should have accepted Gunnar when (as in *Sig. in skam.*) she clearly preferred Sigurd. One is tempted to ask what moved Brynhild to accept Gunnar in the first place, before the appearance of the Atli motif, and whether it is likely that such an insipid original plot (von See himself calls it "motivarm"⁵³) would have formed the subject of an early lay or story. It is not unreasonable to conclude that Brynhild's deception was an integral part of the original tale, out of which both German and Norse traditions grew up, and that Brynhild's words in *Sig. in skam.* st. 57 originally referred to such a deception and were not elliptical, but that in the changed setting of *Sig. in skam.*, with its very different interpretation of Brynhild's motives, their natural object of reference has come to be the Atli scene of st. 36-38.

In *Sig. in skam.* st. 4, which tells of shared bed and naked sword, von See sees evidence in favour of his proxy marriage theory, calling it "mitgeschlepptes Überlieferungsgut",⁵⁴

⁵² Von See, 'Freierprobe . . .', 168.

⁵³ Von See, 'Die Werbung . . .', 18.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 18.

since Sigurd clearly does not here set out alone on his journey to Brynhild. But the stanza in itself supports neither of the contending points of view and would fit into a version with an exchange of shapes, no less than into that of a proxy marriage. An interpretation of this stanza in the total context of the *Sig. in skam.*, and an explanation of the circumstances that led to the introduction of the Atli scene, will be found below (pp. 249 ff.).

As for the sword, it need not after all be exclusively symbolic of a proxy marriage.⁵⁵ It is also a tangible symbol of the supposed Gunnar's chaste intentions which may well have been part of the original plot, even if the flame barrier was not the original test of suitability, thus necessitating a sword or similar device in the changed setting of the flame barrier.⁵⁶ Brynhild's question about the sword (*VS* p. 50) need never have implied, "Why are you inexplicably going through the motions of a proxy marriage?", but "Why are you not consummating the marriage?"⁵⁷ The sword can and did symbolize chasteness outside the context of a proxy marriage, as for instance

⁵⁵ Von See admits this ('Die Werbung . . .', 10, n. 2) and refers to J. Grimm, *Deutsche Rechtsaltertümer* I (1899), 233 f., but declares that a Christian chastity motif "wird in der ursprünglichen Form der Nibelungensage noch nicht gewirkt haben". But the historical personages, whoever they were, would probably have been at least formal Christians, and even if they were not, the sword as a symbol of chastity is not specifically Christian (see B. Heller, 'L'épée symbole et gardienne de chasteté', *Romania* 36 (1907), 43 ff.). The sword separating Sigurd and Brynhild need never have had anything to do with a proxy marriage. Indeed, it becomes ever more doubtful whether proxy marriage existed as a mediaeval European institution before the high middle ages, see R. N. Combridge, *Das Recht im "Tristan" Gottfrieds von Strassburg* (2nd ed., 1964), 78.

⁵⁶ If Sigurd's behaviour was originally unchaste, as in *BSS*, then the sword could not have existed prior to the newer chaste relationship, introduced to enable Brynhild falsely to accuse Sigurd of abusing his position. And if there was originally no sword, then the whole theory of a proxy marriage becomes void, though that of a trick played by an unrecognized Sigurd does not.

⁵⁷ Von See ('Die Werbung . . .', 9) considers Brynhild's question and Sigurd's answer as a clumsy device designed to keep the sword of the proxy marriage scene in the (as he believes) new context of an exchange of shapes when Gunnar is seemingly present in person. But question and answer are both reasonable in their extant setting: Sigurd (in Gunnar's shape) must not consummate the marriage and he lays the sword between them. It is equally natural that Brynhild should ask why, and that Sigurd should ascribe his action to the demands of a higher power (*VS* 50, ll. 3 f.). There is a parallel in the scene in which Bride asks Orendel a similar question when Orendel lays a sword between them (and there is no question of a deception), receiving (in the Christian setting) a not dissimilar (and true) answer, see H. Steinger, *Orendel* (1935), ll. 1849 ff.).

in *Tristan* where, despite von See,⁵⁸ there is no cause to assume any link with the proxy idea.⁵⁹

If the sword really implied Brynhild's proxy marriage to Gunnar, then surely it is the last thing she would want when she joins Sigurd in a death which, in the earliest Eddaic poem that tells of it, is clearly a "Liebestod".

On the whole, the weight of evidence supports the view that Brynhild's deception by magic means and its associated elements are old, and that the following pattern of development is likely.

The *NL* shows an essentially primitive form of Brünhilt's relationship to Sifrit: her discovery of the deception is seen by Hagen as an excuse for removing a dangerous upstart (the *machtmotif*). There never was any prior betrothal, or love, or jealousy, and Brünhilt, through Hagen, seeks vengeance on Sifrit for the help he gave Gunther on the second night after the wedding (or for having bragged about it).

But such a situation could lead to the introduction of a jealousy motif which first appears in the *Brot*, all we have of *Sig. in forna*, and the earliest of the Norse poems that told of Sigurd's murder. As in the *NL* the *machtmotif* is clear and, as we have seen, the exchange of shapes and vengeance themes are implicit. In addition we have a hint of jealousy: Högni suggests (st. 3) that Brynhild grudges Gudrún her husband, and is dissatisfied with Gunnar, probably because she sees from the revealed deception that Sigurd is the better man. But it does not necessarily follow from this that the poem told of her love for him and of their prior betrothal, or for that matter, of her suicide, any more than does the *NL*, nor is there any other passage in the *Brot* that need be thought of as suggesting the

⁵⁸ Von See, 'Die Werbung . . .', 10.

⁵⁹ It is very far from certain that Tristan's embassy to Isolde on Marke's behalf is to be viewed as implying a marriage by proxy (see R. N. Combridge, *op. cit.*, 78). Moreover, Marke himself does not see the sword as a proxy symbol (F. Ranke, *Tristan und Isold* (4th ed., 1959), ll. 17518 f.), for him it is a chastity symbol pure and simple, while the huntsman can make nothing at all of the situation and is indeed scared by it (ll. 17450 f.). The sword just does not suggest a proxy marriage to anyone.

contrary. Admittedly Brynhild weeps (st. 15), but this is in the small hours of the morning after the assassination, whereas she had laughed in triumph when she first heard the news. Those who witnessed her tears failed to understand them: they certainly did not ascribe them to love for Sigurd, and nor should we. For in the meantime Brynhild has had something of a nightmare, a cold douche to the feverish pitch of her earlier excitement. She has dreamt that their hall is chill and her bed cold, for Gunnar with all his people is riding to his doom, and the full extent of the desolation her quest for vengeance entails for herself is brought fully home to her. But in the very recital of her dream, her vengeful mood seems to reassert itself and her momentary weakness leaves her. She reveals to her husband, Gunnar, how she has tricked him and the others into breaking their sworn oaths to Sigurd, and she implies that he, no less than Sigurd himself, must fall victim to her vengeance for the part he played in deceiving her. Here, though there may be a most poignant sense of regret, there is certainly no love, and thus no warrant for the assumption of Brynhild's suicide, certainly not as an act of "suttee" at Sigurd's obsequies. Her vengeance is at any rate not yet complete since Gunnar still lives, and the form taken by her dream suggests that she sees herself as Gunnar's widow, which would hardly seem to presage her own imminent demise. Brynhild's self-immolation on Sigurd's pyre is a later development.

Guðrúnarkviða I (*Gðr. I*) shows us the Brynhild of the later tradition, although the picture is very incomplete. St. 25-26 clearly imply that Brynhild would have preferred Sigurd to Gunnar, and her jealousy of Guðrún is intense. Moreover, she curses the woman (st. 23) who succeeds in rousing Guðrún from a near-fatal lethargy, a trance-like state caused by her grief at Sigurd's murder. At the end of the poem Brynhild's resentment of her treatment reaches a tremendous climax, and here the poet stops. The *machtmotif* and Gunnar's broken oaths of an earlier stage

appear (st. 21), and so does the ride of the two heroes to seek Brynhild's hand (st. 22), but Brynhild is now thought of as living with her brother Atli, not in her own flame-bound castle, and she blames him for all that has happened (st. 25). This is a new motif which, if the following interpretation of *Sig. in skam.* is accepted, presupposes the full story of Brynhild's jealousy, love and death.

It is *Sig. in skam.* which, outside the lost poems preserved in the prose of *VS*, develops the theme hinted at in *Brot* st. 3 and best shows us a jealous, and a loving, Brynhild. We saw that this poem probably does presuppose a version with the exchange of shapes and the revealed deception, though they are only just recognizable in it. The *machtmotif* is present (st. 16), though it is less prominent than in *Brot*. But Brynhild's jealousy is much more prominent (especially st. 6-9) — here it is clearly her main motive for wanting Sigurd dead — and the quarrel scene with the ring and discovery of the trick are understandably quite absent.

Incidentally, how fitting in a context of jealousy that the murder should be transferred from outdoors to indoors. What a triumph for a (newly) jealous Brynhild that Sigurd's wife should be present at his murder. The "Bettod" is not necessarily of ancient lineage!

In this lay we have for the first time a possible reference to the prior betrothal. When Brynhild explains how Atli, her brother, forced her to marry Gunnar — this theme of Atli's compulsion is probably late (see below p. 249) — she declares she preferred Sigurd, "one only I loved and none other, I was not fickle-minded" (st. 40). Earlier she had said she was promised to the man who sat with gold on Grani's back (st. 39). This may mean that she preferred Sigurd at first sight to Gunnar when in the later tradition they came to ask Atli for her hand, and he compelled her to accept Gunnar. But a half-line is missing which may well have contained a reference to Hindarfjall, the scene of the prior betrothal;⁶⁰ moreover, "I was not fickle-minded"

⁶⁰ Convincingly postulated by von See, 'Die Werbung . . .', 14 f.

surely indicates that a relationship already existed between Sigurd and herself. And some interpret the *vega kunni* of st. 3, l. 6 as "Sigurd knew the way (to Brynhild)" (though "knew how to fight", if less relevant to the context, is an equally possible translation of the phrase as it stands⁶¹).

Sig. in skam. st. 35, l. 1, in which Brynhild disclaims any desire to marry any one at all, might seem to be a rather strange remark if she was already betrothed to Sigurd. In the context of a prior betrothal, von See is certainly right when he ascribes this attitude on Brynhild's part to Sigurd's not having returned to her after their first meeting.⁶² She had in fact changed her mind (as in a different context and for very different reasons she changes her mind in *NL* st. 475, even though she had been won), and Gunnar's proposal, or indeed the sight of Sigurd himself since, being the Gjúkungs' right-hand man, he is presumably present on this occasion, awakens her old feelings — as we are told, she is certainly not fickle-minded. Von See, however, is not right when he considers Brynhild's total opposition to marriage as evidence that there was originally no test of suitability,⁶³ for as the *NL* shows, the two motifs can co-exist in complete harmony.

In *Sig. in skam.* there is clearly a new pattern: Brynhild is not merely jealous of Gudrún, she is actually in love with Sigurd and had been betrothed to him. This revision of the basic plot must have been made at some stage between the *Brot* and *Sig. in skam.* Sigurd's valkyrie became identified with the Brynhild who was to be Gunnar's future wife.

This new link may well have contributed to two further phenomena: the almost complete suppression of the exchange of shapes and associated themes, as in *Sig. in skam.* where they are barely recognizable, and the appearance of the theme of Atli's compelling Brynhild to

⁶¹ See Detter-Heinzel, *op. cit.*, II 459.

⁶² Von See, 'Die Werbung . . .', 15.

⁶³ *ibid.*, 14.

marry Gunnar. The identification of the valkyrie with Brynhild had opened the way for the coalescence of Sigurd's visits to two different women. The proof that such a coalescence did take place is found in *Helreið* where Sigurd wins Brynhild for Gunnar on his *first* visit, and it would seem most likely that the substitution of Brynhild's flame-barrier for the valkyrie shield-castle led to a parallel tradition in which Sigurd won Brynhild for himself when he first visited her by performing the feat originally appropriate to his second visit when in Gunnar's shape. But once won, always won. The deed of daring could not logically be repeated. Thus when Gunnar goes with Sigurd to seek Brynhild's hand, the situation has changed: the flames had already been quenched; there can be no exchange of shapes, no reason at all for Brynhild to accept Gunnar when she had already accepted Sigurd. The plot demands that she marry Gunnar — and so, at this late stage, compulsion by Atli is introduced. That this is a late development is also made likely by the fact that Brynhild and Atli are now blood relations. It is quite incredible that Brynhild should have been Budli's daughter in an early version of the material since the Siegfried-Brunhild story was originally independent of the Fall of the Burgundians; nor is there any indication whatsoever that Atli (or Budli as in *VS* ch. 31) has been substituted for some other earlier "villain" who browbeat Brynhild into an unwelcome marriage.

The motif of compulsion by Atli is at variance with *Sig. in skam.* st. 4 where Sigurd visits Brynhild and lays the sword between them, whether this is thought of as a proxy marriage scene, or as the original flame-barrier scene, unless the Atli passage is thought of as implicitly incorporating the flame-barrier motif,⁶⁴ and if the above argument is accepted, this could not originally have been the case. But there is a third possibility, viz. that the coalescence of Sigurd's two visits to two different women, mentioned

⁶⁴ See A. Heusler, *op. cit.*, 19.

above, not only resulted in the transference of the flame-barrier but also of the sword from the second visit to the first, a natural enough process since, apart from the late addition of Áslaug, Brynhild's daughter by Sigurd, made in the total context of *VS* in order to link Ragnar Lodbrók and the Norwegian royal line with the mythical Volsungs, there is nothing that speaks against Sigurd's relations with his original valkyrie as having been chaste. The assumption of such a transference makes possible the assignment of *Sig. in skam.* st. 4, which originally belonged to the scene of Brynhild's deception, to the scene of what had become the prior betrothal. The preterite tenses of st. 4, ll. 4-8 would then have pluperfect force (which is by no means impossible, cf. e.g. *Atlakviða* st. 19, ll. 1-7). *Sig. in skam.* st. 5, ll. 1-6, which tell of Brynhild's unblemished circumstances, would then imply her failure to understand why, since she is in every way immaculate, Sigurd finally preferred to marry another woman, abandoning her to another man, which is mentioned in the last lines of st. 4. St. 5 may originally have described Brynhild's unblemished, i.e. happy, life with Gunnar before the revelation of her deception, as at the end of *VS* ch. 29.

Sig. in skam. thus bears witness to a clearly developing tradition: the jealousy attributed to Brynhild in *Brot* and arising out of a *machtmotif* situation was interpreted not negatively as envy of another woman's more favourable circumstances, but positively, as love of that woman's husband whose earlier association with a different woman was turned into an earlier betrothal with Brynhild herself, this in turn leading to the coalescence of Sigurd's two visits, originally to two but now to one woman, and the developments consequent on that coalescence. In these changed circumstances, how natural, indeed how inevitable, that Brynhild should choose to die with Sigurd,⁶⁵ and how

⁶⁵ It now seems highly probable that the ultimate origins of the basic Siegfried story — his slaying of the dragon, his awakening of the sleeping maiden, his murder by Hagen — are to be sought in myths. Whether Brynhild's suicide could have had any place in such a myth is very much more doubtful.

fitting her request that the sword should be laid between them on the funeral pyre since now it was linked with their betrothal on Hindarfjall, and not with her deception through an exchange of shapes which belongs to a different antecedent version. Even if *VS*, and possibly the lost *Sigurdarkviða in meiri*, do manage to pour the new wine into the old bottle with some success, it is none the less in the late *Sig. in skam.* that suicide, pyre and sword form an obvious, and entirely appropriate, climax. That later poets concerned with merging the different traditions should have seen a desire to redeem her oath as part of Brynhild's reason for suicide is very likely;⁶⁶ that the idea of a "Liebestod" was uppermost is certain. *Helreið* sees it in that light, the prose passage after *Gðr. I* implies it, as does *Sig. in skam.*, for there her first mention of suicide follows the statement that it was Sigurd she had originally wanted (st. 38) and she makes it abundantly clear that in joining Sigurd in death she is being united to the man whom fate had refused her in life. There is no good reason for dissociating her suicide from the late Norse tradition, and more especially from her love for Sigurd.⁶⁷ In the *NL* she does not, nor ever did, love Sifrit (see above p. 234) and she does not commit suicide, but sits "enthroned in her pride" (st. 1100 *mit übermüete*). The *DSS* which claims to tell the German story, refers briefly to her death only in the

F. R. Schröder in 'Mythos und Heldensage', in K. Hauck, *Zur Germanisch-deutschen Heldensage* (1961), 301, n. 25, suspects it may be "eine letzte Erinnerung an altes Brauchtum" and he draws a parallel with the story of Baldr and Nanna, and points out that "in Bräuchen zur Fastnacht und Mittsommer werden öfter zwei Puppen, die das Maipaar darstellen, verbrannt". This seems to imply that the Brunhild of the murder plot and the Brunhild awakened by Siegfried were always identical, and that Brunhild, with Siegfried, falls victim to the negative, destructive "winter demon", for together they are equivalent to the independent halves of an originally hermaphrodite deity representing the positive, creative principle. Yet in the extant texts Brunhild always arraigns herself on the side of Siegfried's enemies and, even in *Sig. in skam.* where she loves him, she is instrumental in bringing about his downfall, a circumstance which seems to run clear counter to the suggested underlying myth pattern, and which may cast some doubt on the probability of the hypothesis.

⁶⁶ See *VS*, 56, ll. 20 f.

⁶⁷ Hans Kuhn in 'Brünhilds und Kriemhilds Tod', *ZfdA* 82 (1950), 191 thinks her suicide may be an expiation for having Sigurd slain out of jealousy, which, unlike a suffered affront, would not be sufficient grounds for murder.

A version,⁶⁸ where the reference is certainly due to contamination with the late Scandinavian tradition; in the main text she even makes an appearance after Attila's death (*ÞSS* II, p. 374).

VS itself tries to combine everything: there is a hint of the *machtmotif*, the vengeance motif is very clear, but particular stress is laid on jealousy and love — and here, or rather in the original lost lays, we have for the first time (ch. 31) Sigurd's love for Brynhild, and even a trace of jealousy on his part (ch. 30, p. 51), a further development on the eternal triangle theme.

Although *VS* keeps Sigurd's two meetings apart — adding in fact a later variant of the prior betrothal — it also includes two variants of the compulsion theme: in the one it is Brynhild's father, Budli, who exerts pressure (*VS* p. 53, this is in the lost lay section), though it is made to fit in well enough with the older pattern in that it explicitly incorporates the flame-barrier theme and Budli allows Brynhild to choose between the heroes who have come and she chooses the man who could pass the test. The second variant derives from the passage in *Sig. in skam.* (*VS* p. 59 f.), though in *VS* Atli does not actually compel her to marry Gunnar any more than does Budli, and so the scene is not too crassly at variance with what has gone before.

The references in *Oddrúnargrátr* (*Oddr.*) are too brief for extensive conclusions, and there is a mixture of different traditions: Brynhild sits embroidering, she is a sovereign lady (st. 17, as in *NL* and *ÞSS*), and as in *ÞSS* on the occasion of Sigurd's first visit to her, there is an armed conflict before she can be reached (st. 18), there is vengeance, suicide (st. 20), but no explicit reference to an exchange of shapes or to love. Dettner and Heinzel see it as evidence of their proxy marriage idea,⁶⁹ but if Sigurd, as they suggest, is here fighting at Gunnar's side, succeeding in overcoming all resistance, what need of the fake marriage

⁶⁸ See Bertelsen, II 268, n. 13.

⁶⁹ Dettner-Heinzel, *op. cit.*, II 515 ff.

to Sigurd that Detter and Heinzl postulate? Why does not Sigurd simply hand Brynhild over to Gunnar, rather as in the *ÞSS*, especially when, unlike the *ÞSS*, Sigurd has no call in *Oddr.* to talk his way out of a prior betrothal?

And so to the *ÞSS* itself which is all things to all people and certainly contains elements of both German and Scandinavian traditions. It undoubtedly shows clear traces of the development outlined above in the discussion of the *Sig. in skam.* The feat of prowess has been transferred from Sigurd's second visit to his first, and though no betrothal is mentioned at that time, the later retrospective reference to such a betrothal⁷⁰ can only mean that the compiler thought of the meeting in that light. Whether or not the obstacles Sigurd overcomes ultimately come from a treasure adventure (as de Boor thinks⁷¹) or from a variant of the *NL* contests, is not really germane — at any rate, the *Oddr.* shows that they were known in the North and that they antedate the *ÞSS*. The fact remains that the obstacles were overcome by Sigurd on his first visit, so if the above theory is valid, there should be no obstacles left when he went to visit Brynhild with Gunnar — nor are there. And how weak the motivation is in *ÞSS* of Brynhild's necessary acceptance of Gunnar. Since there is here no link with Atli, and thus no brother to compel her, she tamely allows herself to be persuaded by Sigurd who has just explained why he jilted her: he prefers Grímhild (= Gudrún/Kriemhilt) because she has a brother and is thus better connected.⁷² But the love element associated with the prior betrothal in the *Poetic Edda* and *VS* is absent from *ÞSS* because of the combination with the German tradition, the senior partner in the merger, which knew nothing of such an element (see above, p. 245).

Of later works, the Faroese *Brinhildartáttur*⁷³ is clearly the outcome of tendencies similar to those suggested. The

⁷⁰ *ÞSS* II 38, ll. 24 ff.

⁷¹ H. de Boor, *op. cit.* ii. 24 above, 157 ff.

⁷² *ÞSS* II 39, ll. 17 f.

⁷³ Text in V. U. Hammershaimb, *Sjúrðar kvæði* (1851).

prior betrothal scene has a flame-barrier, and we may conclude coalescence with Sigurd's second visit to Brynhild, which is not so much as mentioned, Brynhild's marriage to Gunnar being vaguely assumed and entirely unmotivated. The erotic side of the first encounter is increased to Venusberg proportions, and love has again ousted earlier motifs, including all trace of the *machtmotif*. The drink that makes Sigurd lose his memory is naturally retained, and so is the quarrel scene with insult and ring, although there is otherwise no hint of a deception. The taunt "who slept with you first", which in the original pattern had revealed to Brynhild that she had been tricked and thus understandably aroused within her a desire for vengeance, has lost all meaning in *Brinhildartáttur* with its changed pattern of jealous love, and Brinhild's consequential resolve to have Sigurd slain is quite illogical since the taunt in no way changes the situation. And Brinhild dies quite unheroically of grief, a weakening of the suicide theme in *Sig. in skam*.

The one significant Norse account that does not subscribe to the basic pattern here postulated is Snorri's,⁷⁴ for although the link between the valkyrie and Gunnar's wife is not as strong as in *V/S*, since they are not identified quite so unhesitatingly and there is no explicit prior betrothal,⁷⁵ and although Brynhild seeks vengeance for having been deceived, displaying no love or jealousy, she nevertheless commits suicide, possibly, though not explicitly, in order to redeem partially her broken oath to marry the man who braved the flames. But there can be no doubt that Snorri gives only an abbreviated and eclectic account of the developed tradition.

The question of Brynhild's love for Sigurd cannot be left without a mention of R. C. Boer and Kurt Wais — if either of them is correct, then her jealousy and the prior betrothal

⁷⁴ Guðni Jónsson, *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar* (1935), 167 ff.

⁷⁵ That Snorri's account does in fact presuppose the prior betrothal is made very likely by K. von See's cogent arguments in this respect, 'Die Werbung . . .', 6 f.

are after all early, and not a late development. Both postulate an early betrothal entirely unconnected with any "Sleeping Beauty" adventure. Boer⁷⁶ saw *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* with its broken engagement between Sigríd of Sweden and Ólaf of Norway as the source of this motif. For Wais⁷⁷ the motif is even earlier than the Sigríd-Ólaf story which, he believes, was itself influenced by the *NL* story. He holds that the motif in the Nibelungen poem is derived from the archetype of the French *Girart* epics as reconstructed by René Louis. To draw conclusions from a postulated symbiosis between two reconstructed poems seems very daring. Siegfried Beyschlag in his very favourable review of Wais⁷⁸ rejects any link between the Sigríd-Ólaf story and Nibelung tradition on the basis of his own work on the Kings' Sagas, and there are further grounds for doubting in general this aspect of Wais's conclusions.

There are two major points. The first is that Louis's *Girart* archetype as outlined by Wais contains, as Wais admits, some slight additions of his own,⁷⁹ though he does not particularize. One of these additions seems to be diametrically opposed to Louis's findings, for he did not think that the betrothal complications of the *Girart* epics belonged to the earliest *Girart* poem, but that they were introduced not earlier than the end of the twelfth century, and possibly a little later.⁸⁰ Wais does not indicate that he makes this change, though his reasons for doing so can be found in his contribution to the *Gamillscheg Festgabe* (1952).⁸¹ René Louis, in Wais's estimation, failed to appreciate some important points:

⁷⁶ R. C. Boer, *Untersuchungen über den Ursprung und die Entwicklung der Nibelungensage* (1906-09), III 147 ff.

⁷⁷ K. Wais, *Frühe Epik Westeuropas und die Vorgeschichte des Nibelungenliedes* (1953), 52 ff.

⁷⁸ *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* 4 (1954), 257 ff.

⁷⁹ Wais, *op. cit.*, 53.

⁸⁰ René Louis, *Girart, Comte de Vienne* (1947), I 49.

⁸¹ Kurt Wais, 'Zum Verständnis von Geschichte und Dichtung in den drei Girart-Epen', *Festgabe Ernst Gamillscheg* (1952), 209 ff.

(1) That the scorned and unjustly vengeful betrothed woman is characteristic of Frankish heroic poetry. This is a somewhat opaque statement. If it has any relevance, it must surely imply that the Frankish Brunhild poem influenced the *Girart* poem in the matter of the prior betrothal, which Leo Jordan believed,⁸² but which Wais, of course, denies. In his *Frühe Epik*⁸³ Wais does postulate that the archetype of the *Girart* version, which shows a jilted fiancée with a vengeful nature, took over that vengeful nature from the Brunhild of the contemporary *Nibelung* poem where, according to Wais, she seeks revenge for an insult offered her — this by way of exchange, as it were, for the prior betrothal motif. But this is an entirely different matter.

(2) That in spite of certain secondary traits, *Girart's* jilted fiancée is the opposite of the courtly lady of the *amour courtois* tradition and that she could not have been the creation of the courtly period, and so Louis is wrong in the late dating of her appearance in the poem. But there is plenty of evidence that motifs and attitudes that are not specifically courtly can develop in the courtly period. Such an argument cannot be decisive.

(3) That the historical *Girart's* *liaison* with his sister-in-law was linked with certain aspects in the life-story of his historical successor's wife, including the fact that she had formerly been betrothed to the Byzantine Emperor. These elements supposedly entered the earliest *Girart* poem, composed in the immediate wake of the historical events, appearing there as the betrothal pattern, the exchange of fiancées between *Girart* and his liege, as seen in the late extant *Girart* poems. That such a complete fusion could have taken place in so brief a span is by no means obvious.

Such are Wais's basic arguments in this matter. Whether they are weighty enough to overthrow Louis's theory of a late development of the betrothal theme may seem to some very doubtful.

But for the sake of argument, let it be assumed that the betrothal complications did exist in the primitive *Girart* of the late ninth century — which introduces the second major point. Wais's reconstruction of his Brunhild lay after alleged contamination by his *Girart* archetype has some curious features.⁸⁴ Brunhild, reputed to have been a

⁸² L. Jordan, 'Girartstudien', *Romanische Forschungen* 14 (1903), 321 ff.

⁸³ p. 54.

⁸⁴ *Frühe Epik*, 188 f.

courtesan before her marriage, one day suggests to Siegfried's wife that Siegfried is not of princely birth, which Siegfried's wife counters with "Who took your virginity?" Mortally insulted at this allusion to her past — whether or not she had been Siegfried's mistress when they were betrothed — Brunhild finds assassins and has Siegfried slain. Such are the essential features of the reconstruction to this point, and they seem not a little inconsistent. Brunhild has long had cause for annoyance with Siegfried because of the broken engagement. Why should an insulting, possibly false, allusion to her earlier relationship with Siegfried suddenly cause her to seek vengeance for having been jilted by him? Wais might answer that the effect of the taunt was to inflame Brunhild against Siegfried's wife, and that the murder is not so much vengeance on Siegfried as revenge against his wife for having Siegfried, and for the insult itself, because in Wais's reconstruction his murder casts his widow into a near-fatal trance, from which only the uncovering of Siegfried's corpse arouses her. It is the knowledge that her "Schmerzzauber" has failed that kills Brunhild — her death is not suicide.

In short, the main theme of *Gðr. I*, usually considered a late poem, is transferred to this early stage of development because Wais believes that the scenes of the widow's grief in the *NL* and in the Provençal *Daurel*, which he believes to be influenced by Nibelung tradition, are thereby explained.⁸⁵ But firstly, outside *Gðr. I* itself there is nowhere any sign of a trance: Kriemhilt in the *NL* and Esmenjart in the *Daurel* merely swoon, and the husband's body plays no part in their revival. And secondly, in *Gðr. I* itself it is far from clear that Gudrún's trance was deliberately planned by Brynhild, whose anger with the attendant for arousing Gudrún by uncovering Sigurd's wounds may be not so much due to that fact itself, as to fear of the consequences of the curse Gudrún has just uttered. If, then, *Gðr. I* is deleted from Wais's recon-

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, 46 ff.

struction, what is left? A Brunhild whose decision to have Siegfried slain is not based on her real grounds for resentment. This situation bears a marked resemblance to the illogical pattern of the Faroese *Brinhildartáttur* (see above p. 254), explicable there because the motif of Brynhild's deception had been crowded out. But here, according to Wais, there has been no such deception, and this illogicality may well cast doubt on the validity of the reconstruction, and on the contention that the prior betrothal motif entered the early Nibelungen poem from the *Girart* archetype, granting that this latter did feature that motif.

Wais's arguments do not appear to be persuasive enough to compel general acceptance of the prior betrothal at so early a stage, or of Brunhild's death at that stage. In Wais's reconstruction Brunhild's death is poorly motivated. Why should she suddenly die because her supposed plot against Siegfried's wife has failed? And if there never was any such plot, as seems likely, then there is still less reason for her death since she clearly no longer loves him, and it is only in such a context that her suicide makes full sense (see above p. 250). Certainly none of the other possible reasons for her suicide in the developing Norse tradition apply at this early stage.⁸⁶

It is clear that the early stories which told of the fate of Siegfried and of the Burgundians underwent radical and dissimilar changes in the two main areas of development, Southern Germany and the Scandinavian North. Yet despite the differences, there is an unmistakable parallelism in the essence of what took place. In the South, too, it was love and its fatal consequences that fused together with and partly effaced an older pattern, but it was not Brünhilt who became the centre of attraction. Kriemhilt (= Gudrún) had taken over Etzel's (= Atli's) earlier rôle, and with it his greed and treachery. How natural for her inordinate greed for gold and her treachery — of which unmistakable traces remain — to be turned by a late poet into greed for

⁸⁶ See R. G. Finch, *The Saga of the Volsungs* (1965), xxiv f.

vengeance on the treacherous murderers of her now inordinately loved husband. But in the North, Guðrún did not take over her second husband's rôle, and thus the factor that made possible the specific Southern development was lacking, and comparatively little could be done with her. In the North, the new interest in passionate love and its significance centred on Brynhild, the starting point for her development being essentially the situation in the *NL*. It may be that the Southern Brünhilt did suffer at the hands of a late German poet, that in fact her original rôle was that of full co-instigator (but not the sole instigator) of Sifrit's murder in a *machtmotif* context similar to that of the *Brot*, though without the incipient jealousy of the *Brot*, where she exults that the murdered Sigurd is no longer a menace; a context in which she was incensed at and afraid of the growing power and prestige of Kriemhilt and Sifrit, a rôle which was largely transferred to Hagen, the new Kriemhilt's natural opponent. But that is all the cutting of her rôle amounts to, if cutting there was. In the *NL* as it stands there is no reason to assume that Brünhilt has, or in an earlier German version had, any affection for Sifrit, and her very evident dislike of him does not presuppose that he ever jilted her. The so-called "hints" of a prior acquaintance between them are clearly no such thing, despite J. Bumke's ingenious arguments to the contrary, and the alternative prior betrothal theme suggested by Kurt Wais seems, as does R. C. Boer's earlier theory, to be unwarranted. It is only in the more developed Scandinavian tradition that Brynhild's jealousy of Guðrún for having the more outstanding husband appears in conjunction with the old *machtmotif* and with Brynhild's need for vengeance because Sigurd in Gunnar's shape had tricked her. Klaus von See's arguments that Brynhild's original cause for resentment towards Sigurd arose from wounded pride because Sigurd came openly as Gunnar's proxy and not on his own behalf, however skilfully put, seem no more compelling than Detter's and

Heinzel's argument that Sigurd in his own shape tricked Brynhild by pretending to marry her himself, for it is highly probable that all the extant poems presuppose the older tradition of the exchange of shapes and the revealed deception.

On the theme of jealousy followed that of love, the prior betrothal and the complications resulting from the coalescence of Sigurd's two visits to Brynhild, i.e. the absence of a test of suitability on the second visit, and the associated need to find a way to explain how Brynhild came to marry Gunnar when she had already been won by Sigurd, a need satisfied by the invention of Atli's compulsion.

Brynhild's suicide appears in the closest association with the late Northern themes, especially with that of love. The whole of Brynhild's emotional entanglement with Sigurd is the specifically Northern development of possibilities in the earlier pattern which in Southern tradition were stifled by the emergence of the new Kriemhilt — and Brünhilt in that tradition was never Kriemhilt's rival for Sifrit's love.

NOTES

I. ON THE VÍNLAND LEGEND OF THE VINLAND MAP

BY GILLIAN FELLOWS JENSEN

P. G. FOOTE'S comments on the forms taken by some Scandinavian personal names in the legends on the Vinland Map (*Saga-Book* XVII, part 1, 73-5) prompt the following observations based on the forms taken by such names in English and Anglo-Norman sources.

(1) The spelling *ya* in *Byarno*. In the sources in question medial *ja* is almost invariably represented by *e* but it may be noted that *Ya-* is a fairly common spelling for initial *Ja-* in English sources from the thirteenth century onwards.

(2) The declension of this name. Professor Foote notes that weak masculine names were normally latinised as third declension nouns (e.g. *Biarno*, *-onis*) in Scandinavia in the Middle Ages and says that a form like *Byarnus* "would seem to be quite exceptional". In post-Conquest sources in England, however, it is not unusual for Scandinavian weak masculine names to be latinised by the addition of *-us* to the stem and declined as strong nouns. This procedure is very common in Domesday Book, cf. O. von Feilitzen, *The Pre-Conquest Personal Names of Domesday Book* (1937), 128.

(3) *Erissonius*. Scandinavian *ks* is quite often replaced by *s* or *ss* in English sources which show Anglo-Norman influence, e.g. the Domesday Book form *Sassebi* of the place-name Saxby (originally **Saksa*-), cf. R. E. Zachrisson, *A contribution to the study of Anglo-Norman influence on English place-names* (1909), 10, and M. K. Pope, *From Latin to Modern French* (1934), § 650. Patronymics in Latin sources in England always appear with *filius*.

II. PREPOSITION OF IN A MANUSCRIPT OF SVARFDÆLA SAGA

BY PETER FOOTE

JÓNAS KRISTJÁNSSON'S study, doubtless definitive, of the manuscripts of *Svarfdæla saga* in his new edition reviewed on pp. 268-9 below clarifies a point which has long puzzled me. In

a paper on the prepositions *of* and *um(b)* published in *Studia Islandica* 14 (1955), I observed that there appeared to be a tendency to retain *of* longer in phrases of time than in others, and I wrote (p. 70): "A curious example is *Svarfdælasaga*, preserved in a MS from *c.* 1700 and other late copies [this could have been better expressed], probably from a fourteenth-century original. There are twelve instances of *of* in the text . . . in each case the phrase is *of vetrinn*." I had used the "critical" edition available,¹ where the text of the vellum fragment S (see p. 268 below) is printed but where the main text is given from ÍB 226 4to, written about 1700. No instances of *of* occur in the fragment; it is ÍB 226 4to which provides the 12 examples I incautiously assumed to be survivals. Jónas Kristjánsson has shown, however, that ÍB 226 4to is a direct copy of Thott 976 fol., a manuscript written by Páll Sveinsson early in the sixteen-nineties, which is itself descended through at least two intermediaries from *J* (cf. stemma, p. lxxi), Jón Erlendsson's text of *Svarfdæla saga*, now recognised as the best of the paper copies extant (see p. 268 below). Now, in *J* there are no examples of *of* at all. In other words, the instances of *of* in *of vetrinn* collected from a manuscript of *Svarfdæla saga* are archaisms introduced by an Icelandic writer round about 1700, and as such, of course, they have no significance for the study of the language of the saga or for the study of the obsolescence and disappearance of preposition *of* in Icelandic. But they do teach us not to underestimate the risk of being gammoned by scribes and editors. It is extremely instructive to read Jónas Kristjánsson's comments elsewhere (pp. xxxiv-vi) on Ásgeir Jónsson's "extraordinarily consistent" archaising in Thott 1768 4to, where his generally authentic older forms can be fully demonstrated to be innovations because his own immediate exemplar is known (AM 483 4to, written 1687). Similarly, as Jónas observes (pp. xvi-xvii), an exhaustive investigation of Jón Erlendsson's scribal habits is needed before any sound opinion can be formed of the significance of old-looking forms and spellings in his copy, *J*, of the saga, even though it seems very probable that many of them are to be set to his account. A feature of Icelandic usage which has never been fully charted, for example, is the appearance of enclitic first person pronoun *-k*, common in verse and well known in early prose.² It is perhaps likely that double pronoun usage (*ek hefík* and so forth) may be taken as a sure sign of age, but without a full

¹ *Íslenzkar fornsögur gefnar út af Hinu íslenzka Bókmentafélagi*, III (ed. Finnur Jónsson, 1883).

² Cf. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Dating the Icelandic Sagas* (1958), 101; idem, *Ritunartími Íslendingasagna* (1965), 119-20.

survey it is impossible to tell what significance sporadic instances of simple enclitic usage in fourteenth- or fifteenth-century manuscripts may have. If numerous instances were found in a text, however, it might seem tempting to regard them as survivals that provided trustworthy linguistic evidence of earlier stages in a work's existence. But Jón Erlendsson's copy of *Svarfdæla saga*, *J*, emphasises for us how little we know about this phenomenon — he has rather many examples of enclitic usage,³ some of them suspect, but as things stand we simply cannot tell whether all or any of them are his contributions or not. A look at the vellum fragment suggests some might be inherited, for *hefig* occurs there once (where *J* has *hefer ek*), and this form *hefig* is frequent elsewhere in *J*; but we also find that *J* has *ætlag*, where *S* has *ætla ek*,⁴ so caution is again counselled.

³ *hefig* 9/29, 13/3, 14/1, 23, 26/10, 60/20, 68/7; *lastig* (sic) 58/19; *mundag* 69/11; *nennig* 15/20; *villdag* 67/4; *væntig* 12/5, 58/3; *ællag* 54/7. Note also *viligh* 65/22, 66/6, for early *vil ek*!

⁴ See 52/S6, 52/S11.

BOOK REVIEWS

THREE VIKING GRAVES IN THE ISLE OF MAN. By GERHARD BERSU and DAVID M. WILSON. *Society for Medieval Archaeology, Monograph Series: No. 1*, 1966.

For a number of years during and after the war the late Gerhard Bersu's activity as an excavator was centred on the Isle of Man. His work marks an era in the growth of our knowledge of the island's past, and it is no disparagement of earlier scholars, among whom P. M. C. Kermodé was pre-eminent, to say that the progress made in those few years was unexampled. It was a fine achievement, and some share of the credit for it must go to those who enabled Dr Bersu to work as he did.

To him, in his Isle of Man years, excavating was something which he did himself, and not, as is common nowadays, something which the excavator watches a large band of semi-trained people do in his name; so that his findings have a validity which can all too rarely be ascribed to the results of excavations. Those who were lucky enough to see him at work may be pardoned for feeling that excavation techniques have not developed significantly in the last quarter of a century.

Unfortunately, a proportion of this work has remained unpublished, and we owe a great debt to those scholars who are now ensuring that it will take the place which it deserves in our archaeological records. In this volume, the first of a new series of monographs, we have a most welcome presentation of three Viking burials excavated between 1944 and 1946. It consists, by and large, of Dr Bersu's own descriptions of the excavations, and of a full and valuable discussion by David Wilson of the small finds.

One of the burials was a boat-burial, like that excavated by Kermodé at Knoc-y-doonee, while the other two were either coffin-burials or, as the editor points out, possibly *Kammergräber*. They have at least this in common, that they are near the coast, and command fine vistas of land and sea. At least two of them were marked by substantial timber posts, and must have been familiar sights to those who sailed past. In the *Odyssey* Elpenor begs for just such a burial, with a mound visible from the sea, and his oar set upright upon it. The parallel is as close as one could wish. In at least one, and possibly two of the burials, there was evidence for suttee.

Their value to the historian is somewhat lessened by the fact

that they cannot be dated with any kind of precision. It is quite probable that they represent graves of the first generation of settlers, but they do not help us to decide whether this generation was dying in, say, the seventies of the ninth century, or fifty years later. It may be unlikely that the Isle of Man escaped occupation until the end of the ninth century, and the earlier date may accordingly appear the more probable; but we certainly do not know. Their chief value is that they give substance to an episode which could otherwise only be very fleetingly glimpsed. They enable us to picture the pagan settlers who, if they had little use for Christianity, seem often to have preferred to be buried in a Christian cemetery. They were cut off from their traditional family burying-places, and some of them felt the need for a spot where a tradition of burial already existed. Just how numerous they were is still something of a mystery, but as there is evidence which suggests that Celtic speech virtually died out on the island for some centuries, the settlement must have been fairly dense.

We may welcome this volume both for the meticulous excavating which it records, and for the thorough discussion which it provides of an important group of small finds. The editor's task was an important one, and it has been worthily carried out.

PETER S. GELLING

OLD NORSE-ICELANDIC STUDIES: A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY. Compiled by HANS BEKKER-NIELSEN. *Toronto University Press and London, Oxford University Press*, 1968. 94 pp.

This bibliography by one of the editors of the annual *Bibliography of Old Norse-Icelandic Studies* is intended as a student's guide. It is the first volume of a series of medieval bibliographies to be published for the Centre for Medieval Studies in the University of Toronto.

As the editor states in his preface, the work is primarily intended for English-speaking students, and consequently concentration is on material available in English and the better-known European languages. This accounts for a number of omissions, though I do not wish to leave the impression that important works in the modern Scandinavian languages have been neglected. Any reviewer of a select bibliography is bound to find something missing. One notices, for example the lack of the Everyman translation of *Laxdæla saga*, of Guðbrandur Vigfússon's *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* and *Origines Islandicae*, both of which still have

their uses, of E. A. Kock's *Notationes Norrœnæ*, and of Bjarni Vilhjálmsson's convenient edition of the *Riddarasögur*. A more serious, deliberate, omission is the lack of reference in the section devoted to the *Íslendingasögur* to *Vápnfrðinga saga*, *Droplaugarsona saga*, *Hænsna-Póris saga* and many others.

The bibliography is sub-divided into five sections: *Introductory Material* including reference to Bibliographies, Periodicals, Saga Collections, and Series; *Study of Language* including Grammars, Dictionaries, History of Language, and Catalogues of Manuscript Collections. In this last it would have been worthwhile to have made reference to the British Museum manuscripts — see Jón Þorkelsson in *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* VIII (1892), 197-237, and H. L. D. Ward, *Catalogue of Romances in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum* II (1893). The third section is on *Literary History and Criticism*, the fourth on *Texts*, and the fifth on *Background Material*. An index of authors is also provided.

Cross references are frequent, so that the bibliography will be easy to use. However, for the student, a fuller account of the content of such important works as *Islandica* and the *Íslensk Fornrit* editions would have been helpful. Many of the items are, of course, mentioned, but if lack of space forbade the full listing of them, at least their importance might have been indicated in the preface.

Despite the above strictures this one-volume bibliography is very welcome, and notwithstanding its selective nature, it will be a useful guide.

A. R. TAYLOR

ALTNORDISCHES ELEMENTARBUCH. By FRIEDRICH RANKE, revised by DIETRICH HOFMANN. *Sammlung Götschen Band 1115/1115a/1115b*. Berlin, Walter de Gruyter and Co., 1967. 205 pp.

This is the third edition of Professor Ranke's *Altnordisches Elementarbuch*, now fully revised by Professor Dietrich Hofmann of the University of Münster. In the space of its 205 pages the book gives us an introduction to medieval Scandinavian literature, a few brief notes on the development of the Scandinavian languages prior to the literary period, a grammar of the medieval Scandinavian dialects (though this only deals with their phonology and morphology), a selection of texts and a comprehensive glossary. The result of including so much varied material in a book of this size is, of course, a certain superficiality of treatment.

This is inevitable, but what could have been avoided is the complete imbalance of the whole presentation. The introduction to Icelandic literature occupies over 10 pages, while only 3 are devoted to the literature of Norway, Sweden and Denmark, and these deal almost exclusively with the laws. In the grammar Icelandic is given 44 pages and the other Scandinavian dialects 8. The Icelandic texts spread over 56 pages, the others receive only 24. While such a distribution may be justified on grounds of literary merit, it seems wholly unwarranted in a book whose prime aim, we must assume, is to provide an introduction to the language of medieval Scandinavia. If this is not the aim — and “Altnordisch” is perhaps a rather vague term — there seems little point in including snippets of Old Norwegian, Swedish and Danish, too short for us to judge whether they have any value as literature or not. Among the Icelandic texts there is a heavy bias toward the *Eddas* which occupy 37 of the 56 pages devoted to Icelandic literature.

The texts themselves give the impression of muddle. The Icelandic is normalised throughout, but whereas standard normalisation is adopted for the saga extracts, Neckel's system is used for the Eddic poetry. This leads to a number of confusing inconsistencies, e.g. medio-passive *-sk* forms in the sagas, but *-z* forms in the poems. The Norwegian, Swedish and Danish texts are semi-normalised. Expansions are not italicised, and although some orthographical changes are indicated by italics, it is difficult to see on what principle they have been made. The original MS reading is never given in such cases. The spelling of *v* and *u* has been normalised without comment, but not that of *i* and *j*. Length marks have been introduced over all long vowels except where the MS already has an accent, in which case this is retained (thus *nū*, but *apalldrstré*).

There are two mistakes in the book which ought to be corrected in any subsequent edition. On p. 15 it is stated that *Grettis Saga* was written between the time of the composition of *Fóstbrædra Saga* and *Njáls Saga*, the date of the latter being given as about 1280; and on p. 83 we learn that *Egils Saga* is preserved in three big fourteenth-century MSS.

The best features of this book are the useful but brief introduction to the native literature of medieval Iceland and the unusually clear description of the phonology and morphology of Old Icelandic. These will be excellent for beginners or for purposes of revision. As an “Altnordisches Elementarbuch”, however, this book must be counted a failure. What it has to say about Old Norwegian, Swedish and Danish is too brief to be of any value.

MICHAEL BARNES

SVARFDÆLA SAGA. Edited by JÓNAS KRISTJÁNSSON. *Rit Handritastofnunar Íslands*, II. Reykjavík: Ísafoldarprentsmiðja h. f., 1966. lxxii + 94 pp.

When the Manuscript Institute of Iceland (*Handritastofnun Íslands*) was established in 1962 under the directorship of Professor Einar Ól. Sveinsson, it assumed the function of the older Manuscript Publishing Council of the University of Iceland (*Handritaútgáfunefnd Háskólans*) and made each of the latter's three publications the first of its three series. Jón Jóhannesson's facsimile edition of *Íslendingabók* (1956) is the first of *Íslensk Handrit* and has been followed by Hreinn Benediktsson's remarkable *Early Icelandic Script* (1965) and two collections of Icelandic seals (*Sigilla Islandica*) published by Magnús Már Lárusson and Jónas Kristjánsson. Jónas Kristjánsson's editions of *Dínus Saga* (1960) and of *Viktors Saga ok Blávus* (1964) will form the basis for a collection entitled *Riddarasögur*. The third series (*Rit Handritastofnunar Íslands*) was begun by Jakob Benediktsson's definitive edition of the *Skarðsárþók* redaction of *Landnámabók* (1958) and is now followed by the edition of *Svarfdæla Saga* under review.

Svarfdæla Saga is in a poor state of preservation. The archetype for the forty-odd late paper manuscripts contained several lacunae, the largest of which splits the saga into two virtually disconnected parts. The characters of the saga before this lacuna are entirely different from those in the part which follows it. In this edition Jónas is able to show that all the paper manuscripts are derived directly or indirectly from one — AM 161 fol. (*J*) written by Jón Erlendsson í Villingaholti sometime between c. 1640 and c. 1670. In addition there is a fifteenth-century vellum leaf in AM 445c 4to (*S*). *J* and *S* are related texts but each is independent of the other. The basis for the edition is therefore a diplomatic text of *J*, with *S* given as a parallel text as far as it goes. The introduction gives special attention to these two main manuscripts but also discusses all the other copies, demonstrating their dependence on *J* and showing how they can be classified into seven groups. Attempts by later copyists to fill out the various lacunae are given as footnotes to the main text or, in the case of the lengthier ones, in an appendix (*Eyðufyllingar*).

There is very little to take exception to here. Two points may be mentioned however. As is often the case in Icelandic books, references are sometimes inadequately given. For example on page xix "sjá Håndskriftfortegnelser 72" will not be enough for a reader who does not already know what book is intended. On page xxxiii it is stated that Grunnavíkur-Jón actually owned

Thott 1768 4to for a period: but it is doubtful if this was in fact the case (see *Flóamanna Saga*, ed. Finnur Jónsson (1932), iii). Otherwise the editor, who has already contributed so much to these series and who is an expert on sagas from Eyjafjörður, is to be warmly congratulated. It is a great pleasure to see definitive editions of this type, particularly of the *Íslendingasögur* being so competently produced. The standards of scholarship set in these initial publications of the *Handritastofnun*, by this scholar and by others, are the highest, and one has every reason to believe that they will be maintained at this level. The decision to transfer the Arnarnagnæan Collection to Iceland will no doubt give added impetus to the editorial activity which has already produced so much good work. In the meantime, in this edition, the firmest basis possible is provided for the study of an interesting type of late Family Saga, put together from the heterogeneous elements of half-forgotten traditions and highly stylized literary motifs.

RICHARD PERKINS

EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE VIKING AGE. By JACQUELINE SIMPSON. London: B. T. Batsford. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1967. 208 pp.

This is a popular book on the Vikings and a good one. In two hundred pages the author covers a wide range of aspects of Viking culture and does so without forcing her account or making it list-like. A glance at the index will give some idea of the scope: America, Bearing-dials, Celtic names, Divorce, Grobin, Skates, Rollo. The first chapter, "Ruffians or Heroes?", reviews among other things the sources for our knowledge of the period and counsels wariness of the sagas; if, however, there is any general criticism to be made of this book, it is perhaps that Miss Simpson herself is sometimes a little too credulous; surely, for instance, the fighting in the Family Sagas is largely what Laxness has called "the dreams of a dull-weaponed people" (cf. pp. 120 ff.). Chapter 2 deals briefly but adequately with the Viking expansion and the following seven chapters with such subjects as "Life on the Land", "Ships and Seafaring", "Games, Arts, and Poetry". A long chapter is rightly devoted to the Vikings as merchants and the author acquits herself competently in another, difficult one on "The Family and Society". Miss Simpson's scholarship is broad, accurate and up-to-date. One could disagree on a few points. Room V at Stöng (p. 52) is much more reasonably explained as

a large latrine of a type we hear of in literary sources than as some sort of cold-storage room, as has been suggested (see *Kulturhistorisk Leksikon* VI (1961), s.v. Hemmelighed. Island). Ibn-Khurdadhbih does not call the Rus "a sort of Slav" (p. 108); the word used, *aṣ-Ṣaqāliba*, covers not only the Slavs but also various neighbouring peoples. Despite Snorri, Turgeis of Dublin should not unreservedly be identified with a Norse "Thorgisl" (p. 25); indeed Carl Marstrander definitely rejects the latter, found in Irish sources as Torgesli, in favour of *Þurǵestr. But oversights like these are unavoidable in a book of this type and hardly detract from the value of what is a well-balanced, carefully thought-out survey of a wide subject. The book is imaginatively illustrated with drawings by Eva Wilson and black and white photographs. It is a credit to its author and to Batsford and can be confidently recommended to anyone interested in the subject.

RICHARD PERKINS

THE NORTHMEN TALK. A choice of tales from Iceland translated by JACQUELINE SIMPSON. Foreword by ERIC LINKLATER. *Phoenix House, London* 1965. xxix + 290 pp.

The translation of medieval Icelandic into modern English has centred mainly on the more magnificent specimens of the literature: the poems of the *Edda*, and the prose of Snorri and the anonymous authors of the *Íslendingasögur*. Attempts at putting these works into an acceptable form of English have occupied much time and labour, and although no infallible method of defeating the difficulties has been discovered, many problems have received a thorough airing and some notable, if not undisputed, achievements have been made. At the same time much that is of value has been neglected. The sagas of bishops remain largely unanglicized, as does the *Sturlung* compilation, to mention only two of the obvious cases. Icelandic studies in this country are the poorer for such a lack. Incontestably, it is now time to turn from the more immediately absorbing and popular work, and to make a greater variety of Icelandic writing available to a wider public.

Miss Simpson's anthology will be welcomed as a first step in this direction, for of her forty-one selections only thirteen have appeared before in English translation. In pursuing the double aim of entertaining the reader while expanding his knowledge and experience Miss Simpson has ranged widely through Icelandic

literature. Some fairly familiar extracts from the *Poetic Edda*, dealing mainly with the Sigurd legend, are preceded by three *þættir*, each presenting an Icelander in the role of entertainer at a foreign court. By demonstrating the actuality of oral *sagnaskemtun* these three tales form an excellent prologue to what is essentially a collection of popular literature.

Biographical and semi-historical narrative is represented by extracts from three sagas of bishops, the central feud story of *Guðmundar saga dýra*, and the Stamford Bridge and Hastings episodes from *Hemings þáttir*. The last of these provides opportune comparison with other material published as an accompaniment to the 1966 celebrations, while the selections from *Jóns saga helga* and *Þorláks saga in yngri* have been well chosen to show not only a certain style of writing but also, in the first case, the hagiographer's power to excite and his handling of miracle; and in the second case, the twelfth-century beginnings of a crucial problem in thirteenth-century Icelandic history, the clash between church and state.

Saga-writing technique is seen in embryo in the complete translations of *Hreiðars þáttir heimska* and *Hrómundar þáttir halta*. From this one is inclined to think that a volume of *þættir* translations is long overdue. The whole second half of the book is given over to merry incredibilities from the *Fornaldarsögur*, and some equally attractive and welcome renderings of *dansar*, the popular ballad form which thrived best in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Variety and enjoyment have ruled the choice of material.

Miss Simpson translates into straightforward, lively, and thoroughly readable prose. By scrupulously avoiding archaism and syntactic distortion she has successfully recreated the brightness and immediacy of the originals. With her judicious use of colloquial language where it seems appropriate (e.g. "turned a deaf ear" for *lét sér þat ekki skiljast*, p. 93), she insists on the qualities in her sources which must have appealed to the audience for which they were created, and the result of all this is that we are able to read them as fresh art rather than as curious relics. "Vassal" is perhaps a little strong for *lendr maðr* (p. 128), and "sire" too quaint for *herra* (p. 122 etc.), but such discords are infrequent. Rather more weight of criticism could be laid against the achievement of a certain "Englishness" by the enjambement of two or more separate Icelandic sentences into a single translated one. There are widespread examples of this dubious practice. It creates a flow of style which is absent from the originals, and distorts the very precision, terseness and simplicity praised by the translator in her introduction. A more understandable play is

the consistent turning of historic present into plain past tense. On the whole the general tenor of the book justifies this decision, yet not all will agree that nothing is lost, or that no alternative is possible. George Johnston's translation of *Gísla saga* is an admirable case for the rewards of boldness in this respect. Since all writing demands the creative involvement and intelligence of the audience, is it too much to ask (even) the "general" reader to attune himself a little to this often very telling feature of style? As a literary device it is unfamiliar, but not altogether unknown, in England, yet one has only to listen to someone relating an anecdote in order to recognize its instinctive, ingrained appeal in narrative.

No volume of translation is likely to meet with universal acclaim, and the major controversial topic in this one will almost certainly be the straight adoption of the traditional rhymed ballad form to render Eddaic verse. In explaining her chosen path through the swamp Miss Simpson confesses that "no solution is wholly satisfactory", an understatement that will produce wry smiles here and there. Since her stated plan has been to ignore stress and alliteration in an attempt to convey the vigour and directness of the verse, it is only fair to approach her efforts on this ground alone. Basically, the rhyme and regularity of her stanzas take away some degree of the hard force of the original verse, and, even in *Þrymskviða*, introduce an alien note of frivolity. One wonders whether it is absolutely necessary to avoid one set of constrictions by adopting another, already existing. The inevitable associations of the home-grown ballad cannot be forced out. Of the verse translated in this way *Völuspá* seems to possess, in its vocabulary of doom, the best vehicle for riding the transition. All in all one can only admire the consistency and skill with which an unenviable task has been confronted and executed.

Explanatory footnotes are adequate, unobtrusive, and to the point; the print is clear and well displayed; errors few.

As an entity the book inevitably suffers from its own diversity. Despite the independent validity of its extracts, the succession of fragments leaves one only half satisfied. My own view is that future projects would best serve our needs by treating single topics fully.

JOHN PORTER

GAUTREKS SAGA AND OTHER MEDIEVAL TALES. Translated by HERMANN PÁLSSON and PAUL EDWARDS. *University of London Press Ltd.*, 1968. 156 pp.

This volume contains translations of three *fornaldarsögur* and

two shorter legendary *þættir*. Apart from *Gautreks Saga* itself it includes *Bósa Saga ok Herrauds*, *Egils Saga Einhenda ok Ásmundar Saga Berserkjabana*, *Þorsteins Þáttur Bæjarmagns* and *Helga Þáttur Þórissonar*. The stories themselves are preceded by a good introduction to the *fornaldarsögur* for the non-specialist reader. The translations are lively and readable, and accurate, though not slavishly so. There is little to criticise, though an occasional printing error or careless mistake may be found. Thus on p. 22 "þorsteins þáttur bæjarmagns" appears without any capitals at all; the abbreviation BH is used for *Bósa Saga ok Herrauds*, but it sometimes appears in the index as HB. It is a little bold to state without reservation (p. 11) that Ari was "co-author of the *Book of Settlements*". A map of the "north Europe of the Legendary Sagas" is marred by being decorated with a theatrical Viking helmet. The spelling of personal and place names is as consistent as is possible without adopting the Icelandic nominative form throughout, a procedure one wishes were followed more often.

It is certainly refreshing to have a number of *fornaldarsögur* in English, rather than yet another translation of the *Edda* or of *Egils Saga*. It is all the more unfortunate therefore that of the stories chosen for this volume two have recently appeared in their entirety and two in part in Miss Jacqueline Simpson's *The Northmen Talk*.

MICHAEL BARNES

DANISH BALLADS AND FOLK SONGS. Edited by ERIK DAL. Translated by HENRY MEYER. *Rosenkilde and Bagger*, 1967. 303 pp.

It is with pleasure that one discovers that Dr Dal's now standard selection of *Danske Viser* from 1962 has been translated practically speaking in its entirety into English. It has even been possible to maintain the original pagination of the Danish version, to the joy, or otherwise, of anyone wishing to compare the two texts. At the same time the introduction and notes have been expanded by Dr Dal to make them more suitable for a non-Danish reader, and the result is a model of clarity and brevity. The only regret a reader might possibly have is that no melodies are included, a lack which in some ways might be more serious in the English version than in the original Danish one.

Whether the inclusion of the melodies would have been an attribute or not is perhaps open to question, since it might well

have drawn attention more forcibly to the deficiencies of the translations. And these are considerable. The Danish ballads, thanks to their starkness and brevity, are notoriously difficult to translate successfully, and the present translator has been aware of the problems posed. He maintains in the introduction "that the ballad idiom as refined by poets of the nineteenth century tends to sacrifice the original flavour of the ballads handed down by tradition and that it is advisable to dispense with current artistic niceties and stick to the literal fact when original versions of folk ballads are being translated." Quite what this means, I am not sure, but when translated into practice in this selection, it only too often means that an *ad hoc* rendering is chosen for the sake of rhyme when a translation based on a firm principle would almost certainly have forbidden it. The very first stanza in the book is an example of this: "Sir Peter rides into the quad, / fair maiden meets him there so sad." Why this ugly modern abbreviation "quad" in a medieval poem? It certainly provides a sort of rhyme, though why "yard" should not be used, it is difficult to see. At all events it would have provided as good a half-rhyme as many others which are quite justifiably included.

The basic fault in the translations is that Mr Meyer appears to pay no attention to the implications and associations of many of the words he has to translate. The birds on branches and the bark of the birch in the Danish *Tonernes magt* (p. 32) become in the English version birds in birch and yew and the bark of linden and fir, while the *hårde horn af fede kvæg* becomes "the horns of cows, the antlers of deer", which gives a very different impression. So does the translation in *The Woman-Murderer* of the Danish *høg* as "owl".

This book will doubtless be accepted as another respectable rendering of the Danish ballad, but the discerning reader will be left with the conviction that this, perhaps internationally the most important of all Danish literary genres, still awaits its translator.

W. GLYN JONES

LANDNÁMABÓK

Some remarks on its value as a historical source¹

BY JAKOB BENEDIKTSSON

LANDNÁMABÓK (the Book of Settlements) occupies a special place in Old Icelandic literature. Not only is its subject-matter completely different from most of the other great works, but its genesis and textual history are also so complicated that very few Old Icelandic books can be compared with it. To take the subject-matter first: *Landnámabók* tells the remarkable story of how Iceland was settled, enumerating the settlers clockwise round the map of Iceland, and describing how much land each of them took independently or got from the chieftains who had originally taken a greater amount of land than they could use themselves. In many cases we are told about the ancestors and descendants of the settlers, and often their place of origin or the country they came from is mentioned. In this way *Landnámabók* is a gold-mine of topographical and genealogical information; it contains some 3500 personal names and more than 1500 place-names. The independent settlers mentioned by name are more than 400, not counting their wives and children and other followers who did not become settlers in their own right but are sometimes mentioned by name.

It is quite natural that a book of this character should have been widely used to corroborate or discredit divers statements about the genealogies and the personal history of people appearing in the sagas. The difficulty of such a procedure is, however, that the extant text of *Landnámabók* has a long and very complicated history,

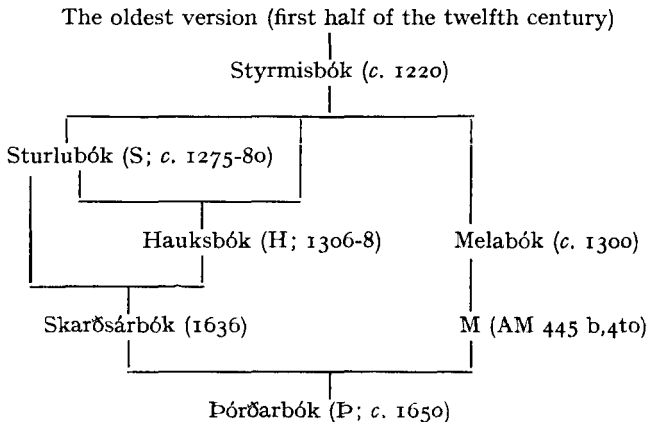
¹ A lecture delivered at the University of Edinburgh and in University College London in March 1969. — For a more detailed discussion of several points in this paper the reader is referred once for all to the author's introduction to *Íslendingabók, Landnámabók* (Íslenzk fornrit I, 1968). This edition is referred to in the following as *IF I*.

and to assess the source-value of the text it is necessary to take this textual history into account. It does not do at all to take the text of *Landnámabók* at its face value as a historical source, as some scholars have done; the first problem is to try to ascertain how far back it is possible to trace each passage, or in other words, how much of the text can be shown to be derived from the oldest version of which we can glimpse the outlines.

It is therefore necessary to give a short survey of the textual history of *Landnámabók*.

Landnámabók exists today in five versions, three medieval, two from the seventeenth century. The mutual relationship of these versions was for a long time the subject of much speculation, and several theories were proposed without gaining general acceptance. The problems were in fact largely obscure until the late Jón Jóhannesson published his important book on the versions of *Landnámabók* in 1941.² In this book he unravelled the intricate relationships of the versions in a way that has been generally accepted. Criticisms of some minor details have not been able to shake any of his main points.

Jón Jóhannesson's studies resulted in the following stemma:



² Jón Jóhannesson, *Gerðir Landnámabókar* (1941).

Let us now for a moment consider the second lost version, Styrmisbók, and the following versions; we shall return to the first version later. Styrmisbók is mentioned in Lawman Haukr Erlendsson's postscript to his version of *Landnámabók*, where he says:

But I, Haukr Erlendsson, wrote this book, following the book which was written by the lawman Sturla Þórðarson, a most learned man, and also that other book, written by Styrmir the Wise.³

An examination of Haukr's text shows that he used S as his main source; more than half of H is simply a copy of S. Styrmir Kárason the Wise (*hinn fróði*) died in 1245 while abbot of Viðey, whereas Sturla Þórðarson died in 1284. It can be shown with reasonable certainty that Styrmisbók must have been finished about 1220,⁴ and that Sturla Þórðarson did not finish his version before late in life, perhaps not before 1275-80.⁵ The Hauksbók-version, which is extant in part in Haukr's autograph copy, in the manuscript called Hauksbók, was written in the years 1306-8, according to the results of a painstaking study by Stefán Karlsson of the Arnamagnæan Institute in Copenhagen, based on a comparison of Haukr's handwriting in Hauksbók with some dated letters written by Haukr himself.⁶ The Melabók-version was probably written about 1300 by the lawman Snorri Markússon of Melar in Melasveit (d. 1313). A significant feature of this version is that in more than forty instances genealogies are carried down to the parents of Snorri and his wife, never to himself. Of this version only two leaves are preserved from a vellum manuscript of the fifteenth century, but this vellum was better preserved in the seventeenth century, when it was used for the compiling of Þórðarbók.

The youngest versions are of value both for textual comparison with copies of the older versions and for

³ *ÍF* I 395 and 397.

⁴ *ÍF* I civ-cv.

⁵ *ÍF* I lxxv.

⁶ Stefán Karlsson, 'Aldur Hauksbókar', *Fróðskaparrit* 13 (1964), 114-21.

supplying material that is otherwise lost. Skarðsárþók is a compilation from two vellum manuscripts, a manuscript of S and the original Hauksþók; of these the S-manuscript was destroyed in the fire of Copenhagen in 1728, and only 14 out of 38 leaves are preserved of the text of *Landnámabók* in H. Both these vellum manuscripts were copied in the seventeenth century and the copies are preserved; however, Skarðsárþók remains a useful text for checking the accuracy of these copies, and has in several places better readings. Þórðarþók, on the other hand, is a compilation of a manuscript of Skarðsárþók and M, using the same manuscript of Melabók of which, as noted above, there are now only two leaves extant. Þórðarþók has preserved many readings from the now lost parts of M, and thus enables us to get some sort of picture of this version. This origin of Þórðarþók was one of the most important of Jón Jóhannesson's discoveries.

Let us now return to Styrmisþók. After the words cited above from Haukr Erlendsson's postscript comes the following statement:

From each of the two books I took the fuller text, but a great deal was told the same way in both of them, and therefore it is no wonder that this *Landnámabók* is longer than any other.⁷

From this it appears that the two versions, Styrmisþók and Sturlubók, were in agreement for a considerable part of their text, and that each contained some matter missing in the other. It has also been proved without doubt that Sturla used Styrmisþók as his main source (though he used a lot of material from other sources as well). It has therefore been one of the chief problems of *Landnámabók* research to determine the differences between Sturlubók and Styrmisþók, or in other words, to discover what Sturla added and what he omitted of the material in Styrmisþók. It has been shown that Haukr Erlendsson's words are not exact; he himself added a certain amount of material to his version from sources other than the two

⁷ *ÍF* I 397.

Landnámabók-versions mentioned. It is therefore not possible to find the material he has got from *Styrmisbók* by simple subtraction: $H - S = \text{Styrmisbók}$. Consequently it is necessary to try to determine what Sturla added to *Styrmisbók* and also to look for other sources that are derived from *Styrmisbók* and can tell us something about its contents.

As I said before, Jón Jóhannesson showed the possibility of reconstructing parts of *Melabók* from the *Þórðarbók*-version. This very important discovery led to another not less important: that *Melabók* was derived directly from *Styrmisbók*, certainly with some minor additions, but by no means as much altered as S and H. This result was corroborated by comparison with other sources derived from *Styrmisbók*, so that in Jón Jóhannesson's words: "M has in most places a more original text than S, and must be considered the best extant representative of *Styrmisbók*."⁸

It goes without saying that it is of first importance for the authority of a given passage in *Landnámabók* to know whether it comes from *Styrmisbók* or is an addition made by Sturla or Haukr. Neither of them was very critical of his sources, and both used sagas and other writings from the thirteenth century which were more or less fiction. Many of these sources have been established without doubt, others have been inferred with reasonable certainty. This does not mean of course that all these sources are necessarily less dependable than *Styrmisbók*, but their value must as far as possible be estimated in each case. I cannot here enter into the problem of Sturla's sources, but it must be stressed that every use of *Landnámabók* (that is: S or H) as a historical source must be preceded by an examination of the origin of each passage. Otherwise there is a great danger of being led badly astray, as all too many examples have shown.

Let us return to the stemma. One might ask with

⁸ *Gerðir Landnámabókar*, 174.

some reason: Is there any need to postulate an older version than *Styrmisbók*, and how can the existence of such a version be proved? Let us take what we could call the circumstantial evidence first. It would seem next to impossible that an author of the thirteenth century like Styrmir could have collected such a detailed body of tradition about the settlements, three hundred years after the fact. The topographical accuracy of the description shows a degree of local knowledge that is almost unthinkable in a single person in an unmapped country. This knowledge must depend upon the collaboration of several people. And what we know about Styrmir Kárason does not in the least support the idea that he was a sort of collector or editor of oral information.⁹

But we have also more direct evidence. At the beginning of his postscript to *H*, Haukr Erlendsson writes:

Now the account of the settlements of Iceland is completed, according to what wise men have written, first the priest Ari Þorgilsson the Wise (*fróði*), and Kolskeggr the Wise (*vitri*).¹⁰

Then he goes on to mention Sturla's and Styrmir's books. There has been much speculation about Haukr's source for this statement. It may be derived from *Styrmisbók*, as it would seem not unlikely that Styrmir mentioned his sources somewhere in his book, but we have no possibility of proving it. Ari the Wise is not mentioned as a source in *Sturlubók*, although his *Íslendingabók* is used there. Kolskeggr Ásbjarnarson is, however, named in the text of *Landnámabók* as the authority for the chapters covering most of the east and south-east of Iceland, and these chapters moreover show distinct stylistic peculiarities. In the text it says that "from this point Kolskeggr has told about the settlements".¹¹ Some variants in the wording of this sentence in *P* render it probable that this statement stood in *M* and consequently also in *Styrmisbók*.

⁹ On Styrmir Kárason see *ÍF* I civ-v, with references.

¹⁰ *ÍF* I 395.

¹¹ *ÍF* I 302: *Nú hefir Kolskeggr fyrir sagt heðan frá um landnám* SH (H omits *heðan frá*); *P* has: *Heðan frá hefir Kolskeggr Ásbjarnarson fyrir sagt um landnám*.

From some genealogies in *Landnámabók* itself it would appear that Kolskeggr was a somewhat older contemporary of Ari the Wise; he might have lived into the first third of the twelfth century. It has been suggested that Haukr had his knowledge of Kolskeggr from just the passage I mentioned, and this might of course be true. But there is one point to make. Haukr calls Kolskeggr *hinn vitri* in his postscript, but in the text of *Landnámabók* he is always called *hinn fróði*.¹² This could point to a different source from the *Landnámabók*-text itself.

Be that as it may, it cannot reasonably be doubted that Kolskeggr wrote or dictated the section about the settlements in the east and south-east of Iceland in the beginning of the twelfth century. It would seem natural that such a work was part of a bigger undertaking, that is, a complete description of the settlements. As remarked above, this would imply the collaboration of several people from different parts of the country, if only on account of the accurate local knowledge that is so manifest in every part of *Landnámabók*. It is quite natural that the name of Ari Þorgilsson the Wise should be connected with such an undertaking, and there are in fact some pointers in later Icelandic literature which indicate that Ari had a hand in the composition of the oldest version of *Landnámabók*. It has been shown that *Laxdæla saga* used a version of *Landnámabók* which was not *Styrmisbók*, but must have been shorter and certainly older. *Laxdæla saga* names Ari as an authority, but unfortunately in such a manner that it is not clear whether he was the authority for the whole passage in question, which was undoubtedly derived from the old version of *Landnámabók*, or only a subsidiary authority for a single point.¹³

In the great collection of contemporary sagas from the thirteenth century, the *Sturlunga saga*, there is a short narrative (*Haukdæla þáttur*) about one of the chief settlers

¹² See *ÍF* I 298 (S and H), 317 (S).

¹³ See further *ÍF* I cx-cxii, with references.

in the south of Iceland, Ketilbjörn the Old, ancestor of the first Icelandic bishops and the great family of Haukdælir, who for two centuries played an important role in Iceland. This narrative is also in *Landnámabók*, and was certainly in *Styrmisbók*. But in the version in *Sturlunga saga* Teitr, Ari's tutor, is cited as authority for the story; he was a descendant of Ketilbjörn. That means without doubt that the narrative was penned by Ari himself, and it must have been in the first version of *Landnámabók*. Some scholars have believed that Ari could have written the story elsewhere, either in his lost older version of *Íslendingabók* or as a notice on a separate slip or *scheda* that was used in *Landnámabók*. Both these theories are rather far-fetched; the story does not seem to fit into the pattern of *Íslendingabók*, and the theory that Ari's preliminary notices survived is at best unprovable and rests in fact upon very slender foundations. The simplest and likeliest explanation is that Ari wrote some parts of *Landnámabók*, either on the same footing as Kolskeggr or as a compiler or editor of the first version.

It has been shown that certain peculiarities of style and subject-matter can be observed in the different sections of *Landnámabók*, which would suggest different authors for different parts of the country.¹⁴ As stressed before, this must have been the case when *Landnámabók* was compiled for the first time, and these peculiarities thus seem to go back to the oldest version. It is not possible to go into details here, but it is my opinion, for what it is worth, that all the evidence suggests that Ari at least wrote some parts of *Landnámabók* and was perhaps the guiding spirit behind it.

One detail may be worth mentioning. In *Íslendingabók*, ch. 2, four prominent settlers are named and the places where they settled are stated; then it is added: *þaðan eru Síðumenn (Mosfellingar, Breiðfirðingar, Eyfirðingar)*

¹⁴ See Barði Guðmundsson in *Skírnir* CXII (1938), 5-22, reprinted in his *Uppruni Íslendinga* (1959), 76-93; cf. *IF* I cxv-cxvii.

komnir ("from him are *Síðumenn* etc. descended"). This passage probably came from genealogies (*áttartala*) in the older (now lost) version of *Íslendingabók*, which are otherwise omitted in the preserved version. But the wording here shows a remarkable likeness to the general pattern in the Kolskeggr-section in *Landnámabók*. Here the settler's name and the place where he settled are normally stated first, then his son if he had one, and the following descendants are mentioned in a formula of the type: *hans son var Án, er Húsvíkingar eru frá komnir* ("his son was Án, from whom the H. are descended"). In this case it is natural to think of a connexion; was the *áttartala* of the older *Íslendingabók* the model for Kolskeggr and others who wrote about the settlements? Or was Kolskeggr perhaps the model for Ari in his *áttartala*? As the older *Íslendingabók* was written shortly after 1120, it might seem probable that it was the prototype.

We know very little about Ari's life after 1100 (he died in 1148), but we know from his own words that about 1120 the two Icelandic bishops entrusted him with the task of writing a short history of the country, the *Íslendingabók*. Now, it is unlikely that they would have done so if Ari had not already distinguished himself in some way as an especially learned man. That he had already been collecting historical material of some sort for years is borne out by the fact that several of the persons he cites as authorities in *Íslendingabók* had died many years before 1120. We might infer from this that the collection of material for *Landnámabók* had already begun early in the twelfth century and that Ari had been one of the chief participants in this undertaking, perhaps its leader.

There are also other reasons that support the theory that *Landnámabók* was compiled at the beginning of the twelfth century. The Icelandic church was placed on a firm footing, its rights were established and written down; the laws were revised and the first law-code was written in 1117-8. The learned people of Iceland were becoming

conscious of the existence of a separate Icelandic nation, with its special characteristics, its own history and unique origin. People like Ari had begun to read the history of other nations — Ari for instance knew some of Bede's works¹⁵ — and it would be natural for them to try to create something comparable for the Icelanders. In such an atmosphere it was understandable that the idea of compiling a work like *Landnámabók* should emerge, just as the proposition to write the history of the country in *Íslendingabók*. Moreover, there is a possibility that some statements in *Landnámabók* may have had an economic significance. In several cases the ownership of some bigger farms is traced from the settlement to the beginning of the twelfth century. Such knowledge was of the greatest importance in a country where deeds of landed property and other documents concerning landowners' rights were non-existent. But it must be admitted that our picture of the first version of *Landnámabók* is so hazy that it is very risky to draw too far-reaching conclusions from the evidence as it stands on this point.

This sketch of the textual history of *Landnámabók* will, I hope, furnish a glimpse of the complex problems that every scholar encounters who tries to use *Landnámabók* as a historical source. First he must try to separate the additions made by Sturla and Haukr and assess them for what they may be worth; with the help of M it may be possible to reconstruct the content of *Styrmisbók*, at any rate in several sections. To get back to the first version is on the other hand only possible by inference, and in most cases it is impossible to ascertain whether or to what extent *Styrmir* altered his source. All this may be a troublesome and often unrewarding procedure, but none the less necessary.

But why take all this trouble? Can we ever hope to find out how much is truth and how much fiction in *Landnámabók*? The answer is that even if the last

¹⁵ See *ÍF* I xxiv-xxvi, with references.

question cannot be answered fully in the affirmative, we must try to sift the evidence and get as close to a result as possible. *Landnámabók* contains such a wealth of information about the settlement of Iceland, about the first settlers and their descendants, that it is of prime importance to form an opinion about its trustworthiness. If we accept it as a fact — as I believe it is — that the first version of *Landnámabók* was compiled in the beginning of the twelfth century, we must take two points into account regarding the reliability of the traditions that were written down at that time.

First: The contemporaries of Ari and Kolskeggr were mostly of the sixth or seventh generation from the settlers — Ari was for instance of the seventh — and they could easily have heard stories about the past from people who were born about or even before the year 1000. Ari thus relies on his foster-father Hallr who was born in 995 and was in the fifth generation from a settler. It would be very unlikely that people of the bigger and more enlightened families should not have been able to trace their ancestry back for five or six generations and know where the first head of the family settled in the country.

Second: In a country without a written history and with a largely illiterate population family traditions would be told and retold from generation to generation, not necessarily the absolute truth of course, but the main facts, such as names of ancestors and of the farms where they had settled and lived, would in most cases be preserved. Even in my youth I knew many old people in the north of Iceland who could trace their ancestors six or seven generations back without the aid of any books or literary sources, and those people were by no means illiterate. It is therefore almost certain that a good many people about 1100 possessed a large amount of genuine knowledge about the settlements. And to that it may be added that such knowledge could be very useful and even necessary in problems and lawsuits concerning inheritance and other rights to landed property, as suggested above.

There is, however, a qualification that must be stressed. In many cases the names of the settlers have without doubt been constructed later from the names of farms or other place-names, such as names of valleys or fiords, when the descendants of the original settlers were dispersed or the direct line had gone downhill or died out. In *Landnámabók* there are several instances where the descendants of the more insignificant settlers are not named at all, and of such settlers' names we have every reason to be sceptical. The same is true of many of the excellent stories that are told in *Landnámabók* about the settlers and their exploits, not least such stories as explain the origins of place-names. They may very well be pure fiction.

But, it must be added, we have very seldom any real possibility of proving or disproving such stories, apart from those which in their character are pure folk-tales, where the likelihood of their being true is very small indeed. Sometimes archaeology may be a help, and it is to be hoped that future research may unearth new evidence on some points. I shall only mention two recent instances.

In 1964 a boat-grave was excavated in Patreksfjörður in the north-west of Iceland; it dated from the period of the settlement, and the grave goods contained among other things a Thor's hammer of silver, presumably worn as an amulet, a piece of lead with an inlaid cross, and a small fragmentary bronze bell of English origin, probably from the north-west of England. Now, *Landnámabók* tells us that the first settlers in Patreksfjörður came from the Hebrides, and that some of them were Christians. The grave goods indicate just such a mixture of heathen and Christian beliefs as one would expect in a group of settlers like the one described in *Landnámabók* in exactly that locality.¹⁶

¹⁶ See Þór Magnússon, 'Bátkumlíð í Vatnsdal í Patreksfirði', *Árbók hins íslenska fornleifafélags* (1966), 5-32.

Another curious story reached my ears a short while ago. In a famous lava cave in the west of Iceland, the so-called Surtshellir — named after the mythological giant Surtr — there are some remnants of stone wallings and a lot of old bones from cows and sheep. There is a popular folk-tale about some outlaws who had lived there and were eventually killed. *Landnámabók* mentions in passing that a famous warrior had been the leader in killing eighteen *Hellismenn* ("the men of the cave"); it is not stated that they were outlaws, but it seems to be implied that they lived in Surtshellir. Now, the Icelandic author, Halldór Laxness, who has long been interested in stories about outlaws in Iceland, some time ago took a bone from the cave and got a radio-carbon analysis of it at the National Museum in Copenhagen. And according to the experts the date of the bone was about 940 (\pm 100 years) — precisely the date that would suit the story in *Landnámabók*.¹⁷ Of course this does not prove that the story tells the exact truth, but it proves that it has some foundation in fact.

These examples illustrate our problem: we can never be sure — even in the case of more probable stories than the two I have mentioned — that *Landnámabók* has preserved the exact truth. The tradition which was the foundation of *Landnámabók* cannot have been more than an approximation to the truth, and the extent to which it is an approximation is at best difficult and often impossible to assess. This we must put up with, but it is not a reason for giving up the study of *Landnámabók* — it is rather a challenge to go on with it, trying to find new ways of sifting and checking the old evidence.

I shall finally touch upon a much-debated question which must be viewed in the light of our opinion about the reliability of *Landnámabók*. This question can be put in a few words: Where did the settlers come from? In

¹⁷ H. Laxness has now published this story and the results of the C-14 analysis in *Tímarit Máls og menningar* (1969), 365-9.

Landnámabók, as was said above, some 400 independent settlers are named. About 130 of them are said to have come from Norway. Some 50 came from the British Isles; some of these are said to have lived there for a long time, even to have been born there, but in most cases we do not know how long they had stayed there. When the point of departure is stated, it is most frequently the Hebrides or Ireland; but in many instances it is only said that the settlers came from the western lands, or this origin can be inferred from their Celtic names. But of more than half of the settlers nothing is said about the country of departure.

These numbers cannot form the basis of any statistical calculation of the original homes of the settlers. It will not do at all — as some scholars have done — to maintain that all the settlers whose point of departure is not stated came directly from Norway. It is in itself much more likely that a considerable number of them came from the British Isles, where they may have stayed for some time — how long it is impossible to say. It is no argument against this supposition that the Icelandic language shows the greatest affinity with South-west Norwegian. The same seems to be true of the language of the Norsemen in Ireland and the Scottish isles, according to the unanimous opinion of the scholars who have studied this question. The situation of the Norse vikings in the British Isles had deteriorated in the years about 900; they were defeated in Wessex and Mercia, thrown out of Dublin in 902 and badly pressed in Scotland and the Hebrides. Their prospects of freedom and gain must have been very much curtailed. The cause normally alleged in *Landnámabók*, that the settlers left Norway because of the tyranny of Haraldr Fairhair, may have some truth in it; the unification of the kingdom of Norway must have caused considerable opposition in the country. But it may also have deprived the vikings in the West of their bases at home, and thus placed the voyage to a new country in

a more favourable light. We must, however, not forget other perhaps more cogent reasons, such as shortage of land at home, pressure of population, prospects of easy gain, along with ambition and love of adventure. It would be natural that many Norsemen at first left for the British Isles, but in view of the setbacks they suffered there in the decades about 900 it is quite understandable that a considerable number of them preferred the new country in the North, where great expanses of grasslands made husbandry look profitable, and plentiful fishing in the sea and the inland streams promised good supplies of food. Traditions about all this may have been very hazy in the beginning of the twelfth century, and the alleged reasons for the settlements are most likely later speculation.

Another point to remember is that the settlers themselves were only a very small fraction of the people who actually migrated to Iceland in the age of settlements. About their followers we know next to nothing. In some cases a few are mentioned, but the authenticity of many such statements is highly dubious. It is, however, indisputable that a number of people of Celtic origin came to Iceland during the age of settlement. A few settlers are directly stated to be Irish or of Irish descent, a few others have Irish or Gaelic names. It is a reasonable guess that the settlers who came from Ireland and the Hebrides had some Irish and Gaelic people with them, slaves, freedmen and other followers. Such things are sometimes mentioned directly in *Landnámabók*, but we have no possibility of assessing the number of those people. The Celtic influence on the Icelandic language is restricted to a few loanwords and some personal names and place-names. This would seem to indicate that the Celtic element in the population was in the main limited to the lower classes, and that the Celts from the beginning had to learn the language of their masters; anyway they never formed a linguistic community in Iceland and were not

able to exert any influence to speak of on the language of the country.

It is not my intention to enter upon the much-discussed subject of Celtic influence on Icelandic character and Icelandic literature. But it has been maintained that some anthropological characteristics, such as cranium indices, of Icelanders of the Viking Age agree better with bone finds from Ireland and Scotland than with bones from Norway and Denmark from the same time. The distribution of blood-groups in the modern Icelandic population is also in better agreement with that of Celtic peoples than with that of modern Norsemen. An Icelandic scholar, Professor Jón Steffensen, has suggested the explanation that the Norse vikings who went to the West were of a different stock from those who later became dominant in Norway, and that most of the settlers in Iceland were of the same stock as the vikings.¹⁸ I am not a competent judge of this theory, but the anthropological facts must be explained somehow, and they do point to a connexion between the settlers in Iceland and the vikings who harassed Ireland and Scotland.

Landnámabók does not give an answer to this question. But it preserves the memory of Celtic connexions to a certain degree. The ancestry of several settlers is traced back to Irish kings, most of them probably as mythical as the heads of other genealogies that are traced back to Norse kings and heroes of the past. But the fact remains that within certain families people prided themselves on their royal Irish ancestors. In Haukr Erlendsson we have even the first Celtomaniac in Iceland. In his version of *Landnámabók* he traces his ancestry no less than three times back to the Irish king Kjarval (=Cearbhall), whoever he may be, and often substitutes the adjective 'Irish' for a more general one in the older versions or inserts it where they mention no nationality at all; he

¹⁸ See Jón Steffensen in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 83 (1953), 86-97, and in *Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for nordisk Middelalder*, s. v. *Population*.

also throws in some other scraps of information regarding Irishmen or connexions with them. We do not know Haukr's reasons for this partiality for the Irish, but it crops up also elsewhere in his writings. Maybe he was so proud of his royal ancestor, Kjarval, because he was himself a servant of the Norwegian king and knighted by him; he may have had to compete with Norwegians of old families and thought of this way to get the better of them. But we must remember that *Landnámabók* gave him the starting-point with its Irish genealogies, whether they are true or not.

Another point must be mentioned where future research might give interesting results. It is well known that many Icelandic place-names have their counterparts in Norway, and were most likely brought to Iceland by the settlers. What is less well known is that the same is true of place-names in the Hebrides and maybe also elsewhere in Scotland and Ireland. It has been pointed out by Hermann Pálsson and Magne Oftedal that such names abound in the Hebrides. On Lewis, for instance, there is a group of place-names in a small area that recur in another small area not far from Reykjavík, an area that was, according to *Landnámabók*, settled by people who at least partly came from the Hebrides.¹⁹ The possibility is therefore near at hand that these place-names were first brought from Norway to the western isles and from there to Iceland. On this point comparative studies of place-names in Norway, the old viking colonies in the West and in Iceland are very much needed. They might tell us something about the wanderings of the Icelandic settlers and their points of departure for Iceland.

The peculiar textual history of *Landnámabók* throws some light on a problem that is known from other medieval texts, that is to say the question of authorship. In the first place we do not know if the persons who wrote the

¹⁹ Hermann Pálsson, *Söngvar frá Suðureyjum* (1955), 13-14; M. Oftedal, 'The Village Names of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides', *Norsk tidsskrift for sprogvidenskap* XVII (1954), 363-409. Cf. also Helgi Guðmundsson, *Studia Islandica* 26 (1967), 108-10.

different versions of *Landnámabók* regarded themselves as authors in the modern sense. Anyway, it is clear that they took it for granted that they could treat the older versions as they liked, expand them and alter them at their pleasure. We do not know either what Sturla and Haukr thought they were doing, when they substituted extracts from sagas and other sources for older and presumably more trustworthy passages. Did they think they were writing history or fiction? Or were they not able to resist telling a good story when they knew one? I shall not try to answer these questions; they belong in reality to a much bigger problem: the problem of the saga-writers' attitude to their work. But in the case of *Landnámabók* it is also the question of incorporating new material, of expanding the often meagre account of the older versions.

Landnámabók is thus a book that was in the making for centuries; it is like a medieval church that one generation after another goes on building and altering, until it becomes very different from what the first builders had planned. The writers of the first version of *Landnámabók* would hardly have recognized Hauksbók as their work, still less the youngest versions.

This is of course true of many other books than *Landnámabók*. And it is a point that should be kept in mind when people speak of the authors of sagas for instance. Many of them were also altered, but the main story persisted, it lived on, and the older version influenced the person who altered it, established certain limits, set up a distinct pattern. So it is also with *Landnámabók*. The main scheme of the book is unimpaired by all the additions and alterations, even if some of the old material had to give way to new, when the additions could not be brought into agreement with the older text. Perhaps it is just this complicated textual history that makes *Landnámabók* so fascinating a subject, representing a challenge to the scholar to dig through all the late layers in an attempt to reach the original core.

BJØRN AT HAUGI

By JÓN JÓHANNESSON

TRANSLATED BY G. TURVILLE-PETRE

THIS paper, by the late Jón Jóhannesson, was published in Icelandic in the *Afmælisrit Dr Einars Arnórssonar* in Reykjavík, 1940. Since it has not been noticed outside Iceland as much as it deserves, I have now translated it so that it may be made available to a wider public.

The author presses no conclusions and, characteristically, writes modestly with close attention to detail. Bjørn at Haugi may not be an important figure in history, but if he was the Bjørn for whom the poet Bragi Boddason the Old had at one time worked, as told in several sources, he is of great importance in the history of Norse poetry. According to Jón Jóhannesson's conclusions, Bjørn was not a king of the Swedes, but a minor king of western Norway. He was not the King Bern whom St Anskar visited in Sweden, *c.* 930, but lived a generation or more later than the Swedish Bern.

It might be suggested that Icelandic historians of the Middle Ages had read about the Swedish King Bern in the *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum* of Adam of Bremen, probably known to Icelanders already in the time of Ari, in which a great part of Rimbart's *Vita Anskarii* was incorporated. Therefore, Icelandic historians later than Ari came to identify Bragi's Bjørn with Anskar's Bern.

It is interesting to note that earlier scholars, on rather different grounds, have also believed that Bragi lived at a date later than is generally supposed. Among them were G. Vigfússon and F. York Powell (*Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, 1883, II, 2 ff.).

Scholars have long debated whether the scaldic

discipline could have been influenced by that of foreign poets, especially British and Irish. If Bragi worked early in the ninth century, this is not likely, but if he worked late in that century, the likelihood is greater.

I am particularly grateful to Dr Guðrún Helgadóttir, widow of Jón Jóhannesson, for checking my translation and agreeing to partial re-arrangement in accordance with English practice.

Jón Jóhannesson's paper was published before its time, and I hope that it will now be fully appreciated.

Ancient Icelandic historians did more than preserve traditions on vellum in the form in which they heard them. They combined conflicting traditions about the same subject; they joined together stories about unrelated subjects if there was something similar in them or common to them, and finally they arranged them according to their own conjectures in so far as their knowledge allowed. To this they added intentional invention. Such activity certainly existed before writing began, as can best be seen from certain ancient lays, but it increased vastly as more and more written documents became available.

At this stage of historical writing, people knew little of the craft of accepting or rejecting according to the reliability of the sources. This method has persisted to our own time, but another form of scholarship has also arisen, namely source-criticism. Scholars analyse the material of a story, break it down to find its original form, if such a term may be used, and they try to discover the stories in the form in which they were originally told or written. Source-criticism thus goes in a way opposite to that of normal historical writing. Various scholars have done a great deal of work in this field, although much more remains to be done.

In this paper I shall consider only one small point, viz.

the stories about Björn at Haugi (Björn of Haugr), and I think that their development will give a clear picture of the methods used by ancient historians.

In historical works of the thirteenth and later centuries, Björn at Haugi is generally called "king of the Swedes" (*Sviakonungr*). People have supposed that he is the *Bernus* of Birka (c. 830) mentioned in the Life of St Anskar. But if we look into the matter more closely, we find that this was not the original view, not even that expressed in the oldest written documents which now, unfortunately, are mostly lost.

First I shall examine the stories of *Landnámabók*, assuming that readers are aware of the relationship between the extant versions of that book and versions which are known once to have existed.

In *Landnámabók* Björn at Haugi is mentioned in connexion with three settlers who all appropriated land on the peninsula between Skagafjörðr and Eyjafjörðr. Sturla the Lawman¹ says of Þórðr knappr, settler at Knappsstaðir in Fljót:

Þórðr knappr hét maðr *sygnskv*, son Bjarnar at Haugi

(Þórðr knappr was the name of a man of Sogn (*sygnskv*), son of Björn of Haugr).

But Haukr the Lawman² wrote:

Þórðr knappr hét maðr *svenskr*, *systurson* Bjarnar at Haugi

(Þórðr knappr was the name of a Swedish man, son of a sister of Björn of Haugr).

Þórðarþok adds nothing further.

There can be no doubt that behind the *sygnskv* son of *Sturlubók* and the *systurson* of *Hauksbók* lay the same original text, and one or the other arose from misreading, but it is more difficult to decide which is the more correct. It is, however, more likely that, at this point, *Sturlubók* has a text closer to the original, because its text is the more

¹ *Landnámabók*, ed. Finnur Jónsson (1900), 191.

² *ibid.* 70.

difficult. According to *Sturlubók*, Björn lived at Haugr in Sogn, and there are places with that name there. On the other hand, Haukr thought that the man alluded to was Björn of Haugr (Björn at Haugi), king of the Swedes; he knew of this man from other writings, and for this reason he added the word *svenskr*, but there is no reason to believe that he got this from Styrmir's version of *Landnámabók*. In any case, Styrmir's book would probably have had the older form *sænskr* for *svenskr*. This supposition of Haukr could well have influenced him in misreading Sturla's text, and probably that of Styrmir as well.

But there is one point which might suggest that the word *sygnskr* was not in Sturla's original text. He took much greater pains about his version of *Landnámabók* than Haukr did, and tried to avoid inconsistencies. He also knew Björn of Haugr from other sources and omitted him in two passages which conflicted with the view that he was king of the Swedes. On the other hand, he would have had no reason for omission or alteration if he had before him a text of *Landnámabók* which had *systurson*. It will be well to bear this in mind in relation to the following observations.

It is said of the settler, Ólafr bekk, in *Þórðarþók*:³

Ólafr bekk var son Karls ór Bjarkey á Hálogalandi. Hann vá Þóri inn svarta, ok gjörði Björn at Haugi hann því landflótta.
(Ólafr bekk was son of Karl of Bjarkey in Hálogaland; he killed Þórir svarti and for this reason Björn of Haugr exiled him.)

Instead of the italicised words Sturla and Haukr⁴ read:

ok varð fyrir þat útlægr
(and was outlawed because of that).

Þórðarþók is obviously following *Melabók* at this point and that must be closer to the original text of *Landnámabók*. According to it, Björn seems to have been a chieftain in

³ *Landnámabók, Melabók*, ed. Finnur Jónsson (1921), 106.

⁴ *Landnámabók* (1900), 192 and 70.

Norway. This conflicted with Sturla's view and, for this reason, he avoided naming Björn in this passage. There is nothing to contradict the view that, at this point, *Styrmisbók* had the same text as *Melabók*, although Haukr has nothing corresponding with it. He made *Sturlubók* his basis, and it is easy to show that Haukr often failed to mention it when *Styrmisbók* had some additional material. Sometimes he forgot it altogether, and sometimes noticed it too late, putting it in the wrong place or writing it over the line. We may also suppose that Haukr was influenced by the same reasons as Sturla.

It is said of the settler Þormóðr hinn rammi in *Hauksbók*:⁵

Þormóðr inn rammi hét maðr *svenskr*. Hann vá Gyrð móðurfoður Skjálgs á Jaðri ok varð fyrir þat landflótta fyrir *Birni konungi at Haugi*.

(Þormóðr inn rammi was the name of a Swedish man; he killed Gyrðr, maternal grandfather of Skjálgr of Jaðarr, and because of this he was exiled by King Björn of Haugr.)

The italicised words are not found in *Sturlubók* but in other respects its text is the same.⁶ *Þórðarbók* has the same text as *Hauksbók*, but adds: *Björn af Haugi gjörði hann landflótta ór Nóregi s(egir) Landn.* (Björn of Haugr made him exiled from Norway, says *Landnámabók*.)⁷

This is certainly taken from *Melabók*, and *Styrmisbók* had a similar text. Sturla left this out for the reasons already given. Haukr, on the other hand, saw no reason to omit it altogether; he only left out the words *ór Nóregi* and added the word *svenskr* on his own. This word is written above the line in the original text of *Hauksbók*.

From this we can see that, in an ancient form of *Landnámabók* older than *Sturlubók* and *Hauksbók*, Björn of Haugr was mentioned in at least two passages in such

⁵ *ibid.* 70-1.

⁶ It should, however, be mentioned that there is a space for one word in *Sturlubók* before the word *Skjálgs*. Probably it was intended to write here the Christian name *Þórólfr* (*Þórólfs*). *Skjálgr* is a nickname.

⁷ *Melabók*, ed. cited, 106.

a way that he must have been a chieftain in Norway. At the same time it is of no significance that two of the settlers named are said to be Swedes, because it has now been shown how this arose.

But now three questions occur:

1. Did a king of the Swedes rule Norway or any part of it about this time? Archaeological finds show Swedish influences in Upplönd and Þrændalög in the ninth century, as is only natural, for from there lay the chief routes from Norway to Sweden. Travelling between the two countries was still very difficult, even by the main routes, so it is most unlikely that a king of the Swedes could have got a firm foothold in Norway, particularly unlikely in the age of the settlement when Haraldr Finehair united Norway. Bernus of Birka had, of course, died long before this.

2. Were there two men called *Björn at Haugi*, one in Norway and the other in Sweden? This is not impossible, but most unlikely.

3. Did the historians transfer Björn, together with the Haugr, to Sweden, and make Björn king there? At first sight this might seem strange, although it is possible to mention numerous examples of such transference. It is not necessary to mention many of these now; I shall content myself with one. Historians made Björn járnstíða, son of Ragnarr loðbrók, the Danish viking chief of about the mid-ninth century, into a king of the Swedes and, at the same time, they pushed his age further back. The name *Björn* was probably one reason for this change, because it was current in the royal house of the Swedes. Now I shall give further evidence in support of this case.

In the A-text of the *Skáldatal*,⁸ i.e. Árni Magnússon's copy of *Kringla*, the best manuscript of *Heimskringla*, it is stated in the section entitled: *Skáldatal Danakonunga ok Svía* (List of poets of the kings of Danes and Swedes):

⁸ *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*, III (1880-87), 252.

Björn at Haugi: Bragi inn gamli. Erpr lútandi vá víg í véum ok var ætlaðr til dráps. Hann orti drápu um *Saur konungs hund* ok þá höfuð sitt fyrir.

(Björn at Haugi: Bragi the Old. Erpr lútandi slaughtered a man in sacred precincts and was to be executed. He made a lay about Saurr the king's dog, and was granted his life for it.)

In this passage, Saurr is plainly reckoned to be the dog of Björn at Haugi, king of the Swedes. In the B-version of the *Skáldatal*⁹ (following *Uppsalaþók*), the story is like this:

Erpr lútandi vá víg í véum ok var ætlaðr til dráps. Hann orti um *Saur konung at Haugi* (ok) þá höfuð sitt.

(Erpr lútandi slaughtered a man in sacred precincts and was to be executed. He made a poem about Saurr, king at Haugr, and was granted his life.)

In the latter text the story is placed a little earlier, between lists of the poets of Eysteinn beli and Björn at Haugi. Since the text of the *Skáldatal* in the *Uppsalaþók* is often very corrupt, and the statements made in it have often been altered in an arbitrary fashion,¹⁰ it may be supposed that the text of the *Skáldatal* in *Kringla* is the closer to the original. Besides this, we can understand why the scribe of the *Uppsalaþók* made this alteration. He knew another story about Saurr, independent of the *Skáldatal* in *Kringla*. This is a passage in the *Hauksbók* called: *Af Upplendinga konungum* (About the kings of Upplönd), which reads as follows;¹¹

Sá Eysteinn (i.e. Eysteinn konungr illráði af Heið) lagði undir sik Eynafylki í Þrándheimi ok fekk þeim til *konungs þar hund sinn, er Sórr hét. Við hann er kenndr Sórrshaugr.*

(This Eysteinn (i.e. King Eysteinn illráði of Heið) conquered Eynafylki in Þrándheimr and gave them as *their king his dog, called Sórr. Sórrshaugr (Sórr's mound) is named after him.*)

This work is, in all probability, older than *Heimskringla*,

⁹ *ibid.* 260.

¹⁰ Cf. Sigurður Nordal, *Snorri Sturluson* (1920), 17 ff.

¹¹ *Hauksbók*, ed. Finnur Jónsson (1892-96), 456.

and Snorri made use of it and, among other things, took this tale from it, as well as adding other tales to it.

Snorri calls the dog Saurr and says:¹²

Hann sat á haugi sem konungar ok bjó í Eyjinni iðri ok hafði atsetu, þar sem hét Saurshaugr.

(He sat on a mound like kings and lived in Eyin iðri (Inderøy) and had his residence in a place called Saurshaugr (Saurr's mound).)

It is of no importance for the present argument whether the correct form of the name is *Saurr* or *Sórr* or neither.¹³ Since Saurr is here placed in relation to a king called Eysteinn, the scribe of *Uppsalaþók* transferred the note in *Skáldatal* and connected Saurr with King Eysteinn beli. Saurshaugr is now called Sakshaug, on Inderøy.¹⁴ There is no knowledge of any other Saurshaugr but this.

Is it not then thinkable that the *Skáldatal* in *Kringla* preserves relics of the original tradition that Bjørn at Haugi dwelt at Saurshaugr on Eyin iðri in Þrændalög? This can well accord with the tradition of *Landnámabók* that Ólafr bekr from Bjarkey in Hálogaland was exiled by him. Moreover, no one knows where the royal residence Haugr was located in Sweden. In this case we must really prefer the reading of *Hauksbók* to that of *Sturlubók* about Þórðr knappr, and there is nothing against this, as already observed.

But how are we to explain that Bjørn was made king of the Swedes? I think it may be done in this way: on Eyin iðri stood a great mound.¹⁵ Someone or other was probably buried in this mound, most probably an ancient king called Saurr. Sacrifice was afterwards offered to him when he was dead, just as it was said to be offered to Ólafr Geirstaðaálfr and Grímr kamban. This custom was very widespread, and burial mounds in Norway were held to be holy not only in heathen times, but also long after the Conversion.

¹² *Heimskringla, Hákonar saga Góða*, ch. 12.

¹³ See M. Olsen, *Farms and Fanes of Ancient Norway* (1928), 308 ff.

¹⁴ Cf. O. Rygh, *Norske Gaardnavne* XV, 176.

¹⁵ Cf. M. Olsen, *op. cit.*, 313.

When Erpr lútandi had committed manslaughter in the sacred precincts, he saved his life by making a lay on the dweller in the mound, in whom people had such great faith. The Icelanders knew this lay. It may well be that dogs were sacrificed in the veneration of Saurr, and this might well have been the reason for the story about the "dog-king",¹⁶ together with the name, which might well have resembled a dog's name.

The story about the "dog-king" was known to Swedes, Danes, Norwegians and Icelanders. It is always a Swedish king or chieftain who sends his dog to the Norwegians or Danes as a king, except in the work *Af Upplendinga konungum* and *Heimskringla*, which follows it. But it is likely that King Eysteinn was transferred from Uppland in Sweden to Upplønd in Norway, like Áli the Upplander (*Upplenzki*) in the *Ynglingatal*.

This is a slight digression, not to do with the main subject. On the other hand, the story that a Swedish king sent Saurr to Norway certainly caused Björn at Haugi to be turned into a king of the Swedes. Perhaps Björn was named in connexion with Saurr in Erpr's lay in such a way that people got confused about it.

On this evidence, Björn at Haugi would have been a powerful chief in Þrændaløg in the ninth century, perhaps a petty king (*fylkiskonungr*). Memory of this survived in Iceland in the twelfth century, when accounts of the settlement were first written. Björn may have lived into the age of the settlement, but I shall not discuss this point in the present paper.

Finally, I will just call to mind the story of the *Historia Norvegiae* that Þrándheimr was settled from Sweden. One cannot avoid the conclusion that this story is in some way connected with the tale of the Swedish origin of Saurr. Who can say that there may not be some historical basis for this? Who can say that the chieftain buried in Saurshaugr was not, in fact, a Swede?

¹⁶ On him see P. A. Munch, *Det norske Folks Historie* I, 1 (1852), 334-5; Gudmund Schütte, *Vor mytiske Kongerække* (1917), 27-35. Schütte does not appear to have known the two variants of the dog-king story in the *Skáldatal*.

BEOWULF AND RAGNARÖK

By URSULA DRONKE

IN 1936 Professor Tolkien offered an interpretation of *Beowulf* in the light of the Norse myth of Ragnarök, the Fate of the Gods.¹ According to this myth, there will be a great battle in which the Gods, together with men, their allies, will be killed by cosmic monsters — the Wolf who pursues the sun, the Serpent who encircles the earth, the fire-demon Surtr — and after this fight the world itself will be destroyed. “Of English pre-Christian mythology we know practically nothing. But the fundamentally similar heroic temper of ancient England and Scandinavia cannot have been founded on (or perhaps rather, cannot have generated) mythologies divergent on this essential point.” In his view, both Norsemen and Anglo-Saxons believed that the Gods waged a continual struggle against the monsters and that “within Time the monsters would win”. Tolkien quotes a passage of W. P. Ker’s as a perfect expression of his own thought: “The winning side is Chaos and Unreason, but the gods who are defeated think that defeat no refutation . . .” They offer “absolute resistance, perfect because without hope”. Assuming this to be the mythological inheritance of the Anglo-Saxons, Tolkien then proposes his symbolic interpretation of *Beowulf* as an image of “man at war with the hostile world, and his inevitable overthrow in time”.²

This interpretation has received criticism on two main grounds:³

¹ J. R. R. Tolkien, ‘*Beowulf*: the Monsters and the Critics’, *Proceedings of the British Academy* XXII (1936), 245 ff.

² *ibid.*, 20-1, 22, 18; W. P. Ker, *The Dark Ages* (1904), 57-8.

³ See especially T. M. Gang, ‘Approaches to *Beowulf*’, *RES*, N.S. III (1952), 6 ff., 11; A. Brodeur, *The Art of Beowulf* (1960), 187 ff. Brodeur’s statements here about the value of scaldic verse as evidence of mythological beliefs are particularly misleading. Note also *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* I civ ff.

(1) that the poem itself does not bear out this interpretation, because the dragon has no cosmic, and practically no moral, significance — it does not even descend from Cain — and because Beowulf succeeds in defeating the dragon, even though he himself dies after the victory;

(2) that the myth of Ragnarøk on which Tolkien bases his argument is a late product of the Viking Age and belongs therefore to a date well after the composition of *Beowulf*.⁴

Before commenting upon these criticisms, I should like to add a third: that the picture which Ker and Tolkien present of Norse mythology and of the myth of Ragnarøk in particular is, in some essential points, incorrect. Chaos and Unreason — the monsters — do not win; they destroy what is ripe for destruction, a decaying and tainted world, but a world whose defenders have sufficient strength to destroy their destroyers. Absolute resistance there is — where can one escape to, when monsters advance from every direction? — but there is no lack of hope. Óðinn is avenged by his son, and that son will live on in the new world that rises from the drowned ashes of the old. There is a philosophy underlying the Norse legend of Ragnarøk, but it is not quite that which Ker and Tolkien describe. Is it possible, then, if we confront *Beowulf* with as true a picture as we can achieve of ancient Norse mythology, that some relationship between the two will emerge? Amid all the praise and criticism of Tolkien's buoyant and penetrating article, his fundamental service to the study of the poem has passed unnoticed and undeveloped, namely, the attempt to imagine the heathen mythology that could have been known to the poet of *Beowulf*. If heathen myths survived in Norse poetry at least two centuries after the conversion of Iceland before any of them were recorded in writing, might not some at least of the greater myths have survived also in Anglo-Saxon

⁴ See the considered arguments on the dating of *Beowulf* in D. Whitelock, *The Audience of Beowulf* (1951).

memory until the end of the eighth century, the latest date commonly considered likely for the composition of *Beowulf*? Was heathen lore so quickly and efficiently obliterated by Christian teachers? Was there a vacuum in the Anglo-Saxon memory only where legends of the gods were concerned, though ancient heroic legends and folktales — of Sigemund and Fitela, of the troll behind the foss — were avidly remembered? The Anglo-Saxons and their poets would be censored by the Church, but not brainwashed. They were taught to regard their myths in a new light, euhemeristically, or sceptically: "Your kings are descended from gods? No, it is your ancestors whom, in your ignorance, you have deified." So Woden and Scaef are placed, together with Noah, in the royal genealogies. That the Anglo-Saxons had a rich pantheon of gods, goddesses and their offspring, is clear from the letter of Bishop Daniel of Winchester (709-744) to Boniface, advising him how to tackle the follies of heathen faith:

Quis ante natos deos mundo imperaret, quis regeret? Quomodo autem suo subdere dominatui vel sui iuris facere mundum ante se semper subsistentem potuerunt? Unde autem vel a quo vel quando substitutus aut genitus primus deus vel dea fuerat? Utrum autem adhuc generare deos deasque alios aliasque suspicantur? Vel, si iam non generant, quando vel cur cessaverunt a concubitu et partu; si autem adhuc generant, infinitus iam deorum effectus numerus est. Et quisnam inter tot tantosque potentior sit, incertum mortalibus est et valde cavendum, ne in potentiolem quis offendant.⁵

The Church has not left us a very dignified picture of Anglo-Saxon heathen belief: the names of the gods in the days of the week or in place-names, a fragment of ancient characterization in a charm or a rune-motto.⁶ Only in *Beowulf* is heathen superstition invested with philosophic

⁵ MGH *Epistolae Selectae* I (1916), 39-40.

⁶ For Woden cf. especially the Nine Herbs Charm (G. Storms, *Anglo-Saxon Magic* (1948), 188), and for remarkable parallels with *Skirnismál* and the cult of Freyr cf. the charm for the improvement of fields (Storms, 172 ff.). For Tiw and Ing cf. especially the Anglo-Saxon Runic Poem stanzas 48 and 67 (Bruce Dickins, *Runic and Heroic Poems* (1915), 18, 20).

solemnity. Is this solemnity to be attributed entirely to the Christian training of the poet, or does it stem partly at least from a seriousness inherent in the heathen material itself?

Tolkien's interpretation of the poem is his own response to its philosophic solemnity, and in one of his phrases especially he touches upon the main source of it: the phrase "in Time". In Time the monsters will come, in Time man will be destroyed. I should like to develop further the implications of this phrase.

Three times in *Beowulf* a movement, or theme, is repeated: a stable, orderly, serene and virtuous state is broken up, and broken up from within. Hroðgar is haunted by this experience: "For fifty years I ruled the Ring-Danes, kept them secure by my power from foreign enemies beyond my borders, but see, within my own homeland reversal came —

Hwæt, me þæs on eþle edwenden cwom —

when Grendel, the old enemy, became my invader (*ingenga min.*)"⁷ The pattern is repeated for Beowulf: he ruled nobly for fifty years until the dragon within his realm was roused to persecute him:

deorcum nihtum oð ðæt an ongan
draca ricsian.⁸

The words echo those that herald the raids of Grendel:

Swa ða drihtguman dreamum lifdon,
eadiglice, oð ðæt an ongan
fyrene fremman feond on helle.⁹

These physical incursions are explicitly given a spiritual parallel. Before Hroðgar speaks of Grendel's emergence within his secure and happy land, he has warned Beowulf

⁷ *Beowulf* 1769-76. *Ingenga* is not elsewhere recorded in Old English; the simplicity of the word is striking in the context.

⁸ *Beowulf* 2210-11.

⁹ *Beowulf* 99 ff.

to guard against the growth of evil within his own soul, for it is just at the moment when a man feels that his world is perfect — *him eal worold wended on willan* — ordered, secure, without sorrow, illness or enemies, that a small seed of selfish pride begins to sprout in his heart:

oð þæt him on innan oferhygda dæl
weaxeð ond wridað.¹⁰

His prudent conscience sleeps and his soul is exposed to the arrows of the devil that pierce his visor. He thirsts for more possessions, forgets his debt to God. Then death comes, and another takes his wealth and spends it. "Beware of such pride, Beowulf, and choose your eternal good. At this moment your strength is flowering for its short day, but at length, by one agent or another, death will come. So for fifty years I ruled the Ring-Danes" Hroðgar now points his moral from his own experience. It is clear from this juxtaposition that Grendel's coming is intended by the poet as an exemplum of the didactic point Hroðgar has just made, namely, that change will come, from confident strength to humiliating impotence. Hroðgar's invasion by Grendel, however, provides no moral parallel to his vivid description of the emergence of pride in the heart of the self-contented man. Hroðgar was not visited by Grendel's persecutions because of any moral flaw: the confident building of Heorot, though it stirred Grendel's envy, like a fallen Lucifer in the darkness envious of Eden, cannot have been reprehensible: a most virtuous song of divine creation was sung in it. Nor do we know of any error of Beowulf's that brought the dragon flaring across his countryside, though Beowulf himself properly dreads that he has angered God in some way (lines 2327-32).

Behind these three movements of sudden change, there lies a fourth movement, an inexorable process, the

¹⁰ *Beowulf* 1740-41.

encroachment of time, bringing age and death. So we have in the poem, through its two narratives and the pivotal homily that links them, four deliberately related instances of change, or *edwenden*: three are physical — the destruction of Hroðgar's and of Beowulf's peace by monsters, and of the human body by death; and one is spiritual — the corruption of the mind by pride, the favoured angel's sin, which brings other vices in its wake. No man can guard against any of the physical changes, but against the spiritual change he can. He has the free-will to choose *ece rædas*, the salvation of his soul.

This pessimistic representation of the physical circumstances of man is wholly in accord with Christian moral teaching: we see other aspects of it in the *Wanderer*, the *Ruin* and the *Seafarer*. It would also find sympathetic lodging in minds furnished with such heathen mythology as the Norse sources preserve. In this mythology, as in many others, physical change is a cyclic phenomenon: in Norse, the physical universe is created out of a death, out of the corpse of the giant Ymir, killed by the gods. These gods themselves were descended from Ymir, from creatures born out of his great living body.¹¹ In the Norse poem *Völuspá*, the 'Sibyl's Prophecy', commonly dated at the end of the tenth century, when Norway and Iceland were on the brink of conversion to Christianity, an attempt is made to present a coherent account, shaped from diverse myths, of the course of the world from its creation to its destruction and resurrection. The gods establish the earth and order the cosmos, the paths of sun and moon and the stations of the stars. They build their temples and forge their wealth and take their recreation:

¹¹ *Vafþrúðnismál* 20-1, 28 ff., *Grimnismál* 40-1 (references are to the stanzas of poems in *Edda: Die Lieder des Codex Regius*, edited by G. Neckel, revised by H. Kuhn, 1962). See also J. de Vries, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte* (second edition, 1956-7), 573, 575 ff.; H. Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization* (1946), 11-19; M. Eliade, *Kosmos und Geschichte. Der Mythos der ewigen Wiederkehr* (German translation with revisions, 1953), especially ch. II 2.

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Tefðo í túni, | They played at checkers in the meadow, |
| teitir vóro, | they were merry, |
| var þeim vettergis | they knew |
| vant ór gulli, | no lack of gold — |
| unz þriár kvómo | until three maids came, |
| þursa meýiar | ogresses |
| ámátkar miøk | great in strength |
| ór iqtunheimom. | from giantland. ¹² |

The pattern of events is parallel to the building of Heorot,¹³ the rejoicing in creation, and the sudden coming of Grendel. These giant-maids are ominous and their intrusion is clearly designed to disturb a new creation: their giant-world is the world of the dead, of the chthonic forces hostile to cosmic order.¹⁴ We do not know for what particular reason they come or what precisely results from their coming, for here the poem in both its extant texts swerves off into a branch-line of the creation story, in which the gods fashion the race of dwarfs and endow with life and sentience the first man and woman, two pieces of driftwood they find on the shore. The ominous, unexplained coming of the three ogresses, however, is only the first of the notes of disharmony, war and grief that ring more and more urgently across the gods' happy creation. The poet of *Völuspá* has selected and organized, according to a logical linking of his own, the myths of the gods within the temporal framework of the world's birth and death.¹⁵ He shows — perhaps not, as Nordal

¹² *Völuspá* 8.

¹³ The act of building a house or temple by the creating god, or gods, is a frequent element in creation stories: cf. M. Eliade, *Traité d'histoire des religions* (1948), ch. X, 'L'espace sacré: temple, palais, "Centre du monde"', 319 ff.; *Sources Orientales: La naissance du monde* (1959), especially 140-1, 143 ff. The sequence of events in the early days of the gods in *Völuspá* is not casually chosen: it is probable that the game of chance which the gods play symbolizes the commencement of chance, and the interplay of fortune and misfortune, in the temporal world; upon this cue the ogresses enter. Cf. A. F. Van Hamel, 'The Game of the Gods', *Arkiv för nordisk Filologi* L (1934), 218 ff. (Van Hamel's interesting material merits deeper investigation). In Hindu myth the four ages of the world take their names from the four throws of the Indian dice game (Zimmer, *op. cit.*, 13 ff.).

¹⁴ Cf. de Vries, §§ 177, 429; also my article 'Art and Tradition in *Skrirnismál*', *English and Medieval Studies presented to J. R. R. Tolkien* (1962), 257.

¹⁵ Cf. S. Nordal, *Völuspá* (second edition, 1952), 191 ff.

suggests,¹⁶ the moral degeneration of the gods — but their progressive entanglement in the difficulties of remaining good and blissful — two essential attributes of divinity here conceived in a realm of thought far removed from that of Boethius.

The image of a menaced creation is not an invention of the poet of *Völuspá*: we see it in other sources that cannot be dependent upon his poem. The great World-Ash, Yggdrasil, that grows through the nine worlds and waters the valleys with dew, suffers more affliction than men can know, the poet of *Grimnismál* tells: a stag bites the leaves above, the side of the tree is rotting, and, below, a dragon gnaws away its roots. And the sun cannot rest: she is being chased by a wolf and one day he will swallow her. And a great winter will come, bringing utter desolation. And the name of the battle-ground is already known, where the beloved gods will encounter the fire demon.¹⁷ The multiplicity of the aspects of approaching decay and destruction of the physical world indicates the antiquity of the idea in the native mythology; it cannot be a late conception of the Viking Age.¹⁸

Within the temporal framework of a hastening end the myths of the gods are enacted. And what maimed and paradoxical characters some of them are. Týr, the patron of good faith between men, has forfeited his hand because he and the other gods kept bad faith when they chained the Wolf. Óðinn, who can see into all worlds, is one-eyed, because he sacrificed one eye to gain wisdom: and Baldr, whose judgements are the wisest, is fated never to have them carried out.¹⁹ Loki, the trickster, close

¹⁶ *ibid.*, 193 ff.

¹⁷ *Grimnismál* 35, 39; *Snorra Edda* (ed. Finnur Jónsson, 1931), 18, 70; *Vafþrúðnismál* 18, 44, 46.

¹⁸ Cf. de Vries, § 598; A. Olrik, 'Om Ragnarök', *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed*, II Række, XVII (1902), especially 189, 195, 198.

¹⁹ De Vries, §§ 359, 397 and references there cited; G. Dumézil, *Mitra-Varuna* (1948), 167 ff. The statement in *Snorra Edda* (ed. cit., 29) about Baldr's judgement — *sú náttúra fylgir honum, at engi má haldax dömr hans* — depends on the reading of three MSS. The fourth MS gives the opposite sense: Baldr's judgement may not be turned awry. On linguistic grounds I cannot accept this minority reading.

companion of the gods, amoral and accident-prone, with a genius for doing the wrong thing, is the begetter of the monsters who attack the gods — almost the father of death itself, for Hel, the personified realm of the dead, is his child. These mythological beings and their adventures represent a conception of reality; the gods' imperfections and frustrations ultimately reflect men's understanding of their own condition. I would emphasize again that this realistic mythology is not of late Norse origin: the wide diffusion and the antiquity of its analogues are sufficient to show this. Even the battle of god and monster in which the god is killed is found in many other mythologies, and in these, as in Norse, the god is always avenged or revived and the monster slain, and the cycle of creation begins again, for the monster's body — Serpent of Chaos, or primeval giant — is originally the substance out of which the ordered universe is made.²⁰ So, in Norse, after destruction, the new world rises, and the radiant and perfect Baldr, denied all efficacy in the old world, returns from death to the new. Though it may be argued that the return of Baldr is no more than a plagiarism of the resurrection of Christ, and the rise of the new world no more than a copy of the new heaven and the new earth of the Apocalypse, we can see from other, and perhaps more primitive, myths that the notion that the world would revive again after destruction was deeply rooted in Norse tradition. In the monstrous winter, the *fimbulvetr*, everything is destroyed except for one man and one woman who shelter in a tree and live on to procreate their race again. And the sun which will be swallowed by the Wolf will have a daughter who will tread her mother's path.²¹

It seems evident that when the poet of *Völuspá* composed his drama of the world and of the gods from

²⁰ Cf. *Sources Orientales* (cf. note 13), 140; J. Fontenrose, *Python* (1959), especially 217-39.

²¹ *Vafþrúðnismál* 45, 47.

creation to destruction and renewal, he found ethical substance for this drama already inherent in his native mythology. Let us imagine that the mythology of the heathen Anglo-Saxons had a comparable ethical substance, that it similarly stirred men to an acute perception of the inevitability of change — *edwenden* — and to an alert apprehension of its coming.²² In such a case, might not a Christian, as well as a heathen, poet draw upon this ethical substance for the theme of his poem, confidently aware that it answered admirably to his Christian purpose? Would folktale alone, which commonly appears emptied of philosophical content, or the superstitious fears of a simple people about fen-dwelling ogres and fiery dragons, have suggested the seriousness and solemnity with which the coming of Grendel and the dragon are invested in *Beowulf*? In folktale and *fornaldarsögur* (as in saints' lives) the grotesque monsters whom the hero conquers frequently acquire a comic aspect,²³ as if they were affected in anticipation by the laughter of nervous relief that an audience utters when suspense and terror are over. When the Green Knight's 'ugly body that bled' gallops headless out of Arthur's court, the knights of the Round Table 'laugh and grin' at what had a few moments before sickened them with horror. So too, when the audience know that the hero will conquer, they can stomach all manner of horrific elaboration. In *Beowulf* we can just perceive the edges of gruesome comedy in the encounters with the monsters, a comedy appropriate to tales in which the hero will win: Grendel munching the bones and grasping out for the next victim, or carrying off men in his snake-skin mitt (is any reader unaware of the comedy in the

²² As a narrative motif in Germanic heroic verse *edwenden* is richly exploited: cf. the swift reversal of fortune in Hygelac's raid on Frisia (*Beowulf* 1202 ff., and Gregory of Tours's account of the expedition, cited Fr. Klaeber, *Beowulf*, p. 268) and in the Geatish war with Ongenþeow (*Beowulf* 2928); also *Hamðismál* 24-8.

²³ Cf. the buffoonery of propping up the dead dragon in *Hrólfs Saga*, chs. 35-6; also the dragon, its eyes broad as basins, and the little demon, its hands bound to its knotty knees, who attack Seinte Marherete (*EETS* CXCIII, 20, 25).

encounter of Grettir and Glámr?), and the snaky dragon, the extreme of human loathing, snorting with annoyance round its lair and ramping out — Fee, Fi, Fo, Fum — when it hears a man's voice. It is the most vivid and realistic representation of a dragon in Germanic literature, but, though deadly, it is a dragon one can — however faintly — smile at: Sigemund's dragon, Frotho's dragon, who can be stuck in the stomach and shoved over the cliff's edge; it is not the cosmic serpent of Ragnarøk, who, if he is to retain his dignity, must not be examined too closely:

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| snýz iormungandr | the earth-snake coils |
| í iotunmóði, | in giant-wrath, |
| ormr knýr unnir, | the worm lashes the waves |
| en ari hlakkar . . . | and the eagle exults . . . ²⁴ |

In Norse mythology the monsters have two parts to play: one is that of disturbing the peace of the gods and involving them in awkward situations; this is chiefly the rôle of the giants and (except in *Völuspá*) is productive of comedy, because the giants are always — at the last minute — outwitted.²⁵ The second part the monsters play is to kill the old gods at the end of the world. For the poet of *Völuspá* it is the ominous knowledge of the monsters' final rôle that weights their earlier intrusions with solemnity, for these intrusions are seen by the poet as preliminary skirmishes for the ultimate war. In a somewhat similar way, I suggest, the poet of *Beowulf* may have conceived of presenting Grendel's emergence in Hroðgar's realm with such solemn and fatalistic emphasis because he too had in mind, and planned to make use of for the climax of his poem, a tragic myth in which the monsters will conquer, and in which the god who traditionally defends the earth from giants — Þunor or

²⁴ *Völuspá* 50.

²⁵ Cf. the myth of Þiazi who nearly gets possession of Iðunn, goddess of youth; of the giant smith who nearly wins Freyja, the sun and the moon; of Þrymr who steals Þórr's hammer only to feel its mortal force. On the relationship between giants and the monsters of Chaos see Fontenrose, 219, 247.

Þórr — succumbs to the cosmic dragon.²⁶ So we return to Tolkien's hypothesis and are faced with the need to consider the mythological analogues in other Germanic languages of Beowulf's fatal fight with the dragon.

Before embarking upon this most speculative stage of the enquiry, I should ask the reader to bear in mind two points:

(1) that, while Latin writers, such as Tacitus and Adam of Bremen, occasionally describe heathen beliefs and practices, the earliest narrative and dramatic presentations of Germanic mythology are in verse; the themes are shaped by individual poets to their own imaginative purposes and are often presented allusively and cryptically. Some at least of the Germanic mythology known to the poet of *Beowulf* would probably have been preserved in just such poetic forms.

(2) that the speculative nature of the discussion is inevitable, the more especially since the comparative study of Germanic mythology, and the examination of striking parallels in Indian and Finno-Ugrian mythologies in particular, still await the researches of Germanic scholars trained also in these fields.

It has often been pointed out that Beowulf's fight with the dragon and Þórr's fight with the World-Serpent belong to the same type of dragon-fight: a hero in defence of his people kills a marauding dragon and himself dies in the fight.²⁷ Þórr, when the last days come, strides out against the serpent to shield Middle Garth, the human world, from destruction. Against the identification of Beowulf's fight and Þórr's fight, however, and the supposition that a similar legend of Þunor may have been

²⁶ Cf. de Vries, § 429. Þórr, like Beowulf, is the great defender of the human world against the giants; he wields his hammer against them as Zeus his thunderbolt against the Titans. None of the other Norse gods is the constant champion against the giants, and in all the myths about the World Serpent Þórr is its only opponent.

²⁷ Cf. Klaeber, *Beowulf*, xxi ff.; K. Müllenhoff, 'Der Mythos von Beowulf', *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* VII (1849), 438-9.

current among the Anglo-Saxons and have inspired the theme of Beowulf's last fight, the following arguments can be raised:

(1) The account of Þórr's death occurs only in *Völuspá*, a source perhaps two hundred years later than *Beowulf*; the evidence that it is an ancient part of the mythology of Þórr, and not an invention of the poet of *Völuspá* or his contemporaries, is not, therefore, firmly rooted. In all other Norse legends Þórr is shown victorious.²⁸

(2) It is not specifically stated in *Völuspá* that Þórr kills the serpent before he dies:

| | |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| Drepr hann af móði, | He strikes in anger, |
| miðgarðs véor[r] — | guarder of the sacred earth — |
| munu halir allir | men shall all leave |
| heimstoð ryðia — | their dwellings desolate — |
| gengr fet níó | he steps nine paces, |
| Fiörgyniar burr | Earth-Mother's son, |
| neppr frá naðri | failing, from the snake |
| níðs ókvíðnom. | that fears no curse. ²⁹ |

Nordal argues that the slaying of the Serpent is clearly implied in the phrase *frá naðri*: Þórr staggers away from the Serpent, which lies where he left it, dead.³⁰ Such an argument is not wholly beyond dispute, and if we do not accept *Völuspá* as evidence for Þórr's slaying of the Serpent, we are left with only one, fragmentary, source to rely on, the verses of Úlfr Uggason (late tenth century), preserved by Snorri (c. 1220), describing a carved picture in which Þórr beheads the serpent — but not in the context of Ragnarøk. ³¹

(3) Þórr has no helper at Ragnarøk, and Beowulf has Wiglaf.

(4) We need not — and should not — look to myth for

²⁸ Cf. de Vries, § 435: the scene of Þórr's death "gehört zur späteren Ausmalung des Weltuntergangs; im Kult hat Thor wohl immer als Sieger gegolten".

²⁹ *Völuspá* 56.

³⁰ Nordal, *op. cit.*, 142.

³¹ Finnur Jónsson, *Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning*, B I 129. Snorri doubts the veracity of this legend, *Snorra Edda*, 63, 87.

an analogue of Beowulf's last fight: there is a folktale, widely spread, in Germany and in Denmark, in which a hero kills a dragon that devastates the land and sacrifices his life in the encounter. In some versions he is accompanied by a helper.³²

These are formidable objections, but not unanswerable.

(1) That Þórr is essentially a victorious god who always overcomes his monstrous enemies, and that it is mythologically out of character for him to be defeated and killed, is sometimes demonstrated by a comparison with the god Indra, to whom Þórr bears a strong likeness in many respects.³³ Indra fights the great Serpent Vritra, the living Chaos, and kills him. But according to some variants of this myth, Indra too may suffer defeat and death in the encounter with the Serpent: the long and complex narrative of the *Mahabharata* (which often preserves more ancient versions of Indian mythology than the Vedic hymns, even though it is later) has four different accounts of Indra's discomfiture. Fontenrose, in his analysis of mythological themes associated with the combat of God and Monster, has shown that an episode in which the God suffers temporary defeat or death constantly recurs. The flight, or temporary death, of Indra is in several instances combined with his need for purification from blood-guilt; during his absence "the earth became barren, rivers and lakes dried up". After purification, he recovers his powers.³⁴ Þórr the giant-slayer dies, but in the new purified world that rises after the dissolution of the old one — tainted with blood and wars — his sons return to fresh sanctuaries, bearing their father's hammer.³⁵ Elements of the same narrative and moral pattern are discernible in both mythologies.

³² Fr. Panzer, *Studien zur Germanischen Sagen Geschichte: Beowulf*, especially 294 ff.

³³ For a succinct but richly suggestive account of the correspondences between Þórr and Indra see G. Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North*, 75 ff., and bibliography, 300.

³⁴ Fontenrose, 197-8.

³⁵ Cf. *Vafþrúðnismál* 51.

(2) and (3) More important for comparison with *Beowulf* than specific arguments as to whether Þórr actually killed the Serpent in Norse eschatological legends is the general fact that in Norse mythology there are various traditional, legendary modes in which a god might meet his death in combat with a monster. In these recorded modes all the motifs combined in the narrative of Beowulf's death are to be found. The Serpent's poison that overwhelms Beowulf is paralleled in Þórr's death, as told by Snorri: "he fell dead upon the earth because of the venom that the Serpent breathed upon him".³⁶ The young helper is paralleled in the avenging son of Óðinn, who plunges his sword into the heart of the Wolf that has killed his father.³⁷ There is also a legend of Þórr in which he depends upon a young helper: when he kills the giant Hrungrnir, the giant's leg falls across Þórr's neck; none of the gods can move the leg, until Þórr's three-night-old son, Magni, comes and lifts it easily.³⁸ Þórr's son Magni is his successor in the new world, as Wiglaf is Beowulf's heir.

That the mutual slaying of god and monster was a known variant of the combat's outcome in Norse can be inferred from Snorri. He adds two encounters to those in *Völuspá*: Týr fights the hound of Hel, Garmr, and they kill each other; Heimdallr fights Loki, and they kill each other. I would surmise that these are inventions of Snorri's³⁹ and were inspired by the mutual slaying of Þórr and the Serpent in traditional legend, the tragic counterpart of the comic struggles between Þórr and the Serpent, which

³⁶ *Snorra Edda*, 72.

³⁷ *Völuspá* 55; *Vafþrúðnismál* 63.

³⁸ *Snorra Edda*, 103. See also Fontenrose, 264, 531, on the variant of the God-Monster combat in which son avenges father.

³⁹ *Snorra Edda*, 72. No other sources mention Týr or Heimdallr fighting at Ragnarøk; it would be characteristic of Snorri to account systematically in this way for the death of the other chief gods and attackers. Týr, who lost his hand in the Wolf's teeth, is appropriately pitted against a wolfish creature, Garmr, whose insistent barking heralds Ragnarøk in *Völuspá* (cf. de Vries, § 354); and Heimdallr is matched with Loki, his traditional opponent in another legend (see below).

emphasize the parity of their strengths.⁴⁰ Any mythology of the last fight of Þunor which may have been known to the Anglo-Saxons would probably have been as varied and fluctuating as the myths on similar themes known to the poet of *Völuspá* — rich material from which a poet could select and shape his own drama.

(4) Beowulf's last fight has analogies in folktales: had the poet folktales only and not myths — that is, stories whose protagonists are gods⁴¹ — as his source? Much of the Grendel story in *Beowulf* is brilliantly illuminated by Fontenrose's analysis of it as the reproduction of a mythical pattern,⁴² but there can be little doubt that, whatever its mythical origins, the elements of the story of Grendel were familiar to the poet from folktales — in which a human being was the hero — and not from myth. Any mythical parallels in Norse for the Grendel episode have faded beyond recognition. On the other hand I think it unlikely that the poet's source for Beowulf's last fight would be folktale *only*, because chronologically the closest analogues of the fight have a cosmic, not a local, setting. *Völuspá* may not have been composed till the year 1000, but it is still much earlier than any recorded folktale of the death-by-dragon type. And, perhaps even more significant, we have in the Old High German poem *Muspilli*, preserved in a hand c. 870 (not an autograph),⁴³ the remarkable account of the last fight of Elias against Antichrist, the anthropomorphic dragon, the Serpent of the tribe of Dan,⁴⁴ in the last days of the world:

⁴⁰ In *Gylfaginning* Þórr succeeds in lifting from the floor one paw of the giant cat — who is Miðgarðsormr in disguise; on another occasion he nearly fishes up the serpent from the ocean with the bait of an ox-head (*Snorra Edda*, 62, 57).

⁴¹ For the purposes of this article I use the simplest possible distinction between myth and folktale, since my concern is the specific problem of the survival of stories about the Germanic gods.

⁴² Fontenrose, 524 ff.

⁴³ The hand has been identified as probably that of King Ludwig the German; the date suggested for the original Bavarian text is c. 810 (cf. *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon* (ed. W. Stammerl), V 699-700, s.v. *Muspilli*). I follow the text in W. Braune and K. Helm, *Althochdeutsches Lesebuch* (eleventh edition, 1949), 75.

⁴⁴ Cf. W. Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend* (English translation, 1896), 137, 144 ff.; also the *Pseudo-Methodius* (c. 700) edited by E. Sackur, *Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen* (1898), 94. On the popular identification of Saint Elias with the god of thunder see J. Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology* (English translation of 1883-8, reprinted 1966), I 173 ff.; H. Bächtold-Stäubli, *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens*, s.v. *Elias*, § 3 (Elias fights in the clouds against monsters, devils and dragons). The subject merits further research.

I heard good men of this world declare that Antichrist would fight with Elias. The wicked one is armed: then battle between them shall begin. The champions are so mighty, the cause is so great. Elias fights for eternal life — he means to strengthen the realm of the righteous: in this he who holds the heavens shall help him. Antichrist stands for the old fiend, for Satan, who will bring him to perdition, since on that battlefield he shall fall and there be vanquished. But many . . . men of God believe that Elias shall be destroyed⁴⁵ in that war. When Elias's blood drips upon the earth, the mountains break into flame, no tree will be left standing, none on the earth, rivers will run dry, marshes be sucked up, the sky will smoulder in the blaze — the moon will fall, Middle Garth will burn, no stone will stand; then Judgement Day will come upon the land, come with fire to punish mankind. Then no kinsman can help another before that *Muspilli*. When the broad wet earth is all consumed, and fire and wind sweep it all away, where will be then the territory man fought over with his kinsmen? That territory is burnt away, the soul stands afflicted, knows not how to make atonement — and goes to judgement.

As in *Völuspá* the signal for the final conflagration of the world is the death of the hero.

In an impressive article published in 1936,⁴⁶ Hermann Schneider argued that there was no Germanic heathen element whatever in this fight between Elias and Antichrist. The brief fragment of the poem shows abundantly the influence of homiletic and apocalyptic literature. From early Christian times the legend is known that Elias and Enoch, the prophets who never saw death, will stand up against Antichrist and denounce him in the last days of the world;⁴⁷ they assume the rôle of the martyred witnesses in *Revelations* 11. Elias, however, is not commonly the military opponent and slayer of Antichrist: that is the rôle of Michael. The only parallel to the playing of this part by Elias that Schneider can discover is in two Coptic

⁴⁵ In the text *aruuartit* could also mean 'injured', but, as Schneider (p. 14, n. 1 of article cited in following note) observes, in no other source is Elias ever wounded and not killed; in *Muspilli* the implication certainly seems to be that he is shedding his blood in death.

⁴⁶ 'Muspilli', *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* LXXIII (1936), 1 ff.

⁴⁷ Cf. Bousset, ch. XIV, 203 ff.; on Elias as the sole witness, 207.

recensions, from the late third or the fourth century, of a Jewish text, probably written in Greek in Egypt, the *Apocalypse of Elias*.⁴⁸ According to this, when Elias and Enoch hear the son of Lawlessness in the holy places declaring himself to be the Lord's anointed, they come and denounce him. "The Shameless One" in fury fights them for seven days, and they lie dead for three and a half days, gazed at by all the people, and rise on the fourth day to reproach Antichrist again, warning him that they will lay aside the flesh of the body and kill him, for they live in the Lord eternally. Unable to overcome these two witnesses, Antichrist continues his attacks against mankind, torturing the saints; sixty righteous men come armed against him, denouncing him (Elias and Enoch are not mentioned here). Christ sends his angels to their aid. Now the earth quakes, trees are uprooted, birds and beasts drop dead, the waters dry up, and sinners moan their complaints against Antichrist for the horrors he has brought upon them. Fighting is renewed: Antichrist takes to his fiery wings, attacking the saints. Again angels help them, and at God's command heaven and earth burst into flame and burn away sinners and devils, and judgement comes. Then Elias and Enoch take on spiritual bodies, pursue the Son of Lawlessness and kill him. He melts before them like ice before fire, annihilated like a dragon without breath. He and those who believed in him are flung into the abyss.

Even though this version of the legend was not totally unknown in the early Middle Ages (Jerome and Origen mention the *Apocalypse of Elias*, though they do not reveal any detailed knowledge of its content), it does not strike a reader as resembling the fight in *Muspilli*. The action is complex and repetitive, quite unlike the simple sequence of the fight between Elias and Antichrist in *Muspilli*; and

⁴⁸ G. Steindorff, *Die Apokalypse des Elias* (1899), 18 ff., 163 ff.; cf. E. Hennecke, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen* (third edition, revised W. Schneemelcher), II (1964), 534.

the order of the action in *Muspilli*, in which the death of Antichrist precedes the death of Elias, is found nowhere else in any of the traditions of Elias that I know.⁴⁹ So strong is the tradition in Christian sources that Elias died first, killed by Antichrist, that the remark in *Muspilli*, "But many men of God believe that Elias shall be destroyed in that war . . ." would seem to indicate that the poet of *Muspilli* was not as subservient to apocryphal tradition as Schneider claims.⁵⁰

Schneider concludes: "There is nothing heathen in the poem except the name *Muspilli*." But, if it is true that this name is heathen — and there is every good reason in favour of supposing so⁵¹ — then it is surely in this context significant. In the Old High German *Muspilli* and the Old Saxon *Heliand* (where the forms of the word are *mudspelli*, *mutspelli*), it is a name for the end, or destruction, of the world when judgement comes. Outside these sources it is found only in the Norse legend of Ragnarök, when *Muspellz lýðir* (*Völuspá*), *Muspellz synir* (*Lokasenna*), the troops, the sons of *Muspell*, surge with Loki

⁴⁹ Bousset, ch. XIV, summarizes the various versions of the encounter between Elias and Enoch and Antichrist. It should be noted here that it is not expressly stated in *Muspilli* that it is Elias who kills Antichrist, but we can hardly imagine the poet had any alternative action in mind, since he emphasizes that it is a duel between the two champions — *khenfun sint so kreftic* — and that Antichrist falls wounded in *deru uuicsteti*, the place where he fights, having lost the victory.

⁵⁰ Schneider distinguishes two Christian traditions which he thinks were known to the poet: one in which Elias conquers and is not killed, and a second in which Elias is killed even though Antichrist is conquered. His evidence in support of the first supposed tradition is weak, since it depends on a distorted reading of a commentary of Haymo of Auxerre (recently so identified) in *Apocalypsim*. Haymo reiterates that Elias and Enoch will be killed but not overcome, i.e. Antichrist has no power over their immortal souls. There is no suggestion in Haymo that Elias will not be physically killed. See also H. de Boor's comment, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur* (1949), I 56, on Schneider's reconstruction of the learned sources of *Muspilli*.

⁵¹ The Christian interpretations of the word are far from convincing (e.g. that of W. Krogmann, *Niederdeutsches Jahrbuch* LXXI-LXXXIII (1948-50), 20 ff. as 'Mouth-destroyer', a name for Christ in Judgement): see G. Baesecke, 'Muspilli', *Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, Sitzungsberichte* (1918, no. XXI), 422; W. Braune, 'Muspilli', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* XL (1915), 425 ff.; de Vries, § 590. The association of the word *Muspilli* with heat and the conflagration of the world is confirmed not only by Snorri (*Snorra Edda*, 11-12, 71) but by Loki's assertion (*Lokasenna* 42, see below) that Freyr will be attacked at Ragnarök by the sons of *Muspell*; Freyr's opponent is traditionally the fire-demon *Surtr*.

and the monsters against the gods. While many scholars consider that *Völuspá* has been influenced by Christian apocalyptic legends, and some would argue that *Muspell* in that poem is taken from southern Germanic Christian sources, the occurrence of the name in *Lokasenna*, a poem wholly heathen in conception and a rich repository of rare mythological allusions,⁵² strongly suggests that *Muspell* is an ancient name in Scandinavian mythology and not a late borrowing from abroad. The fixed context of this Germanic word would seem to me to be inescapable evidence for a Germanic heathen belief in the destruction of the world, more widely spread than Scandinavia.

If the poet of *Muspilli* was not directly reproducing any Christian model in his narrative of Antichrist — and I do not think Schneider has proved that he did — what caused him to alter the traditional order of action in the apocryphal account of the saint's last fight? Is it pure chance that the action he presents has its closest analogue in the tales in which hero encounters dragon and both are slain? If the poet of *Muspilli* deliberately simplified the complex apocryphal narrative into a form that would be more familiar to his German-speaking audience, did he use as a model a common folktale in which human hero and monstrous opponent were slain? If Norsemen "invented" the myth of the death of Þórr, were they also creating out of familiar folktale a myth of cosmic meaning? The coincidence seems too great to be credible. It is more likely that in both instances the death of divine hero (or saint) and monstrous (or devilish) opponent occurs in the context of the last days of the world because that is where, mythologically, it belonged in Germanic heathen tradition. If neither the death of Þórr nor the death of Elias can be convincingly related to folktale, are we content to assume that folktale only is the model for the death of Beowulf?

⁵² For a detailed discussion of the heathen elements of *Lokasenna* see my forthcoming edition of the poem in *The Poetic Edda* Vol. II. That *Muspell* might be a borrowing in Scandinavian from southern Germanic heathen tradition is, of course, possible.

Let us entertain, for a moment, the possibility that the Christian poet of *Beowulf* knew a myth of the death of a god — Þunor — fighting against the Serpent. In his poem he would euhemerize, present as a historical person in an established historical past, a figure whom the heathens considered, or had once considered, a god. This would account for the obtrusive historicism of the poem: the exciting and tragic legends are not pushed to the outer edges, as Ker said; they are deliberately brought in, not merely for structural variety and delight in stylistic interlace, but for historical conviction, to emphasize that this hero was a man. For the same purpose, the poet would throw into relief the real and familiar aspects of the monsters, fleshly descendants of Cain, bogies of everyday superstition. While keeping the melancholy and the fortitude of the heathen myth of Ragnarøk, the poet would cut away any happy issue: he offers no hope of the physical rebirth of the world or any resurgence of earthly prosperity; only wars and more wars close in after the death of this hero, days of humiliation and captivity — *hynðo ond hæftnyd* — and the terror of human foes — *werodes egesan*. The nobility of the individual mind alone survives in the memory, the gentleness, compassion and sense of honour of Beowulf himself, qualities not subject to time, attributes of God himself, *manno miltisto*.⁵³ The material optimism of the heathen is replaced by the spiritual aspiration of the Christian.

It is remarkable that *Beowulf* contains human analogues for three mythological incidents that are recorded in Norse: the death of Þórr, the death of Baldr, and the recovery of the stolen necklace of Freyja, the *Brisinga men*. Each instance of parallelism can easily be dismissed as trivial and improbable, but taken together they acquire significance. The old Geatish king Hreþel laments the tragic death of his son Herebeald, killed by his brother

⁵³ Cf. *Wessobrunner Gebet* 6 ff.: *Do dar niuwihht ni uuas enteo ni uuenteo, | enti do uuas der eino almahtico cot, | manno miltisto . . .*

Hæðcyn when they were playing at archery: he missed the target and killed his brother — *miste mercelses ond his mæg ofscet*.⁵⁴ It was a favourite game of the Norse gods to throw missiles at Baldr in the hallowed assembly place, because they thought that he was charmed against all hurt, until the blind Høðr cast the fatal mistletoe (which, according to Snorri, Loki put into his hand), and killed his brother Baldr.⁵⁵ Admittedly the similarity is limited to (1) the elements *-beald* and *hæð-*, which correspond to Baldr and Høðr in Norse, (2) to the general context of a game, and (3) to the fact that brother accidentally kills brother with a missile. Hæðcyn is not blind and Herebeald is not charmed. The discrepancies are considerable but if the Christian poet intended to euhemerize the myth of Baldr's death, could he have done it more effectively? Would he not have devised some story of this nature?

When Beowulf, for his conquest of Grendel, is given a magnificent necklace, the poet asserts that it was finer than any human treasure since the days when "Hama carried off to the radiant city the necklace of the Brosingas — *Brosinga men* — the jewel and its rich setting: he fled from the malevolence of Eormenric, and chose eternal good, his soul's salvation".⁵⁶ We do not know who the Brosingas were. The necklace of Freyja in Norse myth is the *Brisinga men*.⁵⁷ We do not know who the Brisingar were. The names are slightly different, yet the resemblance is striking. There is, moreover, an impalpable likeness of situation in the account of the necklace in *Beowulf* and an adventure connected with the *Brisinga men* in Norse. Snorri, in *Skáldskaparmál* ch. 16, tells us that the god Heimdallr fought with Loki over the *Brisinga men* — Loki is elsewhere described as the "thief of Brising's girdle"⁵⁸ — and both Heimdallr and

⁵⁴ *Beowulf* 2439.

⁵⁵ *Snorra Edda*, 64.

⁵⁶ *Beowulf* 1197 ff.

⁵⁷ Cf. de Vries, § 536; *Drymskviða* 13; *Snorra Edda*, 38.

⁵⁸ *Hausilong* 9.

Loki fought in the shape of seals. Heimdallr carried off the necklace. Hama's name is identical with the first element of Heimdallr, and his holy end has a faint echo in the character of the god, who is "the white god . . . great and holy", the only Norse god to whom the word *heilagr* is applied in Snorri's characterization of the gods. It would seem over-zealous to pursue the parallel further and identify Eormenric of the "wolfish mind" with the malevolent Loki in this narrative, yet it is worth noting that Snorri,⁵⁹ when he euhemerizes the Norse gods, deliberately identifies myth and heroic legend, for he explains that the legends we attribute to Loki were in fact originally the tales which the Turks told about Ulysses, whom they hated; and Loki was their name for him.⁶⁰ While it is only a hint, we have here again, in the reference to Hama, the appearance of what is mythological in Norse sources as historical in *Beowulf*.

We may wonder why the Christian Anglo-Saxon poet should concern himself with anything so trivial as a mythological necklace. This necklace, however, belongs to an ancient mythical context: the fight between a good and an evil god for possession of a treasure drawn up from the depths of the ocean, a treasure that is the newly created earth itself. Dr Kurt Schier has brilliantly, and convincingly, identified the Norse legend of Loki and Heimdallr with this primeval myth.⁶¹ Subsequent association of this ocean treasure with a fertility goddess, Freyja, and its symbolization as her necklace or girdle, might lead to cultic uses. Here again we are on purely speculative ground, but Pering has offered some remarkable

⁵⁹ Or a reviser of the epilogue of *Gylfaginning* (though I think this less likely). For the purposes of the present discussion the statement is significant whoever the author was.

⁶⁰ *Snorra Edda*, 77; cf. also pp. 87-8.

⁶¹ In a forthcoming Habilitationsschrift in the Philosophical Faculty of the University of Munich. Compare Finno-Ugrian legends of the strife between God and Satan over possession of the new earth, U. Holmberg *Mythology of All Races IV Finno-Ugria* (1927), ch. II; also K. Schier, 'Die Erdschöpfung aus dem Urmeer und die Kosmogonie der *Völuspá*', *Märchen, Mythos, Dichtung, Festschrift Friedrich von der Leyen* (ed. H. Kuhn and K. Schier, 1963), especially 319 ff.

evidence that the necklace of Freyja may have been the prototype of the talismans worn by women in childbirth.⁶² In the light of these possibilities, the *Beowulf* poet's allusion to the tale of Eormenric and Hama could be his euhemerization — by a method not dissimilar from Snorri's — of one of the oldest and most deeply rooted of the cosmic myths. At the same time it might be an attempt to weaken a feminine stronghold of heathen faith — though hope of success by such academic methods must surely have been small!

When early scholars traced the mythological parallels of *Beowulf*, they did not reckon with the mind of a poet well-versed in Christian apologetic techniques against the pagans, deliberately using, and diminishing the stature of, older myths for his Christian didactic purposes; an imaginative explorer who obliterated most of the tracks of his journey; an ingenious craftsman creating from strangely assorted stones of native tradition a mosaic of symbolic design. Yet the assumption of such a mind, and such a context, would do much to explain the enigmas of *Beowulf*.

⁶² B. Pering, *Heimdall* (1941), ch. XI. On birth-amulets cf. S. Seligmann, *Die magischen Heil- und Schutzmittel aus der unbelebten Natur* (1927), especially 215. The necklace of the Mother-Goddess is a very ancient emblem, cf. G. R. Levy, *The Gate of Horn* (1963 ed.), 102, 130 (fig. 68), 141.

THE METRE OF ICELANDIC COURT POETRY

By JOAN TURVILLE-PETRE

SCALDIC poetry has been the delight and the despair of many critics. The first of them, Snorri, took this part of the poetic art in his stride with a sangfroid that has never since been attained. I choose the limited approach of metrical analysis, for I hope that this is the nearest way to discover how the scalds organized their material. For this purpose I take the Court measure comprehensively termed *dróttkvæður háttur*, or more simply *dróttkvætt*, in its standard form, disregarding variations.

Here is a supremely tight and spare verse-form which is particularly rich in allusive imagery. The diction, with its great range of mythological reference, has always commanded attention. Yet the structure of this verse-form is the strangest thing about it. It entails innovations that the great metrist Heusler justly termed revolutionary.¹

The rhythmic structure of standard *dróttkvætt* is agreed to be two parts of six syllables each, with a prescribed ending strong-weak to each part. Both these features are scaldic innovations. The major metrical unit is still linked by alliteration, and yet it separates into two isosyllabic parts each closing with an identical rhythm (— x). The parts were further isolated by internal rime, sporadic at first but gradually extended to every single part.

Alliteration and rime are indicators of a metrical pattern, which has been imposed on natural speech-rhythms. We must first consider the nature of this metre, and its rhythmic constituents.

¹ A. Heusler, *Deutsche Versgeschichte* I (1925), 300. J. de Vries, *Allnordische Literaturgeschichte* (2nd revised edition, 1964), I 101, similarly speaks of a deliberate break with the old verse-form (although it is doubtful whether the earlier style should be described as 'volkstümlich').

A numerically regulated unit with a prescribed closing rhythm inevitably suggests foreign models. There must be some connexion with the metres developed in Latin hymnology, which shaped the verse-forms of the West European vernaculars throughout the Middle Ages. It is easy to believe that this influence was active before the eighth century in areas such as Ireland and Wales, where Christianity early took root. It is harder to see how and when poets of the far North adjusted their native measures under such influence. Scholars have long been aware of the problems of access and chronology, which have recently been discussed with renewed interest.² I shall not pursue the causes of innovation, but try to discover how this metre is organized and how scaldic poets used it. The subject of analysis must be the fully-developed verse-form, but such formative stages as are still traceable will also be considered.

The chief clue to the structure is to be sought at the boundary of the metrical unit, now a 6-syllable line, developed from the half-verse of the alliterative long line but differently constituted. A main metrical unit is normally determined by a fixed closing rhythm, or cadence, which contrasts with variable opening rhythms. The cadence brings the line to a close, by asserting the predominant movement (metre) against apparent deviations. This structure is a feature of all Romance measures. Contrast between opening and close was likewise built into the Germanic alliterative line, but it was achieved by differences in the verbal filling of the basic patterns common to each half-line. These patterns are accentually equivalent, but the rhythms they form differ in each part. Some differences between the syllable-filling of opening and closing parts can be seen in Professor Pope's analysis

² The possible precedent of Latin hymnology was raised by Möbius in 1874, and of Irish verse by Hildebrand in the same year. For references, see Heusler *op. cit.*, 285, and Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Íslenskar Bókmenntir í Fornöld* (1962), 128. The position has recently been reconsidered by G. Turville-Petre in *Skírnisir* (1954) and by J. de Vries in *Ogam* (1957).

of the metre of *Beowulf*.³ But the most obvious symptom of the distinction is the position of the *hofuðstafr*, the first and only alliterating syllable which leads in the close. The opening is more flexible in rhythm and can be more tightly filled, as frequent double alliteration indicates.

The form and function of a metrical cadence needs some illustration, which is to hand in the well-known patterns of closure in the hexameter. This metre is in no sense a source, but a useful analogy on a larger scale.⁴

W. R. Hardie (*Res Metrica* (1920), 25) points out that "the Latin hexameter had its rhythm more obvious, and more clearly revealed by accent, at the end of the line". In Latin, the last five syllables of the hexameter line form a pattern $\cup\cup\cup\cup\cup$. These two closing feet are marked by agreement between metrical ictus and natural word-accent, whereas the two normally conflict in the central feet of the line. This feature of the cadence-feet is probably true of the Greek hexameter, and is quite plain in Latin, where word-accent (on penultimate or antepenultimate) has a recognized prosodic function. Phrasing is adjusted to this pattern in the fully developed hexameter in such a way that the line normally ends with a *word* of three or two syllables; Virgil deviates from this usage for special effect only.⁵ The minimum cadence-phrase thus has three forms, illustrated by *primus ab óris, ómnia mécum, árcet haréna*. The maximum phrase is of 6/7 syllables, as in *cae)lique ferébant, res)pónsa per áuras, Ache)rónte refúso, ruit) árdnuus áether*.

³ J. C. Pope, *The Rhythm of Beowulf* (revised ed., 1966), 231-373 (catalogue of rhythmic variations). Consecutive numbering applied to both verses shows that certain variations are confined to opening or close; and these are differences of time-relation only (shown in musical notation). Differences in the filling (such as the position of various elements of the statement) are not explicitly noted, but they are taken into account and well illustrated.

⁴ W. S. Allen, 'On quantity and quantitative verse', *In Honour of Daniel Jones* (1961), 3-15, examines the metrical features common to quantitative and accentual verse. He concludes that stress has always some metrical function, especially in Latin, where word-accent is manifested in terms of stress. He establishes a contrast between heavy (stressable) syllables and light syllables not normally stressed; the resulting three categories (stressed, stressable, unstressed) are not clear in modern English metrics, but could have been instanced at an earlier stage.

⁵ D. S. Raven, *Latin Metre* (1965), 93-103.

The rhythm asserted by the cadence, which brings the flow of the line to a close, determines the phrasal rhythms of the whole line. This line is normally divided into two phrases (with or without internal checks marked by minor caesuras). Both the Greek and the Latin hexameter divide in three ways: $2\frac{1}{2}+3\frac{1}{2}$ feet, $3\frac{1}{2}+2\frac{1}{2}$, $2\frac{3}{4}+3\frac{1}{4}$. Latin innovations in structure and style appear in the proportionate uses of these combinations. A fourth type, amounting to a specially stylized effect, divides into $4+2$ feet (the bucolic diaeresis). This means that the second phrase consists of the minimum cadence; it often opens a new statement, as in

et mortalia corda
per gentes humilis stravit pavor: *ille* (i.e. Jove) *flagranti*
... telo / deicit. Georg. i, 330-3.

Even in the full and flowing hexameter, only certain phrase-patterns combined in certain ways can occupy the metrical limits of the line. A similar formulation of phrasal rhythms to fit the metrical unit is seen in *dróttkvætt*, in miniscule.⁶ The dominating initial stress of Germanic languages went to extremes in the North, producing a compact word-structure by eliminating proclitic and medial syllables. As a result, the phrasal units are especially tight and full. The typical phrasal unit of this poetry, the kenning, achieves close semantic unity combined with rhythmic variety.

The exceptional complexity of *dróttkvætt* metre is caused by subdivision of the metrical unit. The larger unit of *fornyrðislag* is still maintained in so far as the short lines are paired: the first (odd) line must have two allitera-

⁶ See Hans Kuhn, *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen* (1929), 193-202 (review article on K. Reichardt, *Studien zu den Skalden des 9- u. 10-Jahrhunderts*) for observations on the structure of phrase and statement in *dróttkvætt*. He formulated some principles of word-order, and recognized the functions of rime and alliteration in association with a caesura. Yet in forty years, neither Kuhn nor any other scholar (as far as I know) has pursued this lead. I found this valuable article only when my own work was already complete.

ting accents, while the second (even) line has only one, the opening accent. There is still some rhythmic contrast between the two units linked by alliteration. Yet each line now has rime on the penultimate syllable, asserting an accent at this point. The rime links this accent to *one* of the two preceding accents within the lesser unit of six syllables. So each line now has *three* accents. Rhythmic patterning depends on the position of the second accent — on whether this accent, with the accompanying unstressed syllable(s), is grouped with the first or the third. In other words, each line has *two* rhythms, an opening and a close. But it will be advisable to review all the accentual patterns practised in these six syllables, before considering the structure of each part.

Syllable-limitation does not preclude the traditional metrical licence of resolution, and adjustments of weight are practised (a grammatically long Sbv. or Adj.-stem may be subordinated, or a short may carry accent).

A regular alternating rhythm of accent and non-accent is used, and it may occasionally run unchecked through the line. With digits to represent accented syllables, this is

1+1+1 hǫrðum herðimýlum (*Ragnarsdrápa* 5)

— x — x — x

But normally, alternating accents fall into phrase-groups of 1+2 or 2+1 stresses (I illustrate from now on with quotations later used and identified):

1+2 gandr of stál fyr brandi — / x — x — x

2+1 þél høggr stórt fyr stáli; and with resolution
gram reki þond af lǫndum

— x (∪) — / x — x

Accents may fall at irregular intervals, so that two full stresses follow in sequence. A noun-stem carrying accent in the fourth syllable is always grammatically short⁷:

⁷ W. A. Craigie, *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* XVI (1900), 341-84; explained and illustrated in detail by H. Kuhn, *ZfdA* LXXIV (1937), 55-63.

| | | | | |
|---------------------|---------------|-------------------------|----------------|---|
| 1 + 2 | { | herr, sákak far verra | ┘ / xx ∪ ┘ x | a |
| | | harm, ágætum barma | ┘ / ┘ xx ┘ x | b |
| | | borð létk í fõr fyrða | ┘ x / x ∪ ┘ x | a |
| 2 + 1 | { | Hugstóra biðk heyra | ∪ ┘ x / x ┘ x | b |
| | | ulfs verð þorir sverðum | ┘ ┘ / xx ┘ x | b |
| | | gnóg dæmi mér sœma | ┘ ┘ x / x ┘ x | b |
| | | Knútr spurði mik, mætra | ┘ xx ∪ / ┘ x | a |
| | | (erum heiðin vér) reiði | ∪ ∪ ┘ xx / ┘ x | b |
| þigg Auða konr eiða | x ┘ x ∪ / ┘ x | | | |
| í dal-miskunn fiska | x ┘ ┘ x / ┘ x | | | |

Note that schematically identical sequences (identified by letters a, b) are differentiated by phrasing: a can have a cadence of five, four or two syllables; the cadence of b can vary from five to two syllables.

Occasionally, an irregular sequence is so lightly filled that the second accent is subordinated, and represented only by a secondary stress:

| | | |
|--------|---------------------|---------------|
| 1½ + 1 | ollungis kannr illa | ┘ ┘ x / x ┘ x |
| | en svalbúinn selju | x ┘ ┘ x / ┘ x |

But when syllables of full meaning are packed together, an irregular rhythm may carry three full accents and one subordinate; only the final syllable and one internal syllable are unstressed. By compensation, one of the accents (of full or subordinate stress) must fall on a grammatically short syllable:

| | | | | |
|--------|---------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|---|
| 1 + 2½ | Stóð Hringmaraheiði | ┘ / ┘ ∪ x ┘ x | a | |
| 1½ + 2 | { | kilir ristur men Lista | ∪ ∪ ┘ x / ∪ ┘ x | b |
| | | siklinga, fõr mikla | ┘ ┘ x / ∪ ┘ x | b |
| | | svanvangs, í fõr langa | ┘ ┘ / x ∪ ┘ x | b |
| 2 + 1½ | { | fellr jorð und nið Ellu | ┘ ┘ / x ∪ ┘ x | c |
| | | biðk eirar Syn geira | ┘ ┘ x / ∪ ┘ x | c |
| | | tár-mútaris teitir | ┘ ┘ ∪ x / ┘ x | a |
| 2½ + 1 | { | Hlýð mínum brag, meiðir | ┘ ┘ x ∪ / ┘ x | |
| | | alldyggs sonar Tryggva | ┘ ┘ ∪ x / ┘ x | |
| | | (hõfum lítinn dag) slíta | ∪ ∪ ┘ x ∪ / ┘ x | |
| | eld valbasta kastat | ┘ ∪ ┘ x / ┘ x. | | |

Here, the schematically identical sequence marked a can have a cadence of five or two syllables; those marked b and c can have cadences of three or four syllables. The boundary between opening and close is evidently the main structural feature, and I shall start by examining the cadence.

The closing rhythm may consist of one word, stressed $\underline{\quad} x$, but inspection of the phrasing within the line shows that this is the minimum cadence. So I shall review the phrase-patterns that occupy the cadence. Examples are taken, as far as possible, from two outstanding poets: Egill (c.910 c.990) and Sighvatr Þórðarson (c.995 c. 1045). Egill's verses are quoted by the numeration of *Egils Saga Skulla-Grimssonar*, edited by Sigurður Nordal (Islenzk Fornrit II, 1933). Although the authorship of some of the verses attributed to Egill has been questioned, Nordal was content to treat all (with some five exceptions) as the work of Egill himself. This collection, by such checks as can be applied, is consistent with the style of a powerful and individual poet of the tenth century (see edition, v-xix). The career of Sighvatr as a productive court poet is well charted in *Heimskringla*, where much of his work is recorded (see de Vries, *Altnordische Literaturgeschichte* I, 240-8). I refer his verses, abbreviated Sig, and occasionally those of other poets, to the edition of Finnur Jónsson, *Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning* (1912) I, B (*Skj*). I do not necessarily accept the interpretations of Finnur Jónsson in this volume.

Filling of the two-syllable cadence (one word, which never opens a statement, for the metrical boundary makes this impossible, but is a suspended or concluding member of a statement):—

adverb *Gekk . . . jarlmanns bani) snarla*, EgS 17.
austan. Sig 2, 1.

dat. of agency *fákr laust drengs . . .) fæti*. Sig 3, 11.

completion of vb-phrase *Upp skulum . . .) glitra*, EgS 12.

base-word in noun-phrase *grefs . . .) gætir*. Sig 3, 7.

determinant in noun-phrase *ennis* (... þvergnipur EgS 23.

vb in subordinate statement: (a) concluding⁸ *meðan aðrir . . .) svófu*. EgS 52. *þann's . . . ósléttur þær) rétti*. EgS 20. (b) in mid-clause *en fyrir borð . . .) gengu* (*búendr*. Sig 2, 7. *þeim es fylgju . . .) vildi* (*mína*. Sig 11, 2.

Filling of the three-syllable cadence:—

prep. phrase *und hraustum* EgS 22.

complement *erum . . .) vér vægnir* Sig 11, 18.

obj. *kilir ristur) men Lista*. Sig 3, 9.

completion of noun-phrase *augu þessi . . .) en svörtu* Sig 3, 15.

completing infin. *vel líka*. Sig 5, 2.

postponed obj. *Átt hafa sér . . .) fyrir mikla*. Sig 3, 13.

opening subord. statement *þar's hestar) . . . sporna*, Sig 3, 10.

accented vb in subord. statement: (a) opening *Ellu kind) es olli* (*arfþvörðr Haralds starfi*. Sig 1, 17. *þótt vildi* (. . . *Knútr ok jurlar* Sig 5, 3. *en olli* (*alríkr skapat slíku*. Sig 7, 6. (b) in the close *es jarðgöfugr . . .) mik framði*. EgS 59. *enn átta . . .) styr gerði*. Sig 1, 8.

unaccented vb in main statement *einn dróttin) hefka áttan* (. . . *an þik fyrri*.⁹ *Eyvindr*, Skj 3, 10. *fullkerska) sák falla* (. . . *verðung*. Sig 11, 1.

⁸ H. Kuhn, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache u. Literatur* LVII (1933), 58-60, shows that in poetry there was at first a distinction between the position of the verb in independent as against linked statements (subordinate clauses, and statements introduced by *eða*, *en*, *né* and *ok*). In linked statements, earlier poets tend to postpone the verb, even to end-position. A postponed verb is accented, except in four special categories (see pp. 31-4). The distinction was abandoned in the course of the thirteenth century, when it became normal to give the verb in all statements initial or second position, in poetry as in prose.

⁹ Kuhn (*op. cit.*, 59) would accent the verb in this and similar examples. Such artificial accentuation is unnecessary, if an internal division is made at the proper place — in this case, after the third syllable. Kuhn recognizes that further study of the structure of line and strophe is needed. Thirty years later, de Vries made considerable advances, in his treatment of word and sentence order (*Altnord. Lit.* I, 116-20). He used Kuhn's earlier work, but did not take full advantage of it. The spade-work had not been done.

Filling of the four-syllable cadence:—

prep. phrase *í gny stórum*. EgS 17.

complement *Esat . . .) rétt at synja*. EgS 38.

determinant in noun-phrase *nautk . . . arnstalls) sjötul-bjarnar (arnstalls-sjötul-björn = Arinbjörn)* EgS 36.

attribute of subj.+opening prep. phrase *blóð kom) varmt í viðan (. . . ægi*. Sig 7, 2.

accented vb in (a) full or opening subord. statement *þann's vé grandar*. EgS 28. *sú's mér hnekði*. Sig 3, 5. *es mér sǫgðu (Erlings tál Sig 7, 8. en vér verðum (. . . hylja harms EgS 17; without connective Rétt hykk) kjósa knáttu (karlfolk Sig 11, 5. (b) concluding statement hvé vísur . . .) of fyrir gerðak*. Sig 3, 1. *þá's árliga ærír alms . . .) ofan þustu*. Sig 12, 10.

Filling of the 5-syllable cadence:—

prep. phrase *með éla meitli* EgS 32.

end of prep. phrase *of minum . . .) ágætum barma*. EgS 17.

obj. preceding subj. *Stóð) Hringmaraheiði (. . . Ellu kind* Sig 1, 7.

subj. of subord. statement *Hykk) at hodda stökkvi* EgS 52.

comparative phrase *hvatt) sem korn á vatni*, Kormákr, Skj 2, 42.

accented vb in main statement *ek slíkt of undrumk*. EgS 57.

unaccented vb in main statement *skulum á veg vappa* EgS 47. *Fór betr en vættak*. Sig 3, 2. These two accord with Kuhn's *Satzpartikelgesetz*, since they stand in the unaccented opening of the statement (*Auftakt*).

accented vb in (a) opening of subord. statement *þá's eisa létum (. . . skeiðr at sundi*. Sig 3, 9. (b) conclusion of subord. statement *á svik hvé fóru*. Sig 11, 7. *né hrafnar sultu*. EgS 18. *sem . . . mæri) heiðþegum bæri*. Sig 2, 6.

unaccented vb in subord. statement *því't sárlagar Sýrar, sendr ór minni hendi, digr) fló beint meðal bjúgra (bifþorn . . . rifja. EgS 27. Þá's til góðs — en gjóði gort fengusk hrae svörtum Yggs —) lét herr of höggvit (hrafni, skeiðar stafna. Sig 2, 9. Kuhn classes both of these among violations of his law¹⁰, but it is clear that both are examples of interception, with the statement resuming after a break. In Egill's verse, the subj. *bifþorn* is delayed, but it is represented before the vb by the genitive phrase *sárlagar Sýrar*, the participial phrase *sendr . . . hendi* and the adj. *digr*: the vb *fló* thus stands in the first dip, after the subj.-attribute *digr*. In Sig-hvatr's verse, a parenthesis *en gjóði . . . Yggs* intervenes in the preposed dat. phrase *til góðs . . . hrafni*: the vb *lét* followed by its subj. *herr . . . skeiðar stafna* forms the unaccented opening of the resumed statement.*

It is time to consider how phonetic emphasis was used to define the new line, or rather the paired odd and even lines. The rhythmic patterns opening and closing each line developed in association with initial correspondence (alliteration). But two forms of end-correspondence were added: full rime (combination of identical vowel and consonant), and half-rime (different vowels followed by an identical consonant). In the formative stages of *dróttkvætt*, parts of the *vísa* (8-line stanza) could be adequately determined by the rhythm of the cadence, working together with the alliterative pattern. But already in Bragi's *Ragnarsdrápa* the second part of the unit linked by alliteration (the even line) is usually reinforced by rime or half-rime. The first part (the odd line) is often left rimeless, as it is in some of the variations practised by Egill. The complete system of internal rime-links (full-rime in even lines, half-rime in odd) was not achieved in *Ragnarsdrápa*; the few stanzas that are rimed throughout do not consistently distinguish between types of rime.¹¹

¹⁰ *op. cit.*, 32-4.

¹¹ K. von See, *Beiträge XC* (1968), 217-22, has investigated the distribution of *skothending* in the work of some early poets.

There is a parallel to this development of new metrical patterns in association with an intricate system of sound-effects. Welsh poetry began with a comparatively loose long line, and the internal rhythms were gradually tightened by sound-effects systematically applied. The earliest Germanic verse is remarkable for its use of initial correspondence as the only regular metrical indicator. Most of the verse-forms practised in Europe during the Middle Ages used end-correspondence.¹² The earliest Welsh poetry used both alliteration and rime. Neither was metrically essential, and it must be remembered that conditions of word-accent and syllable division differed from those of the Germanic languages. End-rime is frequently present in the 'heroic' verses of the *Cynfeirdd* (ancient poets), in lines of four or six accents which were not syllabically limited. Internal rime of two kinds is also found: full (*odl*) or half (*proest*).¹³ None of these sound-effects is systematically used; they mark internal divisions already rhythmically established. But alliteration and rime were fully exploited by the court poets (*Gogynfeirdd*) of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.¹⁴ These poets mainly used lines of 9/10 syllables (4 accents), interspersed with double lines of 19 syllables (8 accents). Both single and double lines were demarcated by end-rime. Subdivisions (each normally containing 2 accents)

¹² Poetry in medieval Latin and the Romance vernaculars would seem to provide the most obvious instances. But apparently the earliest French verse could rely on a closing rhythm to define an isosyllabic unit, without marked phonetic effects. Professor G. Lote, *Histoire du vers français* (1949), I 171, considers that the tone and prolongation of accent at the points of suspension (centre and end of line) were the only metrical markers in primitive French verse. But the points of closure soon received phonetic emphasis, assonance or rime.

¹³ The metrical forms of this early poetry are defined by J. Morris-Jones, *Cerdd Dafod* (1925), 131-6, 310-18. For a general description of these poets and their material, see R. Bromwich 'The character of early Welsh tradition', *Studies in Early British History* (1954), 85-100.

¹⁴ The development of sound-effects by these poets has been studied by Professor T. Parry, 'Twi y gynghanedd', *Transactions of the Cymmrodorion*, 1936. There is no comparable analysis in English, but much pertinent material in 'The court poets of the Welsh princes', *British Academy XXXIV* (1948), by J. Lloyd-Jones. See also J. Vendryes, *La poésie galloise des xième-xiiième siècles dans ses rapports avec la langue* (1930).

were effected by alliteration, internal rime, or both in combination. The use of alliteration for internal division gained rapidly over rime alone, but the two in combination increased steadily.

When the system of *cynghanedd*, 'harmony, concordance', was perfected in the course of the fourteenth century, a seven-syllable line had become standard. This was an old measure, much used by poets of the ninth century, but not favoured by the court poets. Various kinds of concordance now marked internal divisions.¹⁵ The simplest (*lusc*) is rime which links the penultimate syllable to a word at the internal break. Consonant concordance is more stringent. It entails repetition of the consonants preceding and following stressed syllables, and can only be effectively practised in a seven-syllable line. The two types of consonant concordance are:

| | |
|------------------|---|
| cynghanedd groes | <i>teg édrych / tuag áðref</i> <i>y llwybrau gýnt / lle bu'r gán</i> |
| cynghanedd draws | <i>ag óerwynt / hydre'n gýrru</i> <i>gwedi póen / dau lygad þúr.</i> |

Cynghanedd lusc involves rime only:

mae'r adar mán / yn cánu.

Cynghanedd sain uses both rime and consonance, and the line is tripartite:

gwell bédd / a górwedd / gwírion.

Both these two could well be practised in longer lines, and the last had been much used by the court poets.

I am not suggesting any contact between these two poetic traditions. The scalds who were court poets had already perfected *dróttkvætt* when their counterparts in Wales were developing their longer measures in the twelfth century. But each tradition shows a comparable process of breaking down a long line, not syllabically regulated, by using sound-effects to define internal rhythms. The final product was a short line (of 6 and 7 syllables respectively),

¹⁵ A full account in English is given by J. Glyn Davies, *Welsh Metrics* (1911).

tightly organized and sharply chiming. In each case, fragmented syntax accompanied the metrical subdivisions. But the features common to *dróttkvætt* and Welsh poetry arise from metrical principles developing in similar ways in a similar social setting. It could be a similar external influence that gave a particular bias to the internal changes of each tradition. The pace of these transformations differed in each area, and the products are at no point closely comparable. Both Norse and Welsh poets responded at different times to a small highly-cultivated audience ready to appreciate poetry brilliantly compressed and rich in sound. But the scalds achieved the maximum metrical compression in the tenth century, and their audience vanished in the thirteenth century. The cultivated circle, of one kind or another, lasted longer in Wales, and the process of compression developed by slower stages.

I can now return to the methods by which the scalds achieved subdivision by using rime of both kinds (full and half, R and H) in conjunction with alliteration (A) to define internal rhythms. The 6-syllable line they devised is paired, so it is necessary to distinguish the first unit (Odd, O) from the second (Even, E). Throughout they retained the old metrical marker A; indeed, alliterative linking has been practised by Icelandic poets down to the present day, in 'free' measures of various kinds, although it now has little metrical significance. But in scaldic poetry A retains full metrical force, tying the first accent of the Even line to the second alliterating accent of the preceding Odd line. The long line is thus still a major metrical unit. In fact, a larger unit of two long lines (4 short) is normally recognized (the *visuhelmingr*).

Rime-linking first appears in Even lines, especially in the second (the end of the *visuhelmingr*). In *Ragnarsdrápa* (Rdr), which contains 29 *visuhelmingar* (11 separate, 18 combined in complete stanzas), Bragi has some kind of rime in 27 fourth lines (the remaining two have R in the

second line); 23 of these fourth lines have R, 4 have H. The usage of other early poets, such as Egill and Kormákr, shows that rime could be sporadic, except in the last line of the *visuhelmingr*, where it was mandatory. This means that the fourth line had a special structure, designed to confirm the close of the major metrical unit. In other words, rime was first introduced to tighten the last line of the *visuhelmingr*, by enhancing the rhythm of the cadence and linking it back.

This mode of tightening the close was next imposed on the lesser unit, the pair O₁ and E₁; internal rime was required in E₁ as well as in E₂.¹⁶ Finally, this unit also was subdivided, but in a distinctive way which did not reduce the metrical force of alliteration. The rhythms of Odd lines, already marked by two alliterating accents, were further defined by H on the penultimate, whether it carried alliteration or not. A subdued sound-effect differentiates this rime from the essential rime in Even lines.¹⁷ It certainly gives more flexibility. Before the introduction of H, the penultimate would be left without emphasis when A was placed on the first and second accents: thus

Letrat lýða stillir (Rdr. 10), ægir öflugbörðu (Rdr. 15)
as contrasted with

fell í blóði blandinn (Rdr. 4), meyjar hjóls enn mæri
(Rdr. 2).

In the following AH and AR are used for syllables

¹⁶ Bragi distinguishes to some extent between E₁ and E₂; in 13 *visuhelmingar* he has H in E₁, R in E₂, but in 9 *visuhelmingar* R is used in both. Egill normally has R in all Even lines, apart from some stanzas with rimeless lines (see EgS 9). But EgS 12 has R in E₁ and E₂, H in E₃ and E₄; EgS 49 has H in E₁ and E₃, R in E₂ and E₄.

¹⁷ Bragi occasionally uses R in Odd lines, just as he uses H from time to time in Even lines. But there appears to be no systematic treatment of Odd lines, which have H sporadically, and often no rime at all. Egill practises various combinations in a few stanzas. In EgS 7 and 44, each of the same pattern and probably deliberately eccentric, no Odd lines are rimed, and only E₄ is rimed normally. Where the rime in Even lines is erratic (or absent), Odd lines also vary; as in EgS 9: O₂ alone is rimed; EgS 12: H in O₁ and O₂ only; EgS 49: H in O₁, R in O₂, the others unrimed. Where all Even lines have R, Odd lines may still vary; as in EgS 17: R in O₁ and O₂, H in O₃ and O₄; EgS 47: R in O₁, H in O₂, 3 and 4.

carrying both alliteration and rime, O for accented syllables carrying neither.

When rime was added, emphasis could be confined to two accents, but it could also be spread over three. In Odd lines, one H was tied to the penultimate, but two As and one H could be disposed in various ways. The predictable five patterns are all found:

| | |
|-----------|-----------|
| AH—O—AH x | O—AH—AH x |
| H—A—H x | A—H—AH x |
| AH—A—H x | |

Bragi shows a pattern AH x AH x O x, leaving the penultimate unmarked¹⁸:

hǫrðum herðimýlum (Rdr. 5), vaðr lá Viðris arfa (Rdr. 16),

but this inadequate distribution was soon eliminated. In Even lines only two patterns were possible:

| | |
|----------|----------|
| AR—O—R x | A—R—R x. |
|----------|----------|

The following catalogue of patterns in Odd and Even lines is representative, not exhaustive.

| | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| ⊥ x AH x / AH x | Nú hefr foldgnárr fellda EgS 21. |
| AH xx ∪ / AH x | Hverr eggjar þik, harri Sig 11, 10. |
| AH ⊥ xx / AH x | helnauð es þat, hylja EgS 17. |
| x AH ⊥ x / AH x | en svalbúinn selju EgS 32. |
| x AH x ∪ / AH x | þigg, Auða konr, eiða EgS 25. |
| ⊥ x AH / x AH x | en í haust, þar's hestar Sig 3, 10. |
| AH ⊥ x / x AH x | qllungis kann't illa EgS 10. |
| H xx A / AH x | Knútr spurði mik, mætra Sig 5, 7. |
| H A x ∪ / AH x | Hlýð mínum brag, meiðir Sig 13, 2. |
| x H x A / AH x | Réð eigi grið, gýgjar Sig 7, 4. |
| H x A / x AH x | Kátr vask opt, þá's úti Sig 3, 9. |

¹⁸ See Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Íslenzkar Bókmenntir í Fornöld I* (1962), 125-6, for a summary of rime patterns and their chief variants. This particular pattern is not noticed by Snorri; but the practice of leaving the third accent unmarked is seen in *sextánmælt* (*Hátt.* 9) and *feinsháttir* (*Hátt.* 57).

H x / A x AH x Enn lét sjaunda sinni Sig 1,7.
 H x / x A AH x þorð létk í fof fyrða Sig 5,1.
 H / A ∪ x AH x Stóð Hringmaraheiði Sig 1,7.
 H / ∪ x A AH x greppr, skulum á veg vappa EgS
 47.

A H xx / AH x Ármóði liggr, æðri EgS 45.
 A H ∪ x / AH x tár-mútaris teitir Sig 11, 13.
 A H x ∪ / AH x eið láta þú, ýtir Sig 5,8.
 x A H x / AH x því't Geir-Rótu gofva EgS 24.
 A H x / x AH x Hugstóra biðk heyra Sig 3,1.

AH x A x / H x bíðrat betri dauða Sig 7,6.
 AH x / A x H x Jór rennr aptanskœru Sig 3,11.
 AH / x A x H x {helt, né hrafnar sultu EgS 18.
 {enn sá's allan kunni Sig 7,6.

AR xx ∪ / R x friðs vættak mér, síðan Sig 3,7.
 AR x ∪ x / R x andærr jofunn vandar EgS 32.
 AR ⊥ xx / R x (ygglaust es þat) dygggra Sig 3,16.
 AR ⊥ x / ∪ R x siklinga, fof mikla Sig 3,13.
 AR x ⊥ / x R x ofðigt veðr á fjofðum Sig 3,9.
 AR ⊥ / x ∪ R x fellr jofð und nið Ellu EgS 21.
 AR x / ⊥ x R x undan, skeiðr at sunði Sig 3,9.
 AR x / x ∪ R x {verðung, of fof gerðak Sig 3,1.
 {flogð baðk, en þau soðu Sig 3,4.
 AR / x ⊥ x R x viðr (þeims nú ferr hiðra) Sig 11,13.
 AR / ⊥ xx R x harm, ágætum barma EgS 17.
 AR / x ⊥ x R x gandr of stál fyr brandi EgS 32.
 AR / xx ∪ R x herr, sákak far verra Sig 3,2.

A R xx / R x ulfs verð þorir sverðum EgS 53
 (Einarr skálaglamm)

A R x ∪ / R x hagþorns á mó sporna Sig 3,10.
 A ∪ R x / R x eld valbasta kastat EgS 50.
 A ⊥ R x / R x ulfs tann-lituðr, glitra EgS 12.

| | |
|---------------|----------------------------------|
| A R ∪ x / R x | snarþótt Haralds áttar EgS 33. |
| x A R x / R x | í dal-miskunn fiska EgS 12. |
| A ∪ R / x R x | gram reki þond af londum EgS 28. |
| A R x / x R x | gnóg dæmi mér sœma Sig 5,7. |
| A R x / ∪ R x | { biðk eirar Syn geira EgS 59. |
| (A resolved) | |
| A R / x ∪ R x | svanvangs, í fôr langa Sig 3,1. |

Some comment is needed on the structure of the opening section of the line. There is more rhythmic variety here than in the close. Although the maximum cadence can be of five syllables, irregular rhythms are far commoner in the opening which has a maximum of four. This is probably to be explained by the regulated ending \cup x of the close, which favours alternating rhythms (e.g. *helt, né hrafnar sultu*). If the opening begins with a proclitic, the line will have at most three accents (e.g. *því't Geir-Rótu gøtva*): x \cup \cup x \cup x. But if it begins \cup \cup or \cup \cup , the line will often be overweight (see above, p. 331).

Only when the full system of alliteration and rime was established could irregular rhythms be firmly demarcated — by placing A on one syllable and H or R on another. A must have full accent, but a secondary accent can carry H or R; as for instance when a verb immediately follows its subject or object: *eið láta þú* (Á Ĥ x ∪), *kilir ristu* (Á Ñ x). Thus many complex groups became possible. I shall examine the two principal four-syllable groups in the opening section.

1. The group opens with a word which can be accented, or can be treated as proclitic. Chief of these is the verb, but some connectives occasionally take accent.

A verb in first place followed by subject, object or adverb could be treated in two ways. If it was a long stem and inflected, it fell into alternating rhythm:

vildit vron̄gum ofra (Rdr. 19);

biðrat betri dauða (Sig 7,6).

But a monosyllabic long stem or disyllabic short stem (resolved) was at first treated as proclitic in Odd lines:

þigg Auða konr eiða (EgS 25);

vilið Hrafnetill heyra (Rdr. 1);

drepr eigi sá sveigir (EgS 53);

skipum borðróinn barða (EgS 53).

Sighvatr does not usually treat the verb as proclitic, but an example is:

búa hilmis sal hjölmum (Sig 3,16).

Increasingly, an opening verb was given accent and drawn into a complex pattern, by separating alliteration and rime. This treatment of a resolved verb-form is commonly found in Even lines:

höfum lítinn dag . . . (Sig 3,11);

erum heiðin vér . . . (Sig 3,5);

occasionally also in Odd:

hafa allframir jöfrar (Sig 13,15).

A monosyllabic long stem bearing accent in this position is frequent in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, in Odd lines:

hlýð mínum brag, meiðir (Sig 13,2);

brestr erfiði Austra (Arnórr Þórðarson, Skj 5,24).

Kuhn has examined both ways of treating the verb,¹⁹ and has remarked that such verbs open a statement and therefore occur in Odd lines; he has not considered the parentheses in Even lines.

A metrical accent could also be placed on connectives, such as *en*, *ok* and *svá*. An irregular rhythm led in by the proclitic connective can be just adequate:

en svalbúinn selju (EgS 32) x ÁH ⊥ x / AH x

ok bláserkjar birkis (Rdr. 6) x Á H x / AH x.

But a phrase in alternating rhythm requires an accent on the connective:

ok fyr hönd í holmi (Rdr. 11);

¹⁹ H. Kuhn, 'Brestr erfiði Austra', *Afmálsrit Jóns Helgasonar* (1969), 403-17.

svá't af renni-rauknum (Rdr. 13);

en í haust, þar's hestar (Sig 3,10).

The next step is to place the minimum sound-effect (H) on the metrical accent:

en lét sjaunda sinni (Sig 1,7).

It is even possible to form a full complex rhythm with this artificial accent:

en herskipum hrannir (Valgarðr, Skj 11) $\acute{H} \acute{A} \cup x / AH x$
(quoted by Kuhn, who draws attention to this group in connexion with the monosyllabic verbs²⁰).

2. The opening section may be a concentrated noun-phrase. Some examples are:

compound subj. *gekk . . .) jarlmanns bani (snarla*
EgS 17.

base-word of *vel mátti þess vatna) viggriðandi*
kenning *(biða EgS 55.*

compound vocatv. *upp skulum . . .) ulfs tannlituðr*
(glitra EgS 12.

compound obj. *svá skyldi goð gjalda . . .) rón mins*
féar (hónum EgS 28.

létk . . .) eld valbasta (kastat EgS 50.
fjörvi næma) Foglhildar mun (vildu
Rdr. 6.

This second group, which contains no verb, belongs to the continuation or conclusion of the statement, and is accordingly commoner in Even than in Odd lines. The first group is usually found in Odd lines; for it consists of the opening part of a main statement with its verb, or else it is the lead-in of a linked statement, with connective but no verb.

These complex opening groups of four syllables show how rime, developed into a complete system in association with alliteration, imposed metrical patterns which broke the continuity of the line. This system favours syntactic distribution. Bragi rarely attained a complex opening

²⁰ Kuhn, *loc. cit.*, 411.

rhythm together with a clear syntactic break.²¹ But later poets used the fully developed system to disperse elements of the statement through the four lines of the *vísuhelmingr*.

This brings us to the final point of the enquiry. How did these poets fit what they had to say into the tight metrical scheme they devised? The lay-out of a poetic statement must correlate with its metrical structure. Otherwise, the metre fails to move or the statement fails to make sense — or both fail together. Correlation is especially close in *dróttkvætt*. The extent of a full statement gives some standard of measurement. Normally, a statement is begun and completed within four lines — each *vísuhelmingr* is a syntactic whole. A statement may be extended by qualifying clauses throughout a whole stanza; but still its essential elements (vb accompanied by subj. and/or obj.) are present in the first half. An example is Sig 2,5: *Vasa sigmána / Sveini / sverða gnýs / at frýja / gjóðs / né góðrar hríðar / gunnreifum Áleifi* (italicised words represent the impersonal verb with co-ordinate datives, the rest being co-ordinate objects). The stanza continues with a clause of reason (því't . . .) enclosing a clause of time and a parenthesis.

Quite often, a statement is completed in two lines, and the *vísuhelmingr* divides into equal parts. This arrangement may also run through a whole stanza, giving four successive statements of 2+2+2+2 lines, as in EgS 12:

Upp skulum órum sverðum ulfs tannlituðr, glitra,
eigum dáð at drýgja í dal-miskunn fiska;
leitit upp til Lundar lýða hvern sem bráðast,
gerum þar fyr setr sólar seið ófagan vígra.

The meaning of course develops progressively although the parts are grammatically detached. And the statement defined in purely grammatical terms can be smaller still.

²¹ *Fengeyðandi fjóða* (Rdr. 11) has no break; *glöð djúpröðuls, auðla* (Rdr. 13) and *vágs hyrsendár ægi* (Rdr. 19) have, but the riming is erratic. In alternating rhythm he often achieves a clear break: e.g. *flaut of set, við sveita* (Rdr. 4), *malma, mætum hilmi* (Rdr. 9).

A parenthesis of one line is not unusual. It can even be squeezed into half a line: e.g. *þolðak vás* Sig 3,1.

But parentheses are interruptions of a larger syntactic unit. The enclosing statement flows on round the parenthesis, which is not truly independent, but a sentence-modifier liberally used in this kind of poetry. It shows how self-contained the part of a larger whole can be. The parenthesis is only an extreme example of the method by which parts of the statement less grammatically complete (but bearing grammatical signals in their inflexions) could be detached and dispersed.

The syntactic unit falls apart as the metrical unit divides, and the parts are distributed. The audience was expected to grasp the total meaning by reassembling the parts. The only sure way to retrace this process is by metrical analysis. We cannot recover the fine distinctions of intonation, but we can pick up the metrical clues of rime and alliteration. The metre does of course please the ear, but this is not its chief purpose. It ensures impetus to keep the meaning moving from start to finish, and it also delimits the word-groups that carry the meaning. It is the metre that locks the dispersed parts of the statement into one whole.

I have already argued that two separate rhythms are metrically confirmed within the six-syllable line. We shall now see that these metrical divisions isolate sections of a dispersed statement, and thus encourage distribution. A good instance of the isolation of suspended parts is seen at the opening of Sighvatr's *Austrfararvísur* (Sig 3,1):

Hugstóra / biðk heyra / hressføers jöfurs / þessar /
(þolðak vás) / hvé vísur / verðung, / of forgerðak. "I pray
the high-hearted retinue (*hugstóra verðung*) of the speedy
prince — I have endured toil of travel — to give ear to
the manner of verses I have made about the expedition."
Here the postponed obj. of *heyra* (the clause beginning
hvé vísur), is suspended by *verðung* (completion of the

obj. announced in *hugstóra*), then concluded in *of fyrir gerðak*.

A check in the flow of the line after the first, second, third or fourth syllable becomes normal usage. The check may be abrupt, as when an isolated adverb such as *út* or *undan* is followed by a prepositional phrase or the opening of a clause; or when an attribute such as *hugstóra* is separated from its noun by the verb-phrase *biðk heyra*. It may be slighter, as when verb and subject are grouped against a following object, *biðrat betri / dauða*; or when two different attributes follow their noun: *Óleifs mágr . . . alldyggs / sonar Tryggva* (the brother-in-law of the splendid Ólafr Tryggvason).

The art of this verse-form is to place rime so that it affirms the coherence of stress-groups, and thus separates them. To illustrate fully effective distribution. I take two *vísuhelmingar* by Egill, and one whole *vísa* by Sighvatr.

- (1) O1. 2+4 H x / x A AH x Jörð grœr, en vér verðum
 E1. 3+3 AR x ∟ / x R x Vínu nær, of mínum
 O2. 4+2 AH ∟ xx / AH x (helnauð es þat) hylja
 E2. 1+5 AR / ∟ xx R x harm, ágætum barma.

EgS 17.

Each line falls into two sections (a and b), and each of these is an element in the syntactic pattern:

O1a, E1b, E2b. opening statement (the earth sends up new growth, covering that noble brother of mine);

E1a. adv. phrase of place (beside the Vína);

O1b, O2b, E2a. adversative statement (but *we* have to conceal our sorrow);

O 2a. parenthesis (dreadful distress it is).

- (2) O1. 3+3 H x A / x AH x Þél høggr stórt fyrir stáli
 E1. 4+2 AR ∟ x ∪ / R x stafkvígs á veg, jafnan
 O2. 1+5 AH / x A x H x út, með éla meitli
 E2. 4+2 AR x ∪ x / R x andærr jötunn vandar.

EgS 32.

The syntactic groups are:

O 1a, O 2a, E 2a-b. obj., vb, advbs, concluded by compound subj. (the cruel enemy of the tree violently beats out a file);

E 1b, O 2b. sentence-adv. (constantly) and phrase of agency (with the chisel of storms);

O 1b, E 1a. two phrases of place (before the bows, along the path of the prow-bull).

- (3) O1. 3+3 H x A / x AH x Kátr vask opt, þá's úti
 E1. 3+3 AR x ⊥ / x R x orðigt veðr á fjörðum
 O2. 3+3 AH x ⊥ / x AH x vísa segl í vási
 E2. 3+3 AR ⊥ x / x R x vindblásit skók Strinda.
 Sig 3,9.

The syntactic groups are:

O 1a. opening statement (I was often merry);

O 1b, E 1a-b. clause opens (when out in the fjords the rough storm . . .);

E 2b, O 2a. obj. and vb of clause (tore the sail of the prince of the Strindir);

O 2b, E 2a. qualifiers of obj. (in the pelting rain, wind-blown).

- (4) O1. 3+3 H x A / x AH x Hestr óð kafs at kostum,
 E1. 3+3 °A° R x / ⊥ R x kilir ristum men Lista,
 O2. 1+5 AH / x A x H x út, þá's eisa létum
 E2. 2+4 AR x / ⊥ x R x undan, skeiðr at sundi.

The syntactic groups are:

O 1a-b, E 1a-b. two co-ordinate statements (the horse of the deep paced nobly, keels cut the circlet of Listi);

O 2b, E 2b. clause (when we made the ships run to the ocean);

E 2a, O 2a. adverbs (away, out); i.e. 'rush forward to the open sea'.

The statement can be disposed in various ways among the eight a. and b. sections of the *visuhelmingr*. A poet's style is characterized not only by his imagery but also by

the methods of dispersal that he adopts. Sighvatr normally practises a steadier flow than Egill. This is because he often carries his statement unbroken through three, four or more sections. Here, we have the clause *þá's úti | orðigt veðr | á fjörðum | vísa segl . . . skók*, and the two co-ordinate statements *hestur óð kafs/at kostum, / kilir ristur / men Lista*. He is especially skilful in constructing a smooth-running statement, checked by a parenthesis and ending with a clause (1=statement, (1)=parenthetic comment, 1a=clause):

| | |
|------------------------|-----------|
| Gerböenn mun ek Gunnar | 1 / 1 |
| gammteitöndum heitinn | 1 / 1 |
| (áðr þó gúm vér ægis | (1) / (1) |
| eld) ef nú biðk felda | (1) / 1a |

"I shall be called importunate by the rejoicers of the raven (men) — I have already received the fire of the deep (gold) — if now I ask for tribute." Sig 13,4.

| | |
|-----------------------------|----------|
| Út munu ekkjur líta, | 1 / 1 |
| allsnúðula, þrúðar | 1 / 1 |
| (fljóð séa reyk) hvar ríðum | (1) / 1a |
| Rögnvalds í bæ gognum. | 1a / 1a |

"Fair women will look out in haste — the ladies see the cloud of dust — as we ride through the township of Rögnvaldr." Sig 3,12.

Egill's style is fairly represented in the short sequences *hylja | harm* and *andærr jötunn | vandar*. He can indeed compose in longer sequences, as in the elaborate

| | |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Olvar mik, því't Olvi | 1 / 1a |
| ól gervir nú fólvan; | 1a / 1a |
| atgeira lætk ýrar | 2 / 2 |
| ýring of grön skýra. | 2 / 2 |

“I grow drunk, for indeed the drink has made Ólvir pale; I make the drizzle of the bison’s spears pour over my lips.” EgS 10.

But Egill excels in frame patterns (where a statement beginning in line 1 is completed in line 4) and interlace patterns (two statements begin in line 1 and run concurrently until both conclude in line 4). The frame is seen in *Þél hæggr . . . andærr jǫtunn vandar*. In the other example, 1) *Jǫrð grær . . . of mínum . . . ágætum barma* interlaces with 2) *en vér verðum, Vínu nær . . . (helnauð es þat) hylja harm*. The two statements form a series 1/2/2/1/(2)/2/2/1.

Sighvatr can handle both frame and interlace, but these patterns do not predominate in his style. Egill is at his best in complex interlace, as in EgS 51 (here, 1a and 2a denote relative clauses defining the subjects of statements 1 and 2):

| | |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| Þverra nú, þeirs þverrðu, | 1 / 1a |
| þingbirtingar Ingva, | 1 / 1 |
| hvar skalk manna mildra, | 2 / 2 |
| mjaðveitar dag, leita, | 1a / 2 |
| þeira’s hauks fyr handan | 2a / phrase |
| háfjöll digulsnjávi | 2a / 2a |
| jarðar gjörð við orðum | phrase / 2a |
| eynglda mér hegldu. | phrase / 2a |

“They drop away, those proclaimers-of-the-sea-king’s-contest (chieftains) who flung out the brightness-of-the-horn (gold); where am I to seek the generous ones who, beyond the isle-studded girdle of the earth, drove snowdrifts of silver on the mountain-range-of-the hawk (hand) in return for my poetry?”

Einar Ól. Sveinsson²² has shown how interplay of images sustains and enriches the double strain running through

²² Einar Ól. Sveinsson, ‘Dróttkvæða þátrr’ in *Við Uppspretturnar* (1956), 62-3.

this verse. The punning use of *þverra* announces duality from the start.

In Egill's fully developed style, rather abrupt variations of rhythm go with an intricate pattern of separated syntactic units. Sighvatr fragments his statement less, and shows some preference for smoother rhythms. His style varies with the occasion, but on the whole it is more straightforward than that of most scaldic poets of the first rank. The poet who excels in statements transparently constructed and richly worded is Kormákr. Such triumphs are not common, and they are memorable; for instance:

Brim gnýr, brattir hamrar
blálands Haka stranda;
allt gjálfr eyja þjálfa
út líðr í stað víðis.

Kormákr, Skj 2,37.

The poet is describing the violent rise and fall of the sea as an emblem of his own restless passion. And as he is dying 'in the straw' he remembers his part in fierce battles, when blood poured like rain from the deep strokes of the sword:

Dunði djúpra benja
dogg, ór mækis hoggvi.

Kormákr, Skj 2,64.

BOOK REVIEWS

MEDIAEVAL SCANDINAVIA I. Managing Editor, HANS BEKKER-NIELSEN. *Odense University Press*, 1968. 240 pp.

Mediaeval Scandinavia is "a new international journal devoted to the study of mediaeval civilization in Scandinavia and Iceland", to quote the editor's description. The launching of a new periodical in this field is an event of some importance in itself; but the form and content of *Mediaeval Scandinavia* make it particularly welcome to those in English-speaking countries interested in the subject. There is no lack of learned journals to publish articles and papers on subjects concerned with mediaeval Scandinavia; but most are either devoted principally to modern Scandinavian literature (like *Scandinavian Studies* and *Scandinavica*), or cover the whole of the rest of European literature as well (like *PMLA*); or else have articles chiefly in languages other than English (like *Arkiv för Nordisk Filologi*, *Acta Philologica Scandinavica*, and those published in Iceland). These last, it is true, perhaps present little inconvenience to specialists, but there are also many serious students of aspects of mediaeval Scandinavia who are not philologists, and it is right that they should be catered for. *Mediaeval Scandinavia* is in fact (apart from *Saga-Book*) the only periodical devoted first and foremost to northern studies in the mediaeval period with articles mainly in English.

Interest in this subject has been growing rapidly in recent times, particularly in Britain and America, and although the traditional philological approach is still very much alive in many places, it is clear that generally the tendency is towards a broader, more literary, perhaps even more humane approach. It is an excellent thing that *Mediaeval Scandinavia*, to judge from its first volume, is now going to provide a spacious — and respectable — forum for studies of this kind. Not the least desirable aspect of its editors' aims is that it is to contain historical and archaeological studies as well as linguistic and literary ones. Closer co-operation and contact between scholars in these closely related fields is bound to be of value to everyone.

The first volume of *Mediaeval Scandinavia* contains a just balance between articles of general and more restricted interest, and is fairly representative of the geographical spread of scholarship in the subject, although it is unfortunate that what is best in American scholarship is not more adequately represented. It is

to be hoped indeed that there will not in the future be any lack of suitable contributions for the editors to choose from, but some of the material in the articles in the first volume is decidedly eccentric, and some of the books reviewed, even at some length, have a very tenuous link, if any at all, with mediaeval Scandinavia.

A lengthy section of the volume (36 pp.) is devoted to the views of seventeen well-known scholars and teachers from various countries on the vexed question of the proper pronunciation of Old Norse, particularly for teaching purposes. It opens with a short and well-balanced account by Einar Haugen of his attitude to this question (which he also discusses at greater length in his article 'On the pronunciation of Old Norse' in the long-delayed *Nordica et Anglica. Studies in Honor of Stefán Einarsson* (ed. Allan H. Orrick, 1968), 72-82). The other contributions vary in length from a few succinct lines to detailed arguments covering several pages. There is a limited amount of sense that can be written on this subject, and most of that is included in Einar Haugen's contribution. There are only really two possible solutions to the question, one must either use the modern Icelandic pronunciation or try to reconstruct that of Old Icelandic; most suggested compromises seem unsatisfactory. In this "discussion" (this is not really the word to describe it, since in a discussion the participators usually all hear each other's remarks, while in this case the contributors had seen only Einar Haugen's statement) the same arguments tend to be repeated over and over again, and although it is surprising how much feeling this well-worn controversy can still arouse, it is rather disappointing that there is no more variety in the views expressed. One is left with the impression that most experienced teachers are fixed in their ways and are not going to be converted by argument however learned and persuasive; and that the factors that lead individuals to choose one answer or the other in the first place, in so far as the result is not simply determined by the accident of who they themselves were taught by, are emotional ones rather than rational. It is interesting to know which scholars favour which pronunciation, but a little depressing to find that on the whole the division coincides all too predictably with nationality: English, American, French, and Icelandic scholars favour the modern Icelandic pronunciation, German and continental Scandinavian ones the reconstructed pronunciation (although there are some exceptions). This of course reflects basic differences in approach to the subject in the scholars of these countries, between the "literary" approach of the former and the Germanic "philological" approach of the latter.

The editor of *Mediaeval Scandinavia* promises further "discussions" of a similar nature on other subjects in future volumes. It is to be hoped that the subjects chosen will be conducive to more varied contributions.

The same basic conflict of views or approaches in Scandinavian studies is reflected elsewhere in the volume. Ole Widding, for instance, in his article 'Dating Rauðúlfs Þáttr' refers disparagingly to "the literary historians" (p. 115), and "the assumptions of the literary tradition" (p. 116), which he contrasts with "the facts". In some of the reviews, the writers express doubts and worries about the qualities of "popular" books, while not actually going so far as to condemn them outright (e.g. pp. 233-6, 236-9). Even in the Editor's Preface there is the unnecessarily slighting (or apologetic?) reference to "people . . . concerned with teaching aspects . . . even at the elementary level that is all that is possible in many courses". Elementary teaching is of course an important and necessary preliminary to advanced teaching; but it is also true that it is not necessary for or even beneficial to the subject for all students and teachers to be specialists. Those who study Old Norse literature from a broadly-based literary and comparative standpoint have a valid contribution to make, and *Mediaeval Scandinavia* will be fulfilling a most valuable function if it assists them in this.

The first volume of *Mediaeval Scandinavia* is handsomely — almost luxuriously — printed and bound, and the arrangement is pleasant. Misprints and typographical blemishes are rare, but get more frequent towards the end, in the Reviews and Notes section (there are in fact no Notes): did the proof-readers get weary? The only place where economy has had a deleterious effect is in the table of contents. This would be more useful if it gave not only the names of the reviewers, but also, what is after all of more interest to most readers, the titles and names of the authors of the books reviewed and the page number of each review.

ANTHONY FAULKES

NORRØNE GUDE- OG HELTESAGN. By P. A. MUNCH. Revidert utgave ved ANNE HOLTSMARK. Universitetsforlaget, Oslo, 1967. 352 pp.

This is the third extensive revision of the Norwegian historian P. A. Munch's ever-popular book, first published in 1840; the earlier ones were by A. Kjær (1880) and M. Olsen (1922). In all three revisions the changes made have consisted more in the

addition of new material than in alterations to Munch's original text, quite a large part of which remains with little change in this newest edition. But the notes have been completely revised and brought up to date by Professor Holtsmark to take account of the most recent research, and her contributions (but not Kjær's and Olsen's, many of which are still included) are conveniently distinguished from the text of her predecessors by the use of smaller type (although it is not clear why the first part of § 57, the introduction to the heroic legends, which is not a new addition by Professor Holtsmark, is also in small type).

Munch's book was a fairly comprehensive retelling, or in some cases summary, of surviving Scandinavian legends about gods and heroes derived from many sources, chiefly the Poetic Edda, the Prose Edda, the Heroic Sagas, and Saxo Grammaticus. There were two main faults in his method. First, he made little or no distinction between these sources, and it is misleading to retell stories from them indiscriminately as if they were all of equal age and validity, and to combine them into a composite narrative as if in the Middle Ages they formed a homogeneous and comprehensive body of lore. Second, the implication throughout the section on mythology is that information is being given about early Scandinavian religion (it still opens with the highly questionable statement "Våre forfedre tenkte seg . . .", which recurs at intervals, and which most readers will take to apply to the whole contents of the book). Munch himself was not unaware of these problems, and in several places drew attention to them, but the additions and alterations of the successive revisers of his work are largely concerned with correcting the misleading impressions which result from his method. Thus they have clearly stressed in many places the difference between religion on the one hand and legend and mythology on the other, the literary nature of most of the sources, and their late date. In fact some of the most interesting and useful parts of the book, brief though they are, are those concerned with our rather meagre knowledge of the actual religious practices of heathen Scandinavia (§ 56, *Om Eddaenes gudelære*; Part III, *Gudedyrkelse*; these sections as they now stand are largely Olsen's work), although even here rather a lot of weight is given to the evidence of late literary sources. Olsen also added a section containing a very brief summary of the evidence of place-names for the cult of heathen gods in Norway (but unfortunately giving little information relating to other countries). This is included without change in the new edition, although it might have been helpful if Professor Holtsmark could have given an account of more recent work in this field too. There is little documentation

in this section, the form and date of the earliest recordings of the names mentioned is rarely given, and so it is difficult to know how trustworthy the information in it is. Like other parts of the book, this section suffers rather from an attempt to give a popular presentation of a complicated subject, which really demands a more scholarly and wary approach even for the non-specialist reader, and so is in danger of falling between two stools.

The main value of the new edition of *Norrøne Gude- og Heltesagn* lies in Professor Holtsmark's notes, which give a reliable, informative and wide-ranging guide to the extensive bibliography about Norse legends and myths, and concise and up-to-date summaries of modern knowledge and theories about them. She indicates fairly fully, and much more adequately than the earlier editors, the source of each section of the main text and the divergences between sources when there is more than one, thus going a long way towards correcting the misleading impressions of Munch's method. Many of her notes are concerned with the question whether all the gods about whom we have traditions and stories in literary sources were ever the objects of a cult — and the answer in very many cases is: probably not. Her revision has made this a much more scholarly and less misleading book, and as long as readers are clear that it is not, and does not claim to be, a history of Norse religion, it can be most useful to both scholars and general readers.

ANTHONY FAULKES

SCANDINAVIAN PERSONAL NAMES IN LINCOLNSHIRE AND YORKSHIRE. By GILLIAN FELLOWS JENSEN. *Navnestudier udgivet af Institut for Navneforskning*, Nr. 7. Copenhagen, Akademisk Forlag, 1968. cviii + 374 pp.

The work consists of an alphabetical list of the Scandinavian personal names found in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire sources down to the end of the thirteenth century (1-341, with addenda 353-356, including new entries for **Gilliman* 354, **Keyrandi*, **Kærandi* 354, **Lakkandi* 354-5, *Stigamann* 355, *Svanhildr* (fem.) 355-6), with analyses of the first and second elements of the personal names (342-52), and a useful index (361-74) of those place-names in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire which are found to contain OScaand pers.ns. A studied but lively introduction (i-cviii) deals with the historical background of the Scandinavian settlements in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire; the geographical distribution of Scandinavian place-names and personal-names there (xxvi-xxviii); the

frequency of occurrence and the chronological stratification of these pers.ns. (xxix-lxiv, an expanded version of a paper in *The Proceedings of the IXth International Congress of Onomastic Sciences, London 1966* [1969], with an interesting appendix (lxiv-lxvi) listing those personal-name formations which appear to have been invented by the colonists rather than inherited or imported from the homelands); the difficulties, presented by the nature of the sources, which have to be considered in the interpretation of the material; and a description of the orthographic and linguistic features of the recorded name-forms (especially notable here is the summary, cii-cviii, of formal features which may be used as clues to the date at which a Scandinavian personal name appeared in England). There is a critical bibliography which distinguishes the good from the unreliable editions of medieval documents for the two counties. There are five maps (xxxiv, xxxix, xliii, xlv, xlvi) of the distribution of place-names containing an OScaand personal name + *bý*, *tún*, *þorp*, other OScaand elements, other OE elements.

This is a book full of useful information and prudent deduction. Its aim is "to give an impression of the nature and extent of Scandinavian nomenclature in a section of Eastern England from the time of the first Scandinavian settlements until the end of the thirteenth century". This aim is achieved. But there are certain reservations, which the author is quick to observe and which she fairly presents to the reader's attention. There are few documents of a localised nature for Lincolnshire and Yorkshire for the period before 1066. For evidence of Scandinavian personal names in this period one has to rely on place-names and the Scandinavian names of TRE tenants in Domesday Book. For the twelfth and thirteenth centuries there are numerous documents containing an abundance of Scandinavian personal names. These kinds of source produce problems. In many instances, that first element of a place-name which can be identified on formal grounds as a Scandinavian personal name, can, on the same grounds, be identified alternatively as a common noun. This is the oldest controversial topic in place-name study. The author honestly states the alternatives in every instance where she adduces place-name evidence (see, for example, the entry *Abbi* where there is a cognate OE name *Abba* and also an orthographic problem arising from the similarity of *-ll-* and *-lb-* in MSS, or that for *Rafn* where there is OE *hræfn*, ON *hrafn*, an OE pers. n. **Hræfn*, or even OE *ramm* 'a ram', or OE *hramsa* 'wild garlic'). In a number of instances credence is lent to the proposal of a personal-name component in a place-name, by the fact that the adduced personal-

name form appears independently in later record in the same region. But it would be wise to remember that wherever some cognate or similar word is possible as an alternative, the Scandinavian personal name suggested in such a place-name is only, itself, a possible alternative, however attractive. Certainly Dr Fellows Jensen is constantly careful to preserve this balance of probabilities. The book contributes largely to English place-name study, as is seen from its index, which contains 1561 place-names; for 271 of them there are hitherto unpublished etymologies. Of these new etymologies, 234 are for Lincolnshire place-names (drawing partly upon the unpublished theses of Irene Bower, L. W. H. Payling and A. J. Kirkman), and 37 are for Yorkshire. The numerous addenda and corrigenda to the English Place-Name Society's Yorkshire volumes which this research has produced will be seen in *The Journal of the English Place-Name Society*, No. 2 (1970).

The Scandinavian names of the TRE tenants in Domesday Book require cautious evaluation in the chronological stratification of names. These TRE tenants' names may well reflect a tradition of Scandinavian nomenclature deriving from the Danish kingdom of England 1016-42 (xxiv, a point made by von Feilitzen), whereas such place-names as contain a Scandinavian personal name + *bý*, *þorp*, and *tún* are seen as a legacy of the ninth-century settlements (xxx-xxxv). Many of the personal names compounded in such place-names do not reappear independently in later record and are considered to have fallen out of use by 1066 (xxxv-xxxvi).

A careful course is steered through the debate about how many Danes came to England 875-925 (xx-xxv). We are reminded of the continuous contacts between England and Scandinavia over a long span of time, lest we should think only in terms of the Alfredian land-division and the kingdom of Knut. Even the Normans were a species of Northman. Dr Fellows Jensen comes out with Cameron rather than with Sawyer or Glanville Jones. She makes the sensible point (xxiii), "Place and personal names provide much evidence to support the assumption that the number of settlers was large. Not only did these settlers give Scandinavian names to villages, a feat which might possibly have been achieved by a comparatively small but select military aristocracy, but they also left behind them a vast number of field and other minor names . . . Further support for the assumption is provided by the number of independent instances of Scandinavian personal names in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire. These can hardly be explained by the presence of some few high-ranking Scandinavians in the early years after the invasions but rather suggest a considerable settlement that retained its Scandinavian character for many years, perhaps right up to the Norman Conquest."

The post-Conquest documentary evidence makes it obvious that by about 1250 the Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Scandinavian name-giving habits had been superseded by Norman custom. In the fourteenth century the increasing use of hereditary surnames leads to confusion of the boundaries between personal name and by-name. In these later evidences the author has not ventured beyond sampling, and rightly so. But within the limits relevant to her work, she recognises and clearly points out (xxvi) that the documents do not always indicate what village or district the named person came from, and this brings a factor of uncertainty into the calculation of distribution and frequency. It would be desirable to chart local and social fashion in name-giving, if the documents gave us sufficient data for statistics. Unfortunately, it appears that the documentary evidence is not going to enable us to study early medieval personal nomenclature at a parochial level where we could draw correspondences between place-names and local population. If it were possible to show that in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries Scandinavian personal names appeared in independent use more frequently in those villages with Scandinavian place-names than in the villages with English place-names, we could make interesting estimations of the strength of Scandinavian influence upon the social patterns of each district. As it is, we can only work on a larger regional average. This book will gain in usefulness when some other monograph on some other part of England has been produced; the comparative method might then lead to deductions which cannot be made yet. However, there is some information in the documentary material which permits sociological commentary (lxi-lxiv) on the interaction of Scandinavian and Norman name-giving habits even within one family.

Not quite so provisional is the important observation (cviii, summarising a detailed demonstration) that the forms of Scandinavian personal names in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire offer little evidence for late borrowing of personal names from the homelands or the survival of Scandinavian language in England. The majority of the forms which would seem to provide evidence of OScand sound developments can be equally well explained as due to Anglo-Norman, Old English or Middle English influence. Here, coincidence obscures the sought-after Scandinavian phenomenon. Nevertheless, there remain eight personal-name forms which do show evidence of OScand sound-changes taking place in England:— *Sortebrand* (< *Svaribrandr*), *Sorthoued* (< **Svarthofuð*), *Sorticolf* (< *Svarthollr*), *Codre-* (< *Skvaðra*), *Bundi* (< *Bóndi*), *Allef* (< *Áleifr* (*Óláfr*) < **Anu-laiþar*),

Stíllag (< *Styrllaugr*), *Keftes-* (< *Keptv*). This irreducible minimum may be sufficient to show that in fact there may have been more such names with a form due to Scandinavian changes. But they are not certainly identified as such because, as already mentioned, the result of the Scandinavian change is identical with that of a process in OE, ME or AN. We are back to the name-student's dilemma, balancing possibility against probability.

We need another five dozen studies like this. Searle, Björkman, Redin, von Feilitzen, Tengvik and Reaney reproach the non-existence of a survey of English personal names to match the English Place-Name Society's volumes. Dr Fellows Jensen's book would serve as a model of one of the two or three kinds of study which such a survey will require. I can find few faults with it. The two paragraphs on xviii-xix, which explain the lay-out of the entries in the Name List, should have been set up nearer to p. 1. It is inconvenient to have to turn back 90 pages in order to find this plan. On xxvi, lines 18, 28, for "Westmoreland" read "Westmorland"; xxx, n. 1, line 2, for "no" read "not"; 353 (index), line 6 from foot, for "88" read "89".

JOHN MCNEAL DODGSON

EIN FØROYSK BYGD. By POUL PETERSEN. Tórshavn, 1968. 320 pp.

From the title of this book, one might expect a description of a Faroese village, or a local history of the kind which many Faroese authors have written since Mikkjal Dánjalsson á Ryggi first set the fashion nearly thirty years ago with his *Míðvínga söga*. Poul Petersen has, however, provided us with something very much more valuable — a comprehensive treatise on Faroese land tenure and village rights, past and present.

Faroese land tenure is a subject of great complexity. The village laws and customs go back in part to the first settlement of Faroe in Viking times. In 1298 there was issued the first codification specially applicable to Faroese conditions, *Seyðabrévið*, the promulgation of which took place towards the end of an age of legal reform throughout the Norwegian kingdom. In 1687 came Christian V's Norwegian Law; and immediately before and after this code came into force in Faroe, a series of enactments brought about the joint outfield system of sheep-rearing, which is so characteristic a feature of Faroese village life today. Further reforms took place in the nineteenth century, especially the Outfield Laws of 1867, and the abolition, in 1857, of the ancient

allodial redemption rights. Ancient practice has thus been overlaid with a series of laws designed to enable the Faroese village to cope adequately with changing conditions.

Two factors have, however, made land tenure in Faroe unusually complex. One has been the twofold inheritance system, whereby a man's privately-owned land is divided among his children at his death, but any Crown lease he holds passes undivided to his eldest son. The other has been the late development of a money economy in Faroe, due to the persistence of the Crown Trading Monopoly until 1856. As a result, the total produce of a village has had to be divided — in kind — into large and small fractions corresponding to a land tenure pattern which may be very complex indeed.

Hr Petersen takes us through this maze with a very sure hand. Peat, seals, seaweed, sand, shellfish, driftwood — nothing is too insignificant for his detailed attention. He is ever prepared, moreover, to provide contrasts or parallels with other legal codes than the Faroese. In his consideration of house-site ownership, for instance, he cites the practice in Norway, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden, Germany, Austria and Switzerland, as well as the position under Roman Law. He distinguishes, better than any other author I have read, between those rights which arise from land ownership (*lunnindir*) and rights which arise from residence in a village (*bygdarrættindir*) — categories which in Faroese practice become easily confounded.

After considering every kind of product the islands afford, the author goes on to consider inheritance, taxation, legal administration, and the meetings by which village policy in the jointly-owned outfields is decided. Finally, there are brief accounts of the customs and practices peculiar to three individual villages, Eiði, Funningur and Gjógv. The non-Faroese reader will wish that these accounts had been rather more detailed, so that the application of the general principles may be seen in particular cases. It is also a pity that instead of making a wide geographical choice, the author has chosen the three northernmost villages in Eysturoy. Certainly, there are advantages in considering contiguous villages, but in Suðuroy, for example, there are some practices divergent from those in other parts of Faroe, and an account of Sumba or Hov might have provided an instructive contrast.

Hr Petersen deserves our thanks for reprinting as an appendix, four mediæval Faroese laws: the *Rættarbót* of 1271, *Seyðabrævið* of 1298, the *Skipan um þingfaratoll* of about 1400, and *Hundarbrævið* of slightly later date. Most of these texts have been out of print for half a century. It is a pity that some of the comments

on these texts that are scattered through the book could not have been briefly summarised in small print by their side, especially as the index, though fair, is not rigorous.

This book is a notable contribution to Faroese scholarship. It is a great mine of facts from which many lesser men will later quarry; and it gives us a full survey of what is involved in Faroese land ownership. It well deserves a sponsored translation into a language more accessible to the average scholar.

JOHN F. WEST