



SAGA-BOOK

VOL. XX

VIKING SOCIETY FOR NORTHERN RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

1978-81

SAGA-BOOK OF THE VIKING SOCIETY

Vol. XX 1978-1981

CONTENTS

ARTICLES AND NOTES	PAGE
GABRIEL TURVILLE-PETRE. P. G. F.	1
BRUCE DICKINS. R. I. Page	4
THE GENEALOGIST AND HISTORY: ARI TO SNORRI. Joan Turville-Petre.....	7
THE AGE OF ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC ISLANDS IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY. Arne Odd Johnsen	24
WILLIAM MORRIS, EIRÍKUR MAGNÚSSON, AND THE ICELANDIC FAMINE RELIEF EFFORTS OF 1882. Richard L. Harris	31
THE INITIAL IMPACT OF THE VIKINGS ON IRISH ART. James Graham-Campbell	42
DUMÉZIL REVISITED. R. I. Page	49
LAWYERS IN THE OLD ICELANDIC FAMILY SAGAS: HEROES, VILLAINS, AND AUTHORS. Alan Berger	70
SCANDINAVIAN AND CELTIC FOLKLORE CONTACTS IN THE EARLDOM OF ORKNEY. Bo Almqvist	80
FIVE KINGS. Axel Seeberg	106
THE AUTHOR OF <i>VÖLUSPÁ</i> . Sigurður Nordal. Translated by B. S. Benedikz.....	114
SAGA MANUSCRIPTS IN ICELAND IN THE LATER 18TH CENTURY. John McKinnell	131
NOTES ON A FIRST EDITION OF "CLEASBY-VIGFÚSSON". Elizabeth Knowles	165
SOME THOUGHTS ON MANX RUNES. R. I. Page	179
BRUNANBURH REVISITED. Michael Wood	200
HILDA A. C. GREEN. C.E.F.....	245
THE VIKING RUNES: THE TRANSITION FROM THE OLDER TO THE YOUNGER <i>FUPARK</i> . Aslak Liestøl	247
THE JELLING MAN. DENMARK'S OLDEST FIGURE-PAINTING. Ingegerd Marxen and Erik Moltke	267
STYLE AND AUTHORIAL PRESENCE IN SKALDIC MYTHOLOGICAL POETRY. Margaret Clunies Ross	276

REVIEWS	PAGE
NORGES LITTERATURHISTORIE. Edited by Edvard Beyer. BIND I FRA RUNENE TIL NORSKE SELSKAB. By Ludvig Holm-Olsen and Kjell Heggelund. (G. Turville-Petre)	137
LÖNG ER FÖR. ÞRÍR ÞÆTTIR UM ÍRSKAR OG ÍSLENZKAR SÖGUR OG KVÆDI. By Einar Ól. Sveinsson. (G. Turville-Petre)	138
THE SCANDINAVIAN LANGUAGES. AN INTRODUCTION TO THEIR HISTORY. By Einar Haugen. (Gun Widmark)	142
NJÁLS SAGA. A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION. By Lars Lönnroth. (R. W. McTurk)	145
UPPRUNI OG ÞEMA HRAFNKELS SÖGU. By Óskar Halldórsson. (Sverrir Tómasson).....	150
LES VIKINGS ET LEUR CIVILISATION. PROBLÈMES ACTUELS. Rapports scientifiques publiés sous la direction de Régis Boyer. (R. I. Page)	152
SAGA OG SAMFUND. EN INDFØRING I OLDISLANDSK LITTERATUR. By Preben Meulengracht Sørensen. (Jeffrey Cosser)	154
GRØNLANDS HISTORISKE MINDESMÆRKER I-III. (Richard Perkins) ..	155
MÍDALDARÆVINTÝRI ÞÝDD ÚR ENSKU. Edited by Einar G. Pétursson. (Maureen Thomas)	156
ORAL TRADITION LITERARY TRADITION. A SYMPOSIUM. Edited by Hans Bekker-Nielsen, Peter Foote, Andreas Haarder, Hans Frede Nielsen. (Anthony Faulkes)	158
UNTERSUCHUNGEN ZUR ZEITGESTALTUNG UND KOMPOSITION DER ÍSLENDINGASÖGUR. ANALYSEN AUSGEWÄHLTER TEXTE. By Hartmut Röhn. (John McKinnell)	160
THE DISCOVERY OF A NORSE SETTLEMENT IN AMERICA. EXCAVATIONS AT L'ANSE AUX MEADOWS, NEWFOUNDLAND 1961-1968. By Anne Stine Ingstad <i>et al.</i> (James Graham-Campbell)	218
GRÆNLAND Í MÍDALDARITUM. By Ólafur Halldórsson. (Jeffrey Cosser).....	222
KONGESAGASTUDIER. KOMPILATIONEN HULDA-HROKKINSKINNA. By Jonna Louis-Jensen. (A. R. Taylor).....	227
NORSK STADNAMNLEKSIKON. Edited by Jørn Sandnes, Ola Stems- haug and Kolbjørn Aune. (Urs Wagner)	228
DET DANSKE RIGE I DEN ÆLDRE VIKINGETID. By Erik Kroman. (Lene Demidoff)	230
SCANDINAVIAN KINGS IN THE BRITISH ISLES 850-880. By Alfred P. Smyth. (R. W. McTurk)	231
COINS AND COINAGE IN VIKING-AGE NORWAY. By Kolbjørn Skaare. (D. M. Metcalf)	235

ORKNEYINGA SAGA. THE HISTORY OF THE EARLS OF ORKNEY. Translated by Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards. (Paul Bibire)	236
HALLFREDAR SAGA. Edited by Bjarni Einarsson. (Diana Edwards).....	237
TO SKJALDESAGAER. By Bjarni Einarsson. (Paul Bibire)	238
SAGADEBATT. Edited by Else Mundal. (Hermann Pálsson)	240
DE NORSKE CISTERCIENSERKLOSTRE 1146-1264 SETT I EUROPEISK SAMMENHENG. By Arne Odd Johnsen. (John Simpson)	241
TRISTÁN EN EL NORTE. By Álfrún Gunnlaugsdóttir. (Maureen Thomas)	241
NORGES INNSKRIFTER MED DE YNGRE RUNER. SJETTE BIND, FØRSTE HEFTE: BRYGGEN I BERGEN. Edited by Aslak Liestøl. (Paul Bibire)	305
SNORRI STURLUSON. By Marlene Ciklamini. (Anthony Faulkes)	306
FYRKAT, EN JYSK VIKINGEBORG. I BØRGEN OG BEBYGGELSEN. By Olaf Olsen, Holger Schmidt <i>et al.</i> II OLDSAGERNE OG GRAVPLADSEN. By Else Roesdahl <i>et al.</i> (Helen Clarke)	309
VIKING AGE YORK AND THE NORTH. Edited by R. A. Hall. (Helen Clarke)	310
SANCTA BIRGITTA REVELACIONES BOOK I WITH MAGISTER MATHIAS' PROLOGUE. Edited by Carl-Gustaf Undhagen. (Roger Ellis)	311
GRIPLA II. Editor: Jónas Kristjánsson.	
GRIPLA III. Editor: Jónas Kristjánsson. (Judith Jesch)	313
VORZEITKUNDE. MÜNDLICHES ERZÄHLEN UND ÜBERLIEFERN IM MITTELALTERLICHEN SKANDINAVIEN NACH DEM ZEUGNIS VON FORNALDARSAGA UND EDDISCHER DICHTUNG. By Peter Buchholz. (Judith Jesch)	315
ÍVENS SAGA. Edited by Foster W. Blaisdell.	
STRENGLEIKAR. AN OLD NORSE TRANSLATION OF TWENTY-ONE OLD FRENCH LAIS. Edited by Robert Cook and Mattias Tveitane. (Maureen Thomas)	318
SKALDENDICHTUNG. EINE EINFÜHRUNG. By Klaus von See. (Diana Edwards)	321
THE EUROPEAN MEDIEVAL BALLAD. A SYMPOSIUM. Edited by Otto Holzappel in collaboration with Julia McGrew and Iørn Piø. (P. J. Frankis)	322
DIE LITERATUR DES NORDENS. By Gerd Wolfgang Weber. (P. J. Frankis).....	325
SCANDINAVIAN SETTLEMENT NAMES IN THE EAST MIDLANDS. By Gillian Fellows Jensen. (A. M. J. Perrott)	325

GABRIEL TURVILLE-PETRE

GABRIEL TURVILLE-PETRE died on 17 February 1978. He would have been seventy on 25 March. He had been dogged by disease for ten years.

Gabriel's enthusiasm for Norse and particularly Icelandic studies blossomed in boyhood and never withered. It was the ideal appointment for him when he was elected in 1941 to be the first Vigfusson Reader in Ancient Icelandic Literature and Antiquities in the University of Oxford — ideal indeed for everybody for he never thought that Oxford was the only place in the world. He then had many visits to Iceland behind him, including two years as Lecturer in the University of Iceland (1936-8) and a spell as British Pro-consul in Reykjavik, as well as periods of study in Scandinavia and Germany; he had met the most accomplished and influential of scholars in the Norse field and become the firm friend of many of them; he had published some important papers and his admirable edition of *Víga-Glúms saga*; and he already demonstrated the twin characteristics of his learning: on the one hand, a sovereign understanding of the Icelandic language old and new; and on the other hand, a universality of interest which could make the most diverse elements of the Latin, Germanic and Celtic inheritance spin in illuminating orbit round the Icelandic centre — everything could and should belong — dead Gothic and living Welsh, Bede and Bragi, Sonatorrek and the Assumpcio Beatae Mariae, Honorius and Snorri, dream-books and place-names, outlaws and Irish metres, ornithology, even graphology — and so one could go on. It was not until the end of the war and after service in the Foreign Office that he could take up the Readership properly; he was given the title of Professor in 1953, became a Student of Christ Church in 1964, and retired in 1975. He went happily to Iceland and to Wales as often as he could, occasionally to Scandinavia, where he had old and new friends in many places, latterly perhaps especially in Uppsala and Odense, and he made three visits to Australia, largely at the instigation of Ian Maxwell. Gabriel found those visits exceptionally stimulating, and I have heard him say more than once that the most intelligent and responsive classes he ever encountered were those he met while in Melbourne as Visiting Professor in 1965.

His distinction was recognised by conferment of honorary doctorates by the University of Iceland in 1961 and the University of Uppsala in 1977. In each case the election was all the more respectful because the universities were celebrating notable anniversaries and cared only for the most eminent. He was an Honorary Member of *Hið íslenska Bókmenntafélag* (1948), and a member of *Visindafélag Íslendinga* (1959), *Kungl. Gustav Adolfs Akademien, Uppsala* (1960), and *Kungl. Vetenskaps- och Vitterhets-Samhället, Gothenburg* (1976). He was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1973. We made him one of the twelve Honorary Life Members of the Viking Society in 1956. His special services to Icelandic scholarship were recognised by his appointment by the President of Iceland as *riddari* of the Order of the Falcon in 1956 and his promotion to *stórriddari* in 1963.

Gabriel's immense contribution to "northern research" will be discussed elsewhere and for ages; a bibliography will appear in a future *Saga-Book*. Here we may briefly remember him in our own context.

The author of the obituary that appeared in *The Times* on 18 February said that Gabriel was "tireless and unselfish in his work for Old Norse studies in England". A mere enumeration of his services to the Society confirms this straightway. He joined the Society in 1935 and became a member of Council in 1936. He was President in the difficult years of the war and A. W. Johnston's dotage, 1942-5, and remained a Vice-President in Council thereafter. He became Joint Editor of the *Saga-Book* in 1939 and acted without a break until 1963. He became Joint Secretary also in 1939 and held that office for the rest of his life. He was editor of the Text Series from its inception in 1953 until he died. Apart from papers and reviews in the *Saga-Book*, he published for the Society *The Life of Gudmund the Good, Bishop of Holar* (with E. S. Olszewska, 1942); and *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* (with Christopher Tolkien, 1956); he translated Einar Ól. Sveinsson's *Dating the Icelandic Sagas*; and at the last he was working on an edition of *Hungrvaka* for the Text Series. It is no wonder that we made him a present of *Nine Norse Studies* in 1972 and in 1976 instituted the Turville-Petre Prize for award in Oxford.

The *Times* obituarist went on to say that Gabriel's "labours for the Viking Society and as editor of Nelson's series of Norse texts much reduced his own output as a scholar". Whether that is

true or not — and I doubt it myself — there is one certainty we can all accept, and that is that those labours of his were totally unbegrudged. In the same way he gave freely to all who came to him, and if there are so many well-manned outposts of Icelandic scholarship in parts of the world near and far, it is less because of his writing than because of his teaching, above all his supervision of graduate students. The number of his pupils in university posts in nine or ten different countries shows how successful his labours were, just as the flourishing state and good repute of the Viking Society do.

Góðu dægri
verður sá gramr um borinn
er sér getr slíkan sefa,
hans aldar
mun æ vera
at góðu getit.

“Hans skal ek ávallt geta er ek heyri góðs manns getit.”

P.G.F.

BRUCE DICKINS

BRUCE DICKINS, doyen of English Vikings, and President of the Viking Society 1938-9, died on 4 January 1978 at the age of 88. His long life was devoted to scholarship, and among the many subjects he wrote on, Norse studies held a high place in his affections. He was educated at Nottingham High School and Magdalene College, Cambridge. After serving in the First World War, he taught as lecturer and reader at Edinburgh University, was elected Professor of English Language at Leeds University in 1931, and succeeded his old teacher, H. M. Chadwick, as Elrington and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Cambridge in 1945. Corpus Christi College elected him a Professorial Fellow in 1946, and he remained a fellow of the college until his death. His erudition was acknowledged by honorary doctorates at Edinburgh and Manchester, by the award of the Israel Gollancz Memorial Prize in 1955, and election to the British Academy in 1959.

Bruce began his scholarly life as a historian, and this training was evident in his later work. It was Chadwick who persuaded him to take, as the second part of his tripos, section B of Medieval and Modern Languages, which involved studying Old English, Old Norse and Gothic, and in which he got a First Class with Distinction in 1913. Henceforth he devoted his skills to various aspects of the Germanic languages and literatures. His first major work was the ambitious *Runic and Heroic Poems of the Old Teutonic Peoples*, published in 1915 and reprinted as late as 1968. He introduced Old Norse into the Edinburgh syllabus, and encouraged its teaching in Leeds and Cambridge. He published continuously throughout sixty years, including many articles on Norse topics. His early interest in runes led him to the Orkneys and to a close friendship with a fellow-Viking, Hugh Marwick. He produced a classic paper on the cult of St Olave in the British Isles. But perhaps his most fruitful use of Norse was in the place-name work that was so congenial to him, and which culminated in the three-volume, *The Place-Names of Cumberland*, which the English Place-Name Society issued under his general editorship in 1950-2.

Unlike Chadwick, Bruce was not a scholar to produce a small number of great works that directed scholarly attention to new

fields and techniques. His genius lay in worrying at details. His immense reading, helped by a capacious memory, allowed him to draw together material from distant sources, to clarify a phrase in one text by a remembered allusion in another. His range was amazing. His published work, besides covering as a matter of course Old Norse, Old and Middle English, Middle Scots, dialectology, place-names, runology, mediaeval history and folklore, included Celtic, naval and military history, cricket, the annals of scholarship, and, particularly in later years, various aspects of book production and printing — Cambridge elected him Sanders Reader in Bibliography for 1968-9. He stood in as Parker Librarian, guarding an important collection of manuscripts and early printed books on most of which he could discourse *extempore*, and many a volume in the college library bears his annotations and cross-references. He looked after the college silver, and commented fluently on college history and heraldry. Perhaps his skills are best summed up in a manuscript book in the Senior Combination Room of Corpus Christi, devoted to unguarded and outrageous remarks of its fellows, where a typical effort of Bruce's, made after he had wagered successfully on a point of fact against a colleague, reads: "It is never wise to assume that I am ignorant of anything."

Two characteristics of Bruce's stand out. The first was his readiness to make his learning and experience available to others, the eagerness with which he sought out new workers in the fields he had mastered, listened to their problems and suggested how to solve them. This was acknowledged in the *festschrift* that friends and pupils gave him on his seventieth birthday, paying tribute to the knowledge "which he has always placed so unselfishly at the disposal of others." The second is the high quality of his writing. His scholarship was meticulous, but the reader found delight as well as instruction in it. His prose was terse and lucid, and full of good sense. His erudition never fell to pedantry, and his impish humour enlivened the most austere textual discussion. Bruce was a product of a more humane school of scholarship than our relentlessly professional age can achieve, and the world of learning will miss him.

R. I. PAGE.

THE GENEALOGIST AND HISTORY: ARI TO SNORRI*

BY JOAN TURVILLE-PETRE

GENEALOGY had of course many practical uses. In medieval Icelandic society it was necessary to be familiar with the web of family relationships, when claims or obligations had to be established among the extended kin.¹ But in this essay I am concerned with the remoter ranges of ancestry, where the scholar had to proceed from the known to the unknown. At this level, genealogy is an imaginative art; which is nevertheless controlled by rules and techniques formulated in the known area.

Icelanders have always been addicted to genealogical studies. At the beginning, they were the offspring of adventurers who never went home. These colonists created a new intellectual outlook. Isolation made them more conscious of their origins, and at the same time they could examine their heritage with some detachment. Together with these interests, they had the advantage of the European education successfully established in the course of the eleventh century. Icelanders became the leading antiquaries of the North; their historical research was acknowledged by Danish and Norwegian writers of the late twelfth century.

The earliest Icelandic scholars were not only, or even mainly, interested in the origins of the settlers who founded their families. These republicans well understood that royal dynasties supplied the chronological systems of oral history; as patriarchs and kings did for early Biblical history. So eleventh-century scholars studied the traditions of the ancient Skjöldungs, forebears of contemporary Danish kings. Within the development of this line, they had to find a place for the Danish empire-builder Ragnarr *loðbrók*, as well as for the fierce old conservative Haraldr *hilditönn*. The Ynglings of Uppsala were an extinct dynasty; yet poetic tradition had linked them to chieftains who had ruled in

* References to *Flateyjarbók* and its contents (e.g. *Nóregs konunga tal*) are to Guðbrandur Vigfússon and C. R. Unger, *Flateyjarbók* (1860-8), by volume and page. References to *Heimskringla* and its parts are to Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, *Heimskringla* (Íslenzk fornrit XXVI-XXVIII, 1941-51), by title and chapter.

¹ The legal limit of kinship extended to *þriðjabræðra*, i.e. the relationship between those in the fifth degree from a common ancestor; see V. Finsen, *Grágás, Staðarhólsbók* (1879), 75; V. Finsen, *Grágás, Skálholtsbók* (1883), 450. Many terms were in literary use. A few express vertical connexion, e.g. *kynferð*, *ættarferð*; *langfeðr*, *langfeðgatal*, *langfeðgatala*; *ættartal*, *ættartala*. Most are horizontal or comprehensive, e.g. *kyn*; *ætt*, *ættbalkr*, *ættbögl*, *ættþringr*; *frændbalkr*, *frændsemi*.

Vestfold in eastern Norway at the end of the ninth century. But the core of Icelandic external history was the Norwegian royal family founded by Haraldr *hárfagri*, the first king to gain control of all Norway. Harald's policy was traditionally the cause of the emigration to Iceland; this remained an article of faith, although it was only partly true. The first Icelandic historical work on record was an account of the kings of Norway. It was probably compiled, in Latin, by Sæmundr *fróði* (b. 1056), and it has not survived. According to early Icelandic tradition, Harald's family originated in Upplönd in eastern Norway. His most famous successors, Óláfr Tryggvason and Óláfr *helgi*, were the offspring of *fylikiskonungar* in this same mountain hinterland of the Vik. Before Ari's time, this family had inherited the Yngling tradition attached to the princes of Vestfold. The connexion was arbitrary, for the two groups had different bases: one in the mountain areas stretching north to Upplönd, the other in the coastal region round the Vik. The mountain kings lived by hunting and by preying on their neighbours, whereas the lowlanders grew rich through Viking expeditions. But Ari was not writing social history, and he accepted the ancestors shared by both these lines. It was left for historians of the late twelfth century, and for Snorri himself, to reconcile the separate traditions. They did this by means of a genealogical scheme.

The principal task of Ari and his older contemporary Sæmundr was to establish a system of chronology. At this stage, it was necessary to co-ordinate the oral records of reliable informants in a scheme of relative dating. It is not surprising that Sæmund's output is scarcely traceable, and the only surviving work of Ari is one short treatise. In a period of great intellectual activity, some of the most original work is quickly used and absorbed.

We know that Sæmundr drew up a list of the regnal years of eleven kings of Norway, from Haraldr *hárfagri* to Magnús *góði* (d. 1047), with brief memoranda of the chief events of each reign; this work is quoted and attributed by the author of *Nóregs konunga tal* (c. 1190). It is mentioned also in the Icelandic translation of Oddr Snorrason's *Life of Óláfr Tryggvason* (c. 1190).² Ari supplied in *Íslendingabók* not only relative dating for the course of Icelandic history, but also synchronisms with the absolute dating of European chronicles.

² *Nóregs konunga tal* 40/5-8: "inntak svá / ævi þeirra / sem Sæmundr / sagði hinn fróði" (cf. *Flateyjarbók*, II 524); Finnur Jónsson, *Saga Óláfs Tryggvasonar af Oddr Snorrason munk* (1932), 90, 114.

So these two scholars were largely concerned with external history; not for its own sake, but as a frame of reference for the foundation of the Icelandic state, and for its connexions with the world outside. In *Íslendingabók* Ari incorporated a list of Law Speakers with the number of years of office of each (*ævi allra lögsögumanna*, ch. 10). He had also drawn up what appear to have been regnal lists of kings (*konunga ævi*); Snorri says that these covered the kings of Norway, Denmark and England.³ But in the Prologue to *Íslendingabók* Ari states that his *konunga ævi* had been dropped from the revised version, together with a genealogical corpus (*áttartala*). It may be that he had come to regard these elements as raw material, to be excluded from his final account of the settlement of Iceland and of the development of its institutions and its Church.

A transcriber of *Íslendingabók* (probably in the mid-twelfth century) added three specimens of the genealogical corpus, outside the opening and closing rubrics. All are in downward order, not the upward order usual when a pedigree is quoted in narrative. One of these additions is concerned with internal history. It is headed *þetta er kyn biskupa Íslendinga ok ættartala*. The terms are complementary: for *kyn* is a collective (like *ætt*, but wider in range), whereas *ættartala* refers to the actual enumeration of forebears. The ancestry of the five bishops of Skálholt and Hólar is given, in order of appointment. Each of these is connected to one of the four chief settlers who appear in ch. 2 of the text. In this chapter, the occupation of each Quarter of Iceland is very briefly defined. Starting with the eastern Quarter (traditionally the first to be occupied),⁴ the settlers named are Hrollaugr, son of Rognvaldr Jarl of Mœrr, Ketilbjörn Ketilsson, Auðr, daughter of Ketill *flatnefr*, and Helgi *magri*, son of Eyvindr *austmaðr*. Each of these was founder of a major clan, comprised in the names *Síðumenn*, *Mosfellingar*, *Breiðfirðingar* and *Eyfirðingar*.

Only two of these five bishops descended from a settler in direct male line. These were the first two bishops of Skálholt, Ísleifr and his son Gizurr. Ísleifr has three ancestors, starting with Ketilbjörn. The other three bishops have six, nine and seven ancestors. The method used to trace their ancestry is selective. For Jón Ögmundarson and Þorlákr Rúnólfsson, the mother's male line is used; in each case there is a switch to a remoter

³ *Heimskringla*, Prologue.

⁴ See Jakob Benediktsson, *Íslendingabók, Landnámabók* (Íslenzk fornrit I, 1968), 336 footnote.

ancestress, so as to reach the desired settler. For Ketill Þorsteinsson, the father's line is used, up to an ancestress in the sixth generation, daughter of Helgi *magri*.

Evidently these bishops could have been traced to other ancestors, through a system of radiating female lines. I call this method convergent genealogy. There is a fine example of the whole system in *Njáls saga* ch. 113, where first Guðmundr *ríki* and then his wife are traced to various settlers, and beyond; these include two kings of England and a king of Ireland. Apart from any literary context, there exists a working model of the system. It is a small collection headed 'Of the Lineage of the Bishops of Skálaholt'.⁵ Internal evidence shows that it was drawn up between 1174 and 1178,⁶ apparently by or for the compiler of *Hungrvaka*, since it gives the ancestry of the five bishops of Skálaholt treated in this work. Apart from Gizurr, who is not typical, each bishop is traced upward through the father's line, and the father's female ancestors. The mother's line is treated in the same way, going upward through her female ancestors.

Only one of the bishops in Ari's lists (apart from Gizurr) occurs in the *Lineage* documents. This is Þorlákr Rúnólfsson. Tables I and II show (in tabular form) how his ancestry is represented in these two sources. According to Table I, Þorlákr was traced to three settlers: on his father's side, to Ketilbjörn of Mosfell and Óleifr of Borgarfjörðr; on his mother's side, to Hǫfða-Þórðr of Skagafjörðr. In Table II, Ari chooses none of these, but a remoter ancestress on the mother's side, Auðr *djúpúðga*.

The other two genealogical additions to *Íslendingabók* are concerned with external history. A list of five ancestors is given for Haraldr *hárfagri*, starting from Hálfðan *hvítbeinn*, King of the Uplanders. This is the prehistory of the family. The later kings of Norway, Óláfr Tryggvason, Óláfr *digri* and Haraldr Sigurðarson are derived from Haraldr within the text.

The third addition is the *langfeðgatal* of Ari himself, a numbered list. It gives the Yngling kings leading to Hálfðan *hvítbeinn*, and thence it branches (through four generations) to Óláfr *hvíti*, ancestor of the Breiðfirðings. The numbers suggest that this was a professional genealogical document, made up in sets of ten generations. The key-figure Óláfr is no. 30. By the same reckoning, the other branch from Hálfðan *hvítbeinn* led to

⁵ See Jón Helgason, *Byskupa sǫgur* I (1938), 10-12; it was entitled *Biskupa ættir* by Jón Sigurðsson.

⁶ The years between the election of St. Þorlákr and his consecration.

TABLE I

'Lineage of the Bishops of Skálaholt'

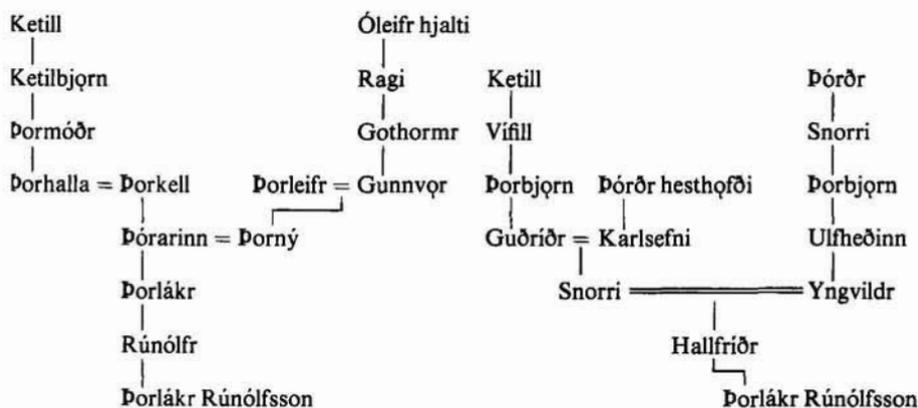


TABLE II

Íslendingabók addition 2



Haraldr in the thirtieth place.⁷ Neither Óláfr nor Haraldr appears in the poem *Ynglingatal*, the ultimate authority for the ancestry of the kings of Vestfold. Ari's source was probably a prose recension which differed in some details from the poem as quoted by Snorri in *Ynglingasaga*.⁸ But the important point is that Ari took the list of ancestors at its face-value. A line of descent from Yngvi and Njorðr belonged to the same category of antique learning as the lines connecting English kings to Woden; these he probably knew. But Ari's interpretation of history lay within the range of verifiable facts. There is no sign that he attempted to collate the history of the Skjoldungs with that of the Ynglings, as Snorri did. Above the level at which regnal years could be calculated lay prehistory. It is unlikely that Ari would envisage a genealogical scheme as a means of organizing the fragmentary information on Norwegian prehistory. This idea came a generation or two later.

These samples of Ari's use of genealogy are enough to show that scholars of the early twelfth century were familiar with the appropriate techniques. I say nothing of the complex genealogical work revealed in the surviving versions of *Landnámabók*. In all this activity, one thing is lacking. Early Icelandic historians had no use for the fine flower of the genealogist's art: the picturesque origin-legend, with heroic invaders, and sons in groups of three, seven or nine. The miniature origin-legends of *Landnámabók* are not of this kind. The core of the compilation is realistic. It represented for the most part family records, written and organized from the late eleventh century onwards.

Origin-legends did exist, but they belonged to poetry. In the Prologue to his *Edda*, Snorri gave an account of the mythological invader Óðinn, who came from the east; he left three sons to populate NW Europe, and three more in Scandinavia. All were ancestors of royal dynasties. The nucleus of this legend came from the Franks; and it also contains a large English element.

There was an indigenous origin-legend, developed in Norway. It presents a certain Hálfðan as the progenitor of royal and noble

⁷ According to Snorri (*Heimskringla*, Prologue) the *Ynglingatal* of Þjóðólfr enumerated thirty male ancestors of Rognvaldr; and by Snorri's reckoning Rognvaldr was of the same generation as Haraldr. The round number could include the subject of the pedigree.

⁸ Snorri may refer to a work of this kind when he states: "Eptir Þjóðólfs søgn er fyrst ritin ævi Ynglinga ok þar við aukit eptir søgn fróðra manna" (*Heimskringla*, Prologue). Cf., however, Svend Ellehøj, *Studier over den ældste norrøne historieskrivning* (Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana XXVI, 1965), ch. III.

families. This person is first found in the *Lays of Hyndla* (perhaps of the eleventh century, and not much later).⁹ Here a giantess is made to reveal her knowledge of ancient genealogy. The lays are a wisdom-exercise, to display the range of genealogical lore needed by a trained poet. Hálfðan is said to be father of eighteen sons, hence originator of the Skjöldungs, the Skilfings, the Qðlings and the Ynglings. His title is *hæstr Skjöldunga*; comparable to *heah Healfdene* in *Beowulf*. In Old English poetry this person belongs to Danish heroic legend. But in spite of the title, no other members of the older Skjöldung family occur in the *Lays of Hyndla*. Hálfðan has been annexed, to become the key-ancestor of a Norwegian heroic legend.¹⁰

This Hálfðan appears in *Skáldskaparmál* ch. 81, where he is called simply *gamli*; in a genealogical context this term denotes the founder of a family. The *Lays of Hyndla* alluded to a formula, the patriarch with eighteen sons; Snorri presents it systematically. A narrative kernel tells of Hálfðan the mighty king who sacrificed to ask for a lifetime of three hundred years. This was denied, but he was promised that his line would continue for three hundred years (i.e. ten generations) without any female or base-born link. The first nine sons of Hálfðan are appellatives of the battle-leader. These died in war, leaving no progeny. The other nine were founders of princely families. They are enumerated, with specimen descendants only. These are heroes of poetic legend, except for two connexions that are made with Haraldr *hárfağri*. One line leads to his great-grandfather Hálfðan *mildi*, another to the maternal grandfather of Hálfðan *svarti*. But the purpose of the genealogical formula is not historic. It is patently a means of organizing the *ókend heiti* for a king, as leader of the war-band and founder of dynasties. All eighteen names except one¹¹ are illustrated by poetic quotations.

Hálfðan *gamli* is used once more, in an origin-legend beginning from the eponym Nórr,¹² who came from the frozen north-east to people Norway. There are two versions of this legend. One is the Prologue to *Orkneyinga saga* (c. 1200); here Hálfðan *gamli* is absurdly made great-grandfather of Rognvaldr, Jarl of Mœrr. The other is the tract called *Hversu Nóreg*

⁹ Einar Ól. Sveinsson places *Hyndluljóð* between the late eleventh century and the end of the twelfth; see *Íslenzkar bókmenntir í fornöld* (1962), 351.

¹⁰ Cf. Einar Ól. Sveinsson (1962), 350: "eins konar norsk eftirmynd Hálfðanar Danakonungs".

¹¹ Nefir of the Niflungar.

¹² Oddr alludes to Nórr (*Saga Óláfs Tryggvasonar af Oddr Snorrason munk*, 83). Nórr is also mentioned in the opening sentence of *Historia Norwegiae* (early thirteenth century, based on a compilation of the late twelfth century), cf. G. Storm, *Monumenta historica Norwegiae* (1880), 73.

byggðisk; it survives only among the genealogical materials at the beginning of *Flateyjarbók*.¹³ Here Hálfðan *gamli* is placed in the mountain kingdom of Hringaríki. He has nine productive sons, but these are grouped in such a way that only three need to be located in Norway itself. Three sons were leaders of military expeditions, three were Vikings, and three stayed to rule their kingdoms. Each of these last three is connected to a female of the line of Haraldr: his mother, his wife and his great-great-grandmother.¹⁴

The manifest intention of this tract was to show that the rulers of all Norwegian provinces sprang from the three sons of Nórr. In fact, the compiler includes few families that could be considered historic; and these are in the maritime kingdoms (Sogn, Fjalir and Firðir, Sunnmœrr and Norðmœrr; perhaps also the family of Raumsdalr). The lines radiating from Hálfðan of Hringaríki are a mixture of poetic legend and historical speculation. The writer of the tract (or possibly, the author of a second recension) had been infected with a historical concept that ruined his overall scheme. He had come across the idea of Upplönd as nursery of the Norwegian royal family.

This concept was worked out by Icelandic historians during the twelfth century. They had no need of Hálfðan *gamli* to reconstruct the prehistory of the dynasty. The core of the reconstruction is a genealogical scheme.

A line of five ancestors for Haraldr *hárfagri* is among the additions to *Íslendingabók*. The first four of these come from the *Ynglingatal* of Þjóðólfr, a poet contemporary with Haraldr. In *Ynglingatal* the fifth and sixth members of the line are Óláfr and Rognvaldr, patron of the poet. But in Ari's list these positions are occupied by Hálfðan *svarti* and his son Haraldr. In this list, each king has an epithet, and none of them is in the poem. There is another difference. According to *Ynglingatal*, the first five members were all buried in Vestfold; which implies that this was the centre of their power. Yet Ari entitles the first member *Upplendingakonungr*. In Icelandic historical tradition the emphasis is on the mountain regions; the rich coastal area of Vestfold is mentioned later in the twelfth century, and especially by Snorri.

¹³ *Flateyjarbók*, I 21-6; see also Guðni Jónsson, *Fornaldar sögur norðurlanda* (1950), II 75-82.

¹⁴ Three of the non-native sons are also connected: Hildir to Harald's paternal grandmother; Lofði and Buðli to higher stages of his mother's ancestry.

Þjóðólfr had devised a long lineage for this family. He connected them to the ancient kings of Uppsala. The father of the first Hálfðan was Óláfr *trételgja*, and from this point upward there are thirteen names with vowel-alliteration. Þjóðólfr was aware that Hálfðan began a new dynasty, for he designates his grandson “the third prince”. The poet had to conform to a living tradition in the five generations leading to his patron. Beyond this point, he could glorify the dynasty in a conventional manner. It must of course have a remoter origin, and this was achieved by the genealogical device of attaching it to an ancient line of kings (the list was probably a mixture of regnal succession and agnatic descent, but this does not affect the issue). The Skjoldungs were not in question, for this poet. The Ynglings of Sweden were chosen.

We do not know on what authority Hálfðan *svarti* and his son were linked to the line of *Ynglingatal*. Haraldr had court poets to praise him, but the only reference to his origin is Þórbjörn’s “the son of Hálfðan, the young *yngling*” (*Haraldskvæði* 4); here *yngling* is probably a *heiti* for “king”, as used by other poets. Harald’s son Hákon is reckoned a member of the *Yngva ætt* by Eyvindr *c.* 961 (*Hákonarmál* 1). But Sigurðr Fáfnisbani and Helgi Hundingsbani are also assigned to the lineage of “Yngvi” (*Reginismál* 14; *Helgakviða Hundingsbana* I, 55); this remote ancestor-figure had become an honorific in the language of poets.¹⁵

The decisive reconstruction of Harald’s ancestry was probably carried out by Icelanders, some two hundred years after his time. It depended on a historic assessment of his achievement. *Heimskringla* tells of prophetic dreams, in which Hálfðan *svarti* was depicted as progenitor of kings of a united Norway. The fulfilment of this prophecy began with Haraldr. It continued in his successors Óláfr Tryggvason, Óláfr *helgi* and the Norwegian kings descended from Haraldr *harðráði*. Each of these represented a separate line, which had to be connected to Haraldr: as he was their political forerunner, so also he must be their common ancestor.

Haraldr became a patriarch, like some other key-figures of prehistory, and he was credited with many more than three sons. According to the tenth-century poem *Hákonarmál*, Hákon had eight brothers (who are not named). Historical works of the late twelfth century fixed the number of sons at sixteen (*Historia*

¹⁵ See W. Baetke, *Yngvi und die Ynglinger* (1964), 110-11, where examples are collected.

Norwegiae) or twenty (a compilation used for *Haralds þátr*, *Ágrip*, *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla*). The topic developed from numbered lists (*Historia Norwegiae*, *Ágrip*, *Fagrskinna*) to grouping by seven different mothers (*Haralds þátr*, *Heimskringla*).¹⁶ A few of the persons named actually were sons of Haraldr; but nevertheless they belong to an artificial genealogical structure. And this was no idle fiction, but an interpretation of historic tradition. Many of the names probably came from oral reports of local chieftains under Harald's control, or even of those before his time.¹⁷ He advanced himself not only by warfare but also through a network of personal obligations. The genealogical exposition of this network produced the multiple wives and sons.

The genealogical scheme which ran from Hálfðan *hvítbeinn* to three generations beyond Haraldr *hárfagri* was not created for its own sake. It was an instrument of historical research, to explain the origin and development of the Upplönd dynasty. By the late twelfth century, Icelandic scholars had organized the material in narrative form. Two branches of this work can be distinguished.¹⁸ A very brief account, probably descending from Ari, is represented by *Historia Norwegiae*; this includes the male line only, and no marriage-alliances are mentioned (up to Gunnhildr, wife of Eiríkr *blóðøx*). A fuller account is the basis of Snorri's narrative in *Heimskringla*. The earliest example of this branch is a tract on the kings of Upplönd; it originated in the twelfth century, but is recorded only in *Hauksbók*.¹⁹ A compilation of the same age covers only the careers of Hálfðan *svarti* and Haraldr; it forms a *þátr* in *Flateyjarbók*.²⁰

The *Uppland Tract* begins with Óláfr *trételgja*, father of Hálfðan *hvítbeinn*, and gives details of his parentage. The marriages of Hálfðan and his successors are briefly treated, with some remarks on relations with chieftains of the region. The *Uppland Tract* follows *Ynglingatal* in branching to Óláfr

¹⁶ Snorri has two different groupings. In the separate saga of St. Óláfr he follows the groups of *Haralds þátr*; but he produces a revised grouping in *Haralds saga hárfagra* chs. 17, 20-1, 25, 37. See Sigurður Nordal, *Om Olaf den helliges saga* (1914), 185-7.

¹⁷ The most reckless identification is made by Snorri, who says that a son Þorgisl was the first Scandinavian king of Dublin (*Haralds saga hárfagra* ch. 33). According to an Irish source, this was a notable Viking ruler who fell in 845. This Þorgisl does not appear in the numbered lists of *Historia Norwegiae*, *Ágrip* or *Fagrskinna*.

¹⁸ See Ellehøj (1965), ch. III, especially 112-18.

¹⁹ Finnur Jónsson and Eiríkur Jónsson, *Hauksbók* (1892-6), 456-7; see also *Fornaldar sögur norðurlanda* (1950), II 143-8.

²⁰ *Flateyjarbók*, I 561-76. Snorri used the source of this compilation, and retained some of the phrasing; see Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, *Heimskringla* (1941-51), I liv-v.

Geirstaðaálfr and Rognvaldr: but Hálfðan *svarti* is connected to the line. Snorri repeats much of the phrasing, but in places he diverges, and he makes significant additions.

In these historical works of the twelfth and early thirteenth century, an immigration-legend was developed to explain the transition from the Yngling dynasty to that of Upplönd.²¹ In *Historia Norwegiae*, it is stated that Hálfðan *hvítbeinn* came from Sweden to the mountain regions of Norway, where the inhabitants made him their king. According to the *Uppland Tract*, Hálfðan was brought up by his mother's family in Sóleyjar (or *Soleyjar*; see note 24 below), a part of eastern Norway bordering on Vermaland. He became king there, and gained neighbouring territories. Snorri is more specific. Although Hálfðan was reared in Sóleyjar, his kingship was established by armed invasion from Sweden. From this foothold, he extended his power north and west (Heiðmörk, Haðaland), south (Raumaríki), south-west (much of Vestfold) and south-east (Vermaland). The *Uppland Tract* mentions only Heiðmörk and Raumaríki, and states that he was buried in Heiðmörk. Snorri says that his body was taken to Vestfold, thus conforming to the place of burial in *Ynglingatal*.

Snorri follows a definite plan, which is inherent in the *Uppland Tract*, but is not there fully developed. The marriage-alliances recorded serve partly to explain acquisition of territory; e.g., the family gained full control of Vestfold through the marriage of Eysteinn, the second member. But their main purpose is to demonstrate a certain pattern of nomenclature. Each of the six early members of the dynasty (down to Haraldr) bore the name of his grandfather, paternal or maternal — with one exception. This is the fourth member, Guðrøðr; and there are signs that this one caused problems that were never resolved in the genealogical scheme.

The intention of the scheme is revealed in Snorri's major innovation. The *Uppland Tract* names the mother of Hálfðan *hvítbeinn* Sólva, sister of Sólvi *gamli*, who was the first to clear a settlement in Sóleyjar. But Snorri calls her Sólveig or Sólva,²² daughter of Hálfðan *gulltönn*, a descendant of Sólvi *gamli*. This Hálfðan is otherwise unknown; but the epithet shows that he was

²¹ W. Åkerlund, *Studier över Ynglingatal* (1939), 68-76 draws attention to the description of Óláfr *trételgja* as *átkonr frá Uppsölum*; he takes this to mean that Óláfr initiated the transition from Sweden.

²² Sólveig K; Solveig F, J.

the subject of some story.²³ His function here is to be maternal grandfather of Hálfðan. For this reason, Snorri intrudes him into the line of Sólvi, eponym of Sóleyjar (the area bounded by the river Glomma, modern Norwegian Solør).²⁴ In this way Snorri accounts for the name borne by the first member of the Upplønd dynasty.

The second member, Eysteinn, was issue of the marriage between Hálfðan and the daughter of Eysteinn, king of Heiðmörk. Snorri had local traditions about this Heiðmörk family. He tells of later members who rebelled against Hálfðan *svarti* and Haraldr; Hálfðan ceded half Heiðmörk to one of these "because of their relationship".²⁵ Eysteinn married the daughter of Eiríkr of Vestfold.²⁶ In *Ynglingatal* this Eysteinn is called *þofurr gauzki*.

The third member, Hálfðan, was named after his paternal grandfather. He was a great campaigner, who enriched himself by Viking expeditions. Hence the epithets *inn mildi ok inn matarilli*: he was free with rewards, but niggardly with the catering. Nothing is said of his territory, and he was buried in Vestfold.

The fourth member, Guðrøðr, bears a name not accounted for in the scheme. His mother is named Hlíf, daughter of Dagr of *Vestmarir* (or *-marar*). Much has been written about this mysterious term,²⁷ which was early misunderstood as a synonym for Vestfold. It could possibly refer to the seas around Ireland and the Western Isles.²⁸ Since Guðrøð's father was a Viking, he could be thought to take a wife overseas.

With this fourth generation, conflict between *Ynglingatal* and the Icelandic interpretation became acute. Þjóðólfr, com-

²³ Apparently a variant of the story told of Haraldr *hilditönn*, the Skjöldung hero. He had prominent teeth, with a gold sheen; after his many victories, he was called "war-tooth" (cf. C. af Petersens and E. Olson, *Spgur Danakonunga*, 1919-25, 5 and 13).

²⁴ The modern Norwegian district of Solør (med. Norw. *Soleyjar*) lies athwart the R. Glomma, up to the Swedish border. The first element of the name probably contains a word related to modern Norw. *søle* "mud, slough" (cf. *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder*, 1956—, X col. 253), while the second element now most closely resembles *ør* "bank, spit" (cf. Icel. *eyrr*). The name would seem to mean: "miry tracts submerged by the R. Glomma in flood". Thus Icel. *Sóleyjar* is most likely a literary interpretation which falsifies both elements, for it would mean "sunny isles". A nature-name of this type is the farm and district name *Sólheimar*, recorded for 12 different sites in Iceland (cf. *Vindheimar* 6 instances); see Magnus Olsen, *Stedsnavn* (Nordisk Kultur V, 1939), 65.

²⁵ *Ynglinga saga* ch. 49; *Hálfðanar saga svarta* chs. 1, 2; *Haralds saga hárfagra* chs. 1, 2. Snorri applies the title *Upplendingakonungr* to this family only.

²⁶ Two ancestors are given, Agnarr and Sigtrygg of Vindill; Jutish Vendel is intended, for the name Sigtrygg is common among Danish Vikings.

²⁷ See E. Hjárne, 'Vestmarr och Grenland', *Saga och sed* (1947), 19-68.

²⁸ As in v. 31 of *Ynglinga saga*; see Jón Jóhannesson, 'Ólafur konungur Goðröðarson', *Skírnir* CXXX (1956), 51-4.

memorating the kings of Vestfold, calls Guðrøðr *inn gofugláti*, "the magnificent". But in all accounts of the ancestry of Harald *hárfagri* Guðrøðr is called *veiðikonungr* (with two exceptions).²⁹ This is the epithet from Ari onwards. It is appropriate to a mountain king: compare Snorri's description of Sigurðr *hjørtr*.³⁰ According to *Historia Norwegiae* both Guðrøðr and his son ruled *in montanis*.

These two epithets are not compatible. "Magnificent" is appropriate to a raider; such as Guðrøðr's father Hálfðan, in the account of Snorri and the *Uppland Tract*. His son Óláfr is described in *Ynglingatal* as a *herkonungr* who controlled large territories overseas. The evidence of *Ynglingatal* could not be ignored; and the poem showed that these three generations had nothing to do with the mountains, but were Vikings based on Vestfold. So both the *Uppland Tract* and Snorri retain the epithet *gofugláti*. Snorri was aware of the older tradition, so he adds *veiðikonungr*: "He was called Guðrøðr the magnificent,³¹ but some called him hunter-king."

By early twelfth-century tradition, this family were kings of Upplönd. But Snorri knew that the founder Hálfðan was buried in Vestfold, which was the chief residence of the second Hálfðan. After Guðrøðr there was an opportunity to diverge. His son Óláfr took the seaboard of Vestfold, while his other son Hálfðan took the mountain hinterland (*inn iðra*). The third Hálfðan is firmly located in the mountains.³² His centre was in Hringaríki, and there he was buried (according to *Nóregs konunga tal* 5, *Ágrip*, *Fagrskinna*).³³

Óláfr *Geirstaðaálfr* stood in the fifth generation, according to *Ynglingatal*. But according to Icelandic tradition, Hálfðan *svarti* was also son of Guðrøðr. It was therefore necessary to use the genealogical device of a second marriage, so that both were sons, but by different mothers.

In the fifth generation I include Óláfr, because he illustrates genealogical method. His mother was Álfhildr, daughter of Álfarinn of Álfheimar (*Ynglinga saga* ch. 48). This was an old

²⁹ *Uppland Tract* and Prologue to *Sverris saga* (cf. *Hauksbók*, 1892-6, 457, and *Flateyjarbók*, II 533).

³⁰ *Hálfðanar saga svarta* ch. 5, "En þat er sagt frá atferð Sigurðar, at hann reið einn saman út á eyðimerkr. Hann veiddi stór dýr ok mannskœð. Hann lagði á þat kapp mikit jafnan."

³¹ *Ynglinga saga* ch. 48, so J; mikilláti K, F.

³² He is called *Upplendingakonungr* in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* (ed. Ólafur Halldórsson, Editiones Arnarnagæanæ A 1-3, 1958—), ch. I.

³³ Snorri adopts the Norwegian tradition that Hálfðan's body was divided between those regions that wished to share his remains (cf. Finnur Jónsson, *Fagrskinna*, 1902-3, Tillæg II, 383-4).

name for the area between the rivers Raumelv and Gautelv; it ranks as a kingdom only for the eponym Álfr and the dynasty created round him.³⁴ The marriage is intended to explain how Óláfr came to be designated *álfr* of Geirstaðir, where Þjóðólfr says he was buried. The epithet is recorded only by Icelandic writers. They also left evidence to show that Óláfr was the subject of a cult after his death.³⁵

Also in the fifth generation, Hálfðan *svarti* was issue of the marriage of Guðrøðr with Ása, daughter of Haraldr of Agðir. The connexion is used to explain the assassination of Hálfðan, which *Ynglingatal* records as an act of revenge by Ása. Hálfðan also married twice. This time, the duplication is caused by divergent traditions about the mother of his son Haraldr.

The first marriage was with Ragnhildr, daughter of Haraldr *gullskæggr* of Sogn.³⁶ Thus he gained control of this western kingdom, which became an important factor in the history of both father and son.³⁷ The marriage would neatly account for the introduction of the new name Haraldr in the sixth generation. But this obvious fulfilment of the pattern is avoided by the three sources available for this part of the scheme (*Haralds þátrr*, *Fagrskinna*, *Heimskringla*). All say that the issue of the marriage was a son Haraldr, who died young. His mother Ragnhildr also died, and Hálfðan married another Ragnhildr, daughter of Sigurðr *hjrtr* (*Fagrskinna* says Sigurðr *ormr-í-auga*). The son of this marriage was again named Haraldr (*Fagrskinna* alone states that he was called after his dead half-brother). The transparent clumsiness betrays an original pattern — Haraldr *hárfagri* was named after his maternal grandfather, Haraldr of Sogn — and at

³⁴ Álfr *gamli* occurs in various sources, including *Hyndluljóð*. This dynasty includes the names Álfeirr and Gandálfr, persons who appear in Snorri's narrative as opponents of Óláfr and Hálfðan, in the area between Eiðaskógr and Vingulmörk. It seems that the element *álfr* was regarded as typical of this area; when Egill was travelling to Vermaland he was hospitably received by a rich farmer called Álfr (cf. Finnur Jónsson, *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*, Altnordische Saga-Bibliothek 3, 2nd ed. 1924, ch. 73).

³⁵ Óláfr was worshipped in his grave-mound as a local deity, as if he were an earth-spirit (*álfr*) living in a hillock at Geirstaðir. Two stories of this cult, both connected with Óláfr *helgi*, are found in *Flateyjarbók* II 6-9, 135. See E. O. G. Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North* (1964), 193-5.

³⁶ Haraldr *gullskæggr* appears in *Landnámabók* (1968, 370), in connexion with Jarl Atli, who was given control of Sygnafylki by Hálfðan but denied it by Haraldr. Atli was killed, and his son Hásteinn settled in Iceland. The account of Hálfðan's marriage and acquisition of Sogn is mainly taken from *Heimskringla*; but the daughter of Haraldr *gullskæggr* is called Þóra in *Landnámabók*. Jón Jóhannesson, *Gerðir Landnámabók* (1941), 121-2, attributes the difference to the *Landnámabók* recension used by Styrmir. The settler Ævarr, founder of a powerful family in NW Iceland, was grandson of Haraldr of Sogn through another daughter, Þuriðr (cf. *Istendingabók*, *Landnámabók*, 1968, 224).

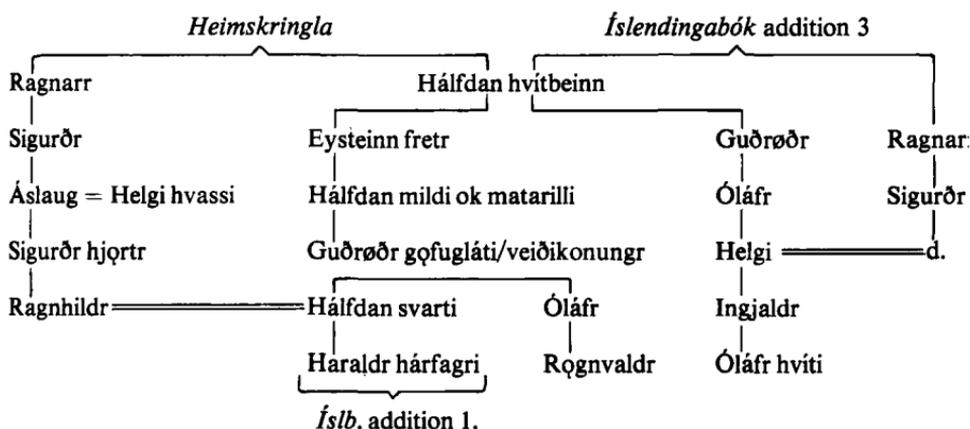
³⁷ The history of Jarl Atli and his relations with Hálfðan and Haraldr is given in *Heimskringla*, *Hálfðanar saga svarta* ch. 3, *Haralds saga hárfagra* ch. 12; differently in *Fagrskinna* (1902-3, 13-14).

the same time shows that there was some compelling reason to depart from it.

The purpose of this manoeuvre was to link Harald's mother to the Danish conqueror Ragnarr *loðbrók*. The three sources do this differently. *Fagrskinna* makes her daughter of Sigurðr, son of Ragnarr. *Haralds þáttr* makes her daughter of Sigurðr *hjørtr*, without further ancestry. Snorri alone gives five generations, making Sigurðr *hjørtr* son of Ragnar's granddaughter (see Table III). The same line of descent is found in *Þáttr af Ragnars sonum*.³⁸ Snorri alone located Sigurðr *hjørtr*, as king of Hringaríki. He did not belong there, for this kingdom had a traditional dynasty, specializing in the names Dagr, Hringr and Óláfr.³⁹ Snorri used this tradition elsewhere. One of the wives of Haraldr *hárfagri* was daughter of King Hringr Dagsson *ofan af Hringaríki*.⁴⁰ Two sons of this marriage were called Dagr and Hringr, and the names recur alternately for three generations in Snorri's narrative.⁴¹

Sigurðr *hjørtr* was "planted" in this area, probably because Hringaríki was the chief centre of Hálfðan *svarti*, and the place of his burial. Clearly Snorri was interested in Sigurðr *hjørtr* for his own sake, and he is openly quoting from a *lǫng saga*. From the

TABLE III



³⁸ This text is found in *Hauksbók* (1892-6), 458-67; also *Fornaldar sögur norðurlanda* (1950), I 287-303.

³⁹ So *Hversu Noregr byggðisk*. Among the Norwegian additions to *Fagrskinna* is an alternative account of Hálfðan's marriage; here his wife is daughter of Dagr, a *hersir* of Haðaland (*Fagrskinna*, 1902-3, Tillæg I, 382).

⁴⁰ *Haralds saga hárfagra* ch. 21.

⁴¹ *Óláfs saga helga* (in *Heimskringla*) chs. 36, 164, 199.

details he gives, it can be seen that Sigurðr was a mythical-heroic figure, regarded as a reincarnation of Sigurðr Fáfnisbani.⁴² The story was a continuation of the Volsung legend, as the textual history of *Dáttir af Ragnars sonum* shows.⁴³ The matter of Sigurðr *hjørtr* is a genealogical as well as a thematic detour. But it seems that by the end of the twelfth century this was the necessary route to connect Haraldr *hárfagri* to Ragnarr, by a female line.

Ragnarr was reckoned to be ancestor of the kings of Denmark and Sweden contemporary with Haraldr, through his sons Sigurðr and Björn respectively. Two other connexions with Ragnarr were made by Icelandic historians, and these are mutually incompatible. Each connexion is made through the same female, a granddaughter of Ragnarr married to a certain Helgi.

In Ari's *langfeðgatal*, Helgi is grandfather of Óláfr *hvíti*. This is the only female link that Ari gives in the whole list. The Helgi of Snorri's account belonged to a particular setting; the epithet *hvassi* identifies him as hero of a tale included in *Dáttir af Ragnars sonum*. But this source says little of his antecedents, and what is said of his descendants is (in the extant text) dependent on *Heimskringla*. The Helgi of Ari's *langfeðgatal* derived from a different setting. Helgi is a name frequent in heroic legend, where figures are readily adapted to varying situations. In each setting, he represents some dynasty that was to be connected to the family of Ragnarr through a nodal figure, granddaughter of Ragnarr.

It is unlikely that either Ari or Snorri aimed at a connexion with the kings of Denmark. Ragnarr was a desirable ancestor because he represented the final resurgence of the ancient Skjöldung line. Scholars have long thought that the theme of Ragnarr and his sons formed part of *Skjöldunga saga*. It has been argued that this was the closing section.⁴⁴ Ragnar's descent had been carefully contrived. The Skjöldung line had divided into two branches; both of these were reunited in another nodal figure, Auðr, daughter of Ívarr *viðfaðmi*. The dynasty founded by Ragnar's father Sigurðr *hringr* was attached to the line, by making Sigurðr grandson of Auðr. There can be little doubt that the purpose of this linkage

⁴² The epithet *hjørtr* recalls the elder Sigurðr, as do the youthful exploits of his namesake. The names of Sigurðr *hjørtr*'s grandchildren are also significant: Sugurðr, Ragnarr, Ragnhildr and Aslaug; these are recorded only in *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar* ch. 26.

⁴³ See Bjarni Guðnason, 'Gerðir og ritbráun Ragnars sögu loðbrókar', *Einarsbók, Afmælliskevja til Einars Ól. Sveinssonar* (1969), 28-37.

⁴⁴ See Bjarni Guðnason, *Um Skjöldungasögu* (1963), 114-32, 140. The material has been identified in the longest saga of Óláfr Tryggvason, cf. *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* (1958—), chs. 63-4.

was to make Sigurðr *hringr* and Ragnarr sole inheritors of the Skjöldung tradition. They recreated the empire of Ívarr,⁴⁵ which included one-fifth of England and much of NW Europe.⁴⁶

The career of Ragnarr is historically attested in Frankish and Irish chronicles. These sources show that he was active at Paris, and on the southern coast of Ireland, in the first half of the ninth century.⁴⁷ There is some evidence that his family originated in the Danish settlements along the coast of what is now western Sweden and south-eastern Norway. In the eighth century these settlements stretched all round the Vík.⁴⁸ It seems as if Snorri had some genuine historical tradition when he described the territorial claims made by Eiríkr Eymundarson of Sweden, early in the reign of Haraldr *hárfagri*.⁴⁹ Eiríkr had advanced to the eastern shore of the Vík; and he intended to press on until he subdued the areas formerly held by his ancestors, Sigurðr and Ragnarr. These were Raumaríki, Vestfold, Vingulmörk and south of it.

The Ragnarr of history dissolved into a hero of romantic story, attracting various stock motives. He lost his chronological position too, through the manipulations of genealogists. The process began with the earliest written Icelandic genealogies, and continued through the twelfth century. Modern historians have rightly been shy of Ragnarr. But Ari prized him as an ancestor. Snorri and his contemporaries considered this last Skjöldung prince an essential connexion for Haraldr *hárfagri*.

⁴⁵ See *Sögur Danakonunga*, 8-9, 12-15, 24-5.

⁴⁶ *Ynglinga saga* ch. 41. The passage probably comes from *Skjöldunga saga*; see Bjarni Guðnason (1963), 46.

⁴⁷ See A. P. Smyth, *Scandinavian Kings in the British Isles 850-880* (1977), 5-6, 83-100.

⁴⁸ See H. Koht, *Innhogg og utsyn* (1921), 16.

⁴⁹ *Haralds saga hárfagra* ch. 13.

THE AGE OF ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC ISLANDS IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY

BY ARNE ODD JOHNSEN

SEVERAL historians already have discussed the problem referred to in the title of this article. The matter has in fact general interest, but what has given special impetus to the efforts of researchers in this field is the question: Was King Sverrir the son of Sigurðr munnr?

Sverris saga gives most tenuous and imprecise information about Sverrir's childhood and youth, in fact about his whole life before he set out from the Faroes in 1174. However, on one point it cannot be doubted: that Sverrir's paternal uncle and foster-father, Bishop Hrói of the Faroes, put Sverrir to school and saw to his progress through the clerical grades until he was ordained priest.¹ This information is given in the first chapter of *Gryla*. That means that it was written at the instigation of Sverrir himself. In *Sverris saga* the king is frequently called priest, particularly by enemies intent on mocking him.² From the point of view of the Church, it was outrageous that Sverrir, a priest who had once taken his vows, should take up the sword. In the contemporary foreign chronicles in which he figures — which for the most part seem to have been inspired by Sverrir's clerical enemies — he is also called priest. In *Gesta Henrici secundi* the king is repeatedly referred to as "Suerus presbyter",³ Roger de Hoveden calls him "Swerus, rex et sacerdos"⁴ and William of Newburgh expresses himself not only unambiguously but also forcefully in his condemnation of the situation: "famosissimus ille presbyter Swerus", "execrandus presbyter" and "nefandus presbyter".⁵ Saxo, his contemporary, actually says that Sverrir had once been a parish priest in the Faroes.⁶ Furthermore Sverrir

¹ G. Indrebø, *Sverris saga etter Cod. AM 327 4°* (1920), 2: Sætti byscup hann til bocar oc gaf honom vigslor. sva at hann var vigðr til prestz.

² Indrebø (1920), 37; 90; 130; 160; 163; and elsewhere.

³ W. Stubbs, Benedict of Peterborough, *Gesta Regis Henrici secundi* . . . (Rolls Series, 1867), I 266-9.

⁴ W. Stubbs, *Chronica Magistri Rogeri de Houedene* (Rolls Series, 1868-71), III 270-2.

⁵ R. Howlett, *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen* . . . (Rolls Series, 1884-9), I 228-32.

⁶ J. Olrik and H. Ræder, *Saxonis Gesta Danorum* (1931), I 502: lisdem fere temporibus Suerus quidam, fabro patre genitus, sacerdotii, quod in Ferogia aliquamdiu gesserat, partibus abdicatis, Norvagiam petens, religionis munus militia mutavit.

is called “sacerdos excommunicatus” by Abbot Wilhelm of Ebelholt.⁷

There can be few accounts in *Gryla* which are as well supported by other evidence as the information that Sverrir was educated and ordained to the priesthood. It is therefore appropriate to investigate whether the canonical precepts touching the age at which ordination should take place may cast light upon Sverrir’s age and the trustworthiness of *Gryla*. This matter has been discussed in varying detail by, amongst others, Ludvig Daae,⁸ Fredrik Paasche,⁹ G. M. Gathorne-Hardy,¹⁰ Halvdan Koht,¹¹ Carl Fr. Wisløff¹² and Kåre Lunden.¹³ While Daae confines himself to explaining that “canon law requires an age of 30 years” for ordination to the priesthood, Paasche — who accepted the saga’s information about Sverrir’s age and other things — made some reservation: “He had not attained the canonical age; but this limit was constantly broken, all over Europe.” Gathorne-Hardy took a similar attitude to the problem: “Since even a deacon’s ordination called for an age of 25, Sverre could hardly represent his age on leaving the Faroes as less than that figure.” Halvdan Koht took a similar standpoint:

One could make the point — as has indeed been done — that the laws of the Church were perhaps not so meticulously observed out in the Faroes. But one would then have to assume that he had received ordination when he was still only 23 years old, and that would be all too egregious an exception to the rule. When we consider, in addition, that Sverrir himself in his saga says that in his youth he was so unruly that it must have been obvious that he was not a suitable candidate for the priesthood, it grows even more improbable that Bishop Hrói, who had charge of his fostering, should find it feasible to grant him ordination against the law at so early an age.¹⁴

As far as I can see, these questions have not so far led to any investigation into what conditions actually were. In the following

⁷ *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* (DN hereafter) VI (1864), nr 4. Cf. E. Vandvik, *Latinske dokument til norsk historie* (1959), 104.

⁸ L. Daae, ‘Var Sverre kongesøn?’, (*Norsk Historisk Tidsskrift*, 4. R., III (1905), 16.

⁹ F. Paasche, *Kong Sverre* (1920), 22 and 284.

¹⁰ G. M. Gathorne-Hardy, *A Royal Impostor* (1956), 83-4.

¹¹ H. Koht, ‘Korleis vart kong Sverre son til Sigurd Munn?’, (*Norsk Historisk Tidsskrift* 41 (1961-2), 293-4.

¹² C. F. Wisløff, *Norsk kirkehistorie* (1966-71), I 168.

¹³ K. Mykland (ed.), *Norges historie* (1976, in progress), 3 21.

¹⁴ Koht (1961-2), 293-4: Ein kunne gjera det innkastet — og det har vori gjort — at dei kanskje ikkje heldt kyrkelovene så strengt borte på Færøyane. Men ein måtte da gå ut ifrå at han hadde vorti prestvigd da han enda berre var 23 år, og det måtte da vera eit altfor grovt avvik frå lova. Når ein så dessutan hugsar på at Sverre sjølv i saga si seier at han i ungdoms-åra bar seg så ustyrlig at det måtte vera synbert at han ikkje høvde til å vera prest, så blir det enda meir urimeleg at bispnen Roe, som hadde han til oppfostring, skulle finne det mogleg å gje han prestevigsla mot lova i så ung ein alder.

discussion I should like to examine more closely the problems which arise in this connection.

A considerable number of canonical rules are founded upon the Jewish precepts contained in the Bible. This undoubtedly also holds true of the canonical stipulation that priests and bishops should be at least thirty years old at ordination. According to Numbers 4 the Lord commanded Moses and Aaron to muster and count the Levites between the ages of thirty and fifty, and gave precepts for their service in the tabernacle. Moses and Aaron themselves belonged to the tribe of Levi, whose members on the same occasion obtained something of a monopoly in various kinds of temple service.

Clear regulations as to the appropriate age for various clerical ranks are found in Canon 4 from the synod which Urban II convoked at Melfi on the tenth of September, 1089. Here it is specified that the minimum age for a subdeacon shall be fourteen or fifteen years, for a deacon twenty-four or twenty-five years, and for a priest thirty.¹⁵ It is at once probable that these rules would be better kept in the more central parts of Europe than in the outer reaches of Christendom; but, even so, it is certain that the rule was also broken in countries where the recruitment of new priests can have posed fewer problems than it did in the Atlantic islands that were put under the Norwegian primacy in 1153.¹⁶ An abbot had to be a priest before he could take up his office. In 1115, when Bernard, at the age of 24 or 25, was elected abbot of Clairvaux, he visited Châlons sur Marne, where Guillaume de Champeaux was bishop, to receive ordination and the bishop's blessing upon his new office. That bishop was no less eminent a personage than the founder of the monastery of St Victor in Paris, and he must have considered Bernard so worthy of the office that he allowed dispensation from the canonical stipulation as to age.¹⁷ Bernard was fully aware that this represented a breach of canon law. In his work on the life of the Irish Saint Malachi, he recounts that the latter was ordained when only 25 years of age, but Bernard finds the proceeding justifiable and excusable since he saw it partly as a proof of the zeal and ardour of the ordaining bishop and partly as a demon-

¹⁵ C. J. Hefele and H. Leclercq, *Histoire des conciles* V, 2 (1913), 1089-91.

¹⁶ Cf. A. O. Johnsen, *Studier vedrørende kardinal Nicolaus Brekespears legasjon til Norden* (1945); *Når ble erkebiskopstolen i Norge opprettet?* (Det kgl. Norske Videnskabers Selskabs Skrifter 1949 nr 1, 1950), and in A. Fjellbu, T. Petersen *et. al.* (edd.), *Nidaros erkebispestol og bispesete 1153-1953* (1955), I 34-57.

¹⁷ Cf. W. Williams, *Saint Bernard of Clairvaux* (1952), 18-22.

stration of Malachi's exceptional merit.¹⁸ It would certainly not be difficult to find examples to show that less worthy clerics than the two mentioned above were ordained priests at equally tender or tenderer ages. At a time when average life-expectancy was at a relatively low level, epidemics, unfilled episcopal thrones and other factors might cause a straight-forward dearth of priests and make a breach of older canonical precepts a necessity.

In Canon 3 of the third Lateran Council convoked by Pope Alexander III in Rome in 1179, it was once again decreed that no one under thirty years of age should be elected bishop. In this same Canon it is said that to the lowlier offices of the Church, as for example those of deacon, archdeacon, curate and parish priest, only men who had completed their twenty-fifth year should be appointed.¹⁹ The ordination of priests was an episcopal prerogative. In case of necessity it was at the discretion of the bishop to grant dispensation from the canonical precepts in his own diocese. Situations could of course arise where such a proceeding was warrantable or indeed necessary. The candidates might in certain cases approach St Malachi or St Bernard in meriting ordination. Otherwise it might happen that the shortage of priests was so great that the bishop felt himself obliged to ordain young, promising candidates for the priesthood long before they had attained the canonical age. Epidemics, temporary difficulties in education for the priesthood, and other problems might create a serious demand for priests, and therefore a compelling pressure upon a bishop however much he might wish to uphold canon law.

Moreover, the bishops were naturally hampered by human frailty. It was only natural for them to favour candidates for the priesthood who had particularly influential people behind them. It might also well be that a bishop saw a personal advantage in ordaining a young man prematurely, for example to assure himself of an assistant bound to him by particular obligations. The motives were doubtless many. Certain it is that the preserved evidence incontrovertibly bears witness that the age rules of canon law were broken in many cases, and in some instances in a manner far from slight. The examples we can give are of Icelandic provenance, and the sources are in the first place *Biskupa sögur* and *Sturlunga saga*. According to *Kristni saga*

¹⁸ *De Vita S. Malachiae*, II 4, in J. Mabillon, *Opera S. Bernardi* (1836), reprinted in J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina* CLXXXII (1862), 1073-1118.

¹⁹ Hefele-Leclercq (1913), 1089-91.

and *Jóns saga hin elzta*, Jón Ögmundsson (1052/3–1121), first bishop of Hólar, received his ordination from Bishop Ísleifr of Skálholt, who died in 1080.²⁰ Jón was then 27 or 28 years old, but it is more than likely that he was ordained some years earlier since his parents had placed him with Bishop Ísleifr to be educated while he was still a child.²¹

There were undoubtedly others in Iceland who were ordained before the age prescribed by canon law, but the *Biskupa sögur*, naturally enough, are most concerned with the age of candidates when elected to a bishopric; they seldom give precise information as to how old they were when they were ordained priests. But in the case of Þorlákr Þórhallsson, Bishop of Skálholt, the sources give unambiguous and interesting information on exactly this point. Þorlákr, who was born in 1133,²² came at a tender age to be educated by the priest Eyjólfur Sæmundsson of Oddi. The rank of deacon was conferred upon him by Bishop Magnús before he was fifteen years old, because that was his age when the bishop was burnt to death in Hítardalur on 30 September 1148.²³ After the death of Bishop Magnús, the bishop's throne in Skálholt was vacant for nearly four years. During this vacancy, the shortage of priests in the diocese increased, and soon it was so dire that the people of the Skálholt diocese asked Björn Gilsson, Bishop of Hólar, to grant ordinations at the Alþingi. He did so and there ordained Þorlákr Þórhallsson and many others. Þorlákr was, in other words, ordained to the priesthood at some time when he was not younger than fifteen and not older than nineteen.

From this it would appear that Þorlákr was ordained when he was eighteen or nineteen years old. This must have been decidedly young for ordination even in Iceland. In this case the absence of the bishop played a considerable part, and also, undoubtedly, the distinction which Þorlákr early obtained on account of his pious life and charity towards others. He was in fact, as we know, elevated to sainthood only five years after his death.²⁴

Another Icelandic saint, Guðmundr Arason, Bishop of Hólar, was born in 1161, probably on 26 September, and ordained priest on 16 March 1185, that is to say when he was about

²⁰ *Biskupa sögur* (gefnar út af hinu íslenska Bókmenntafélagi, 1858-78; abbreviated *Bps* hereafter), I 27, 157-8, 229-30. Cf. *DN XVII B* (1913), 259-60, 270.

²¹ *Bps*, I 153, 218-19.

²² *Bps*, I 112 and 299. Cf. also G. Storm, *Islandske annaler* (1880), 113.

²³ *Bps*, I 91.

²⁴ Cf. A. O. Johnsen, 'Torlak Torhallsson', *Norsk biografisk leksikon XVI* (1969), 532-6.

twenty-three and a half.²⁵ There are other examples of bishops of Hólar in the thirteenth century who were ordained priest when they were 21 or 22 years old.²⁶ It is exceedingly probable that young Icelanders in the twelfth century received ordination at an equally tender or even tenderer age. The churches in Iceland at this time were privately owned and governed by influential men who often had young men educated for the priesthood at their own expense. These had little social standing and easily became utterly dependent on their patrons, the owners of churches. It might happen that they served their masters as herdsmen and farmhands, and very often bore arms in the feuds of influential families.²⁷

Sturlunga saga gives several examples of this, and cites a few cases of early ordination to the priesthood about the end of the twelfth century. We hear, for example, that Þórðr Önuðsson was a child in years and newly ordained priest.²⁸ The same source tells of a young man, Guðmundr by name, who was ordained, but not quite twenty years old.²⁹

Since this was the situation in Iceland in the twelfth century, it cannot be expected that canon law would be better observed in Greenland, Shetland, Orkney and the Faroes, where gaps in the succession of bishops were more frequent and of longer duration, and the range of suitable candidates for the priesthood probably narrower than in Iceland. Against this background a new analysis, or interpretation, of what the sources have to suggest about King Sverrir's ordination may be considered. In AM 327 4to, which is considered the most reliable source in this connection, it is said of Bishop Hrói and Sverrir:

Sætti byscup hann til bocar oc gaf honom vigslor. sva at hann var vigðr til prestz oc er hann var fullcominn maðr at all dri. þa samðe hann sik litt við kennimanz-skap var u-æirin.³⁰

In *Eirspennill* — AM 47 fol. — this information is offered in virtually the same words:

oc setti byskup hann til bókr oc gaf honum vixlur ok var hann vigðr til prestz en er hann var roskinn maðr þa samði hann sig litt við kennimanz skap oc var helldr óæirin.³¹

²⁵ See *Bps*, I 410 and 429; further *DN XVII B*, 271-2.

²⁶ See *DN XVII B*, 274-5.

²⁷ See e.g. Jón Helgason, *Íslands Kirke fra dens Grundlæggelse til Reformationen* (1925); Jón Jóhannesson, *Íslendinga saga I* (1956).

²⁸ K. Kaalund, *Sturlunga saga* (1906-11), I 200: "... oc var barn at all dri oc ny vigðr til prestz."

²⁹ Kaalund (1906-11), I 219: "... ok annan mann, er Gudmundr het, vigdan, ok eigi allz tuitugr."

³⁰ Indrebø (1920), 2.

³¹ Finnur Jónsson, *Eirspennill* (1916), 257.

Against the background of the information given above about the situation in Iceland, it appears to follow simply from these passages that Sverrir was ordained before he was fully adult, and that later it became clear that he was unsuited to be a priest. Most of those who have treated the subject have been of the opinion that Sverrir cannot have been younger than twenty-five when he was ordained, because ordination in that case would have meant far too serious a breach of canon law. From what has been shown here, however, it is evident that in many cases in Iceland the canonical rules were deviated from, and this doubtless happened just as often in the other Atlantic islands. That means that the rules cannot serve as a basis for determining the age of King Sverrir — or perhaps of anyone in orders at all — without independent evidence. Here, as so often, the difference between theory and practice is great and almost incalculable.

On the Norwegian mainland they probably tried, particularly after 1153, to conform somewhat better with canon law, but here also, as in the rest of Europe, local and regional factors contributed to making it necessary or desirable sometimes to waive the most rigorous ecclesiastical requirements. The decrees of the great councils imposing celibacy on all clerics above the rank of subdeacon, for example, were not in fact regarded in the time of King Sverrir, either in Norway or in the Atlantic islands.

Sverrir's personality and his attitude to the Church and the clergy in Norway can be more easily understood when seen against the background of the primitive conditions which obtained in the North Atlantic islands in his childhood and youth. In such a context it is understandable that this bright young man who, during his upbringing, had eaten of the tree of knowledge, should grasp the sword and strive after the highest temporal power. Other educated men had done the same before him. It is enough to recall King Sigurðr slembir and Bishop Vimund of Sodor and Man.³²

³² See A. O. Johnsen, 'Vimund', *Norsk biografisk leksikon* XVIII (1977), 63-5.

WILLIAM MORRIS, EIRÍKUR MAGNÚSSON, AND THE ICELANDIC FAMINE RELIEF EFFORTS OF 1882

BY RICHARD L. HARRIS

THE diverse interests of William Morris — in art, literature, social reform and politics — led him in the late 1860's into a serious study of Iceland and its sagas. He learned Icelandic from his friend, Eiríkur Magnússon, who was Sub-Librarian at Cambridge, and the two men produced a number of saga translations into English. For reasons which I have dealt with elsewhere, Morris was fascinated by Iceland, and he visited the island twice, in the summers of 1871 and 1873.¹ He took with him various friends, Eiríkur serving on the first expedition to introduce them to the country and its people. Morris's interests in Iceland stayed with him to the end of his life, despite his later political preoccupations. He worked with Eiríkur on translations and maintained correspondence with at least one Icelander, his guide on the 1873 journey, up until 1896, the year of his death. While working on a comprehensive and continuing study of William Morris and his dealings with Iceland, I have come across letters and other documents relating to a particular incident of Icelandic history in which he played a part, the famine of 1882, and the efforts of the Mansion House Relief Committee established to aid in alleviating the situation.²

Iceland's northern extremity lies on the edge of the Arctic Circle, and without the Gulf Stream, life on the island would be difficult. However, fishing has usually been productive, and it has generally been possible to raise livestock, particularly sheep, and to grow enough hardy vegetables to keep people alive in the winters. On occasion, an accident of weather or a volcanic eruption might precipitate a condition in which such minimum livelihood was no longer feasible. The results could be disastrous. Perhaps one of the worst such tragedies came in 1783, when a

¹ Richard L. Harris, 'William Morris, Eiríkur Magnússon, and Iceland: A Survey of Correspondence', *Victorian Poetry* 13, Nos. 3-4 (1975), 119-30.

² Letters and other documents used here are in the National Library of Iceland (abbreviated Lbs.). I am grateful to Dr. Finnboði Guðmundsson, Head Librarian of that institution, and his colleagues for the kind help I received from them while there in June, 1974 and 1975. The project has been financed by two University of Saskatchewan President's Humanities and Social Sciences Awards, the Contingency Fund of the Dean of Arts and Science, the University of Saskatchewan Institute for Northern Studies, and a research grant from Canada Council. The letters of William Morris used in this article are in Lbs. 2188b, 4to, unless otherwise stated.

volcanic eruption in Vestur-Skaftafellssýsla scattered sulphurous ash over wide areas of the country, destroying grass and killing sheep. Many people died, and more were driven from their homes. In William Morris's own time, in 1875, the volcano Askja erupted, laying waste much land in northeastern Iceland. In that year, Morris helped Eiríkur and others in the founding of a Mansion House Relief Committee which collected money for food and fodder to aid the distressed area.³

Iceland's problems in the early 1880's began with the unusually cold winter of 1880-1, followed by a chilly summer which caused the hay crop to diminish to half that of an average year. Much livestock, even cows, thus had to be slaughtered in the fall of 1881. The next winter was also severe, so much so that livestock left outside died by the hundreds. Sea ice was still around the north and east coasts in April, and it was even to be found in some places in the south. It was too cold for hay and other crops to be successful, and there would be a need for additional heavy slaughtering at the end of the summer. The country was obviously unable to recover from these losses on its own. The situation was reported in Copenhagen, in *Berlingske Tidende*, on July 27, and shortly before this Eiríkur Magnússon must have heard of his country's plight. A letter from William Morris to Eiríkur's wife, dated July 27, [1882], expresses his sympathy and suggests steps by which a Relief Committee might be formed:

I am grieved indeed to hear that things are no better in Iceland: I shall be back in town next Tuesday morning & shall be happy to do anything to help. The first step will be to appoint a Committee with an hon: Sec: & Treasurer to whom subscriptions can be sent; I should think you would have no difficulty in getting together a very influential Committee: as a matter of course I will be on the Committee & will if you can't get a better name (as you could do) take the office of Treasurer: Also if you please I will write to any of the papers: in fact I will draft a letter at once but will not send it till I hear from you what has been done: you may put my name down for £10 pro: temp: meanwhile.

Then if there is time I don't doubt that the Lord Mayor would take the chair at a meeting at the Mansion House if you have got a good Committee together. Then as much as possible should be done by getting the papers to insert little paragraphs (ready cut & dried) they cost nothing and do much more than advertisements.

Mind, get as large a committee together as possible for the names sake; 2 or 3 will do the *work* if you have a good hon: Sec:

³ See Stefán Einarsson, *Saga Eiríks Magnússonar* (1933), 211-17, for a discussion of this project.

Please let me know what names you have got & tell me anything you want me to do: I think you should write to everybody you know and ask for help at once.

On August 17, *The Times* (p. 5) carried a short notice which indicates the progress that had been made in carrying out Morris's plan:

DISTRESS IN ICELAND. — A Committee for relieving the distress in Iceland is in course of formation; the following ladies and gentlemen among others having joined it: — The Lord Mayor, chairman; the Hon. J. Russell Lowell, American Minister . . . Any communications may be made to Mr. William Morris, Kelmstothouse, Upper Mall, Hammersmith; and to Mrs. Eirikur Magnússon . . . who will act as hon. sec. *pro tem*.

Articles giving publicity to the work of this Mansion House Relief Committee appeared in *The Times* during subsequent weeks. With £5,600 as its goal, the Committee had raised £2,200 by September 11, when at its meeting letters were read from the Minister for Iceland at Copenhagen and from the Hon. C. Vivian, British Minister at Copenhagen, with information on the state of the famine conditions. Although the former Minister remarked that the situation in northern Iceland was uncertain because of the sea ice making passage impossible in that area, even in early August — a fact which was itself indicative of the seriousness of the emergency — Vivian appeared to have more specific information. Without mentioning his sources, he claimed that

a large proportion, probably a third, of the live-stock of the island had perished from cold and hunger, owing to the scarcity of fodder and the intense cold in the latter part of the winter, which lasted until July, while a severe hurricane in April did a vast deal of injury. The northern districts of the island, from their proximity to the ice, had suffered the most, and they cannot be reached by steamer.⁴

Sympathy for Iceland was widespread, and it had been decided that Eirikur Magnússon should proceed there with whatever fodder and supplies had been purchased or gathered at the end of September. On the 2nd of the month, Morris wrote to his friend about the delicacy of handling the people who had to be dealt with in order to get the job done. Eirikur, as a native Icelander, was nationalistic and thus not altogether fond of the Danish Government, which had over centuries held his country in a control sometimes harsh and seldom beneficial to anyone but the Danes. As for merchants, who made a living off the Icelandic

⁴ *The Times*, September 12, 1882, 6.

peasant and with whom Eiríkur had to make arrangements for distribution of the fodder and provisions by boat, those men were notorious for their ruthlessness and dishonesty. Eiríkur himself was not a diplomatic soul — he was frequently at the centre of academic and other controversies in England, his fluent and often angry letters on a variety of subjects appearing regularly in the papers. Morris's concern for his friend's welfare and, more important, for that of the relief project, is evident in this letter:

I thought it better to delay answering your letter till I could see Ellis, who except Storer is the only other active member of the Committee in London, so that there might be no hitch at the meeting: he agreed with me that it is most desirable that you should go: so I think you ought if possible to be present at the meeting on Monday week so that you may produce some sort of scheme & be prepared to answer all questions.

You musn't forget that Mr. Storer has already agreed to take charge of the goods out to Borðeyri so we must take care not in any way to wound his susceptibilities; and he seems withal a very good fellow.

You must forgive me for offering you a bit of advice, since I am now an old hand at organizing committees & the like, and know how easy it is to *chill* the public if any hitch occurs: it is absolutely necessary that whatever your feelings may be about the merchants and the Danish Government, you should keep them to yourself; any smallest quarrel with either of these entities would ruin the present fund with the English Public, & would put a stopper on getting up anything similar in years to come. Try to wheedle the merchants into acting with you if possible.

Of course I agree with all the practical remarks in your letter; but don't quite understand your plan for gathering the horses: we must also on that point be very careful to do nothing that even looks like masterfulness, as you will be the agent of a body which is both foreign & private.

It would be a very good thing (indeed necessary) to get letters from important & if possible official persons in Iceland, such as Habstein, Thorberg, the Bishop: of course over here the parsons will be looked on as officials & of good authority.

I may as Treasurer ask you to be careful to have your accounts drawn out very clearly.

I enclose a copy of the letter from the Iceland trading Company which I think you have heard of.

There is an almost eerie prophetic note in Morris's suggestion that statements be obtained from men of authority on the state of the famine, for on September 16 things took an unfortunate turn for the efforts of the Mansion House Relief Committee. *The Scotsman* of that date carried a letter (p. 9) from R. and D. Slimon, Scots merchants who profited from the Iceland trade, to the effect that their ship *Camoens* had been in northern Iceland for six weeks and that problems there were not so extreme as had been reported.

The actual facts are that the season has been a backward one, and the Greenland ice coming down on the coast has interfered to a considerable extent with the ordinary navigation, thus cutting off supplies of groceries, &c. As regards the live stock he [Slimons' representative] informs us that they will be able to export more fat sheep than they have done for the last 100 years, and that they are in primer condition than they have been for several seasons. We have made arrangements to import over 20,000 sheep, and have two steamers running engaged in this trade.

Eirikur replied on September 20 in *The Scotsman* (p. 8) that reliable official sources assessed the situation as serious, and he noticed that the export of 20,000 sheep did not in fact indicate good times:

the farmer must deprive himself and his household of mutton, at any price it will fetch, in order to procure from the proceeds of the sale of the sheep fodder for his cows; for when the cow dies the days of the family are told.

Eirikur at one point wrote to his wife that the Slimons were opposed to aiding the farmers because they would then not be able to import so many sheep.⁵ At the end of the letter quoted above, he advises the brothers with some asperity: "Finally I beg to assure Messrs Slimon that the relief is not intended to interfere with their trade, but to alleviate misery, and thereby indirectly to ensure the continuance of their trading transactions in the immediate future." The situation was admittedly complex — perhaps too complex for the Mansion House Relief Committee notices to represent accurately and at the same time effectively the facts which lay behind the problem. A letter from W. G. Lock in *The Scotsman* (Sept. 23, p. 8) describes the problem's subtleties and concludes "the relief of the northern farmers — no relief is needed in the south — is only to be brought about by sending out at once by steamers several cargoes of compressed hay, and the more readily transportable of the prepared cattle foods . . ." Lock's motives seem to have been more sincere than those of the Slimons. He carried on his private correspondence with the Relief Committee in which he voiced his objections to what he found exaggerated and oversimplified reports of the famine, at one point eliciting from Morris's friend F. S. Ellis a statement, in a letter dated September 23, indicating the committee's awareness of the justifiability of his contentions:

There has never been any intention of sending relief where it was not needed, but you will be gratified to learn that our supplies of fodder will leave in a day or two for the ports named in your letter.

⁵ A letter dated September 30, 1882, in Lbs. 2179, 4to.

Had we endeavoured to explain the difference between one portion of the island requiring aid and another not doing so, the chances are we should not have succeeded in obtaining the necessary funds, but we have taken careful means to prevent any misappropriation of the money collected.⁶

Although thus assured by Ellis, Lock continued to watch the committee's activities with suspicion and eventually found much to object to in the distribution of supplies to Iceland. Eirikur took issue with a detail in a letter from Lock to *The Scotsman* (Sept. 30, p. 9), and the two became involved in a brief petty quarrel irrelevant to the more pressing problems of the relief project itself.

Another source of friction came from the Paterson family, of whom Spence Paterson was British Consul for Iceland. One of his brothers, Charles E. Paterson, who had visited Iceland in August, journeying along the north coast, claimed that "not a hint or a whisper reached me that any one was starving . . ." So far as he had been able to ascertain, all was good except for a lack of grass, and some starving animals:

It seems somewhat remarkable that my brother, Mr. Spence Paterson, Her Britannic Majesty's Consul for Iceland, whose official and commercial relations extend over the entire island, had, up till a week ago, received no information which indicated that there was any degree of distress existing in any part of Iceland.

This letter, which appeared in *The Times* on September 28 (p. 8), was strong in its disapproval of the Mansion House Relief Committee's publicity, and there were objections to it. The Lord Mayor published a letter from Mr. H. M'Keone in *The Times* for October 7 (p. 10), to inform the public that he had spoken with the Consul while visiting in Iceland in June and July:

Mr. Paterson . . . with whom I was in constant personal communication, told me that the distress was and had been very great; that in many of the houses the whole of the inmates were laid up from measles, &c.; and that from this reason many households were on the point of starvation. Mr. Paterson added that this prevalence of disease, coupled with the cold summer, would lead to even greater distress in the ensuing autumn and winter. So far I have written only of what may be termed personal experience, but the reports which were brought up from the north of the island were of a much more serious character.

In his own experience, M'Keone had seen a scarcity of food, semi-starved animals, and a startlingly high number of funerals, given the size of the population. It was thus puzzling that both

⁶ In W. G. Lock, *Icelandic Troubles, and Mansion House Muddles* (1883), 11.

Consul Paterson's brothers contended otherwise.⁷ The problem may have arisen partly because of the complexity of the situation and the Consul's closeness to it. He wrote to Lock, agreeing with his views, in a letter published in *The Times* on October 30 (p. 6):

I...take this opportunity of thanking you for exposing the gross misstatements and exaggerations which have been circulated in regard to the alleged 'famine' and for pointing out in what way real assistance can be rendered in those districts where the hay crop has failed.

It must be emphasized that, unlike his brothers, the Consul did not categorically deny the existence of an emergency — he only agreed with Lock in the latter's specific detailing of its nature and extent. Both, apparently, disapproved of the advertising practices of the Relief Committee, which undoubtedly were a result of a desire to muster support for their cause, rather than to mislead the public. It is possible, too, that Consul Paterson came upon further information, after seeing M'Keone, which indicated the overall effects of the famine would be less dramatic than he had hitherto supposed. At any rate, the Mansion House Relief Committee, meeting on October 2, found various statements of the Paterson brothers so contradictory as to be of little use in deciding what was true of the state of things in Iceland.⁸

This controversy must have been upsetting to individuals responsibly involved in the committee's work, since a scandal was looming on the horizon if sufficient support could not be obtained for the validity of their work. To Eiríkur, who by then was in Glasgow waiting to depart for Reykjavík on the *Lylie*, F. S. Ellis wrote on September 27:

I have been about all day today seeking to counteract the statements . . . to the effect that the famine in Iceland has been grossly exaggerated and Morris has just come up from Kelmescott with the same purpose.⁹

Morris himself wrote from Kelmescott to Eiríkur a few days later with encouragement and advice:

October 2nd.

My dear Magnússon

I have your letter which I shall note & keep till you come back: it is most annoying that is[?] & won't prevent one saying the only thing worth saying to these rascals: 'You are damned liars.' but patience is the only recourse. I

⁷ Thomas G. Paterson, in *The Times* (Oct. 3, 1882, 10), quoted a letter dated September 4 from Jón A. Hjaltalin, "Principal of Modruvellir College": "Many things have been getting scant, such as coffee and sugar; there is, however, no actual distress or famine about these parts. Although the seasons have been severe, I must admit that there is no more failure of harvest than in many other countries."

⁸ *The Times*, October 3, 1882, 6.

⁹ A letter in Lbs. 404, fol.

am writing this in hopes it will catch you in time to wish you heartily God speed, & to say that in my opinion it is important for you to bring back letters from amptmen, clergy, good bonders & the like setting forth the real state of the case in their respective districts. As for these scoundrels, who are of the type of the cooly-traffickers & rum & canon (*sic*) missionaries who have disgraced us all over the world, it is of little use noticing them; it only advertises them.

Hoping that even your rough voyage & hard work will do you good rather than harm as to health

By the way don't publish this letter, for we are bound to keep our tempers.¹⁰

No doubt heartened by these words of friendship and support, Eiríkur left for Iceland on October 4, having fired a last salvo at Lock, in *The Scotsman* (p. 3), printed the day after departure, this time about the latter's questions concerning the relief activities of 1875.

Morris himself must have felt very awkward about having recruited friends to help in a project which had suddenly become so unpopular. Back at Kelmscott, he wrote to F. S. Ellis, on September 29: "I repeat I am so vexed that you should have been let in for such worrits — I am reminded of Swinburne's view of providence when he said that he never saw an old gentleman give a sixpence to a beggar, but he was straightway run over by a bus."¹¹ Although he may have been upset at this point, the furore had only begun for Morris and his fellow committee members.

About a week after Eiríkur's sailing, an old enemy and fellow countryman, Guðbrandur Vigfússon, who, like Eiríkur, had spent years in England and established himself as an academic figure, quarrelling with the Sub-Librarian from time to time over scholarly matters, suddenly raised an active voice in the campaign against the activities of the Mansion House Relief Committee. On October 13, Guðbrandur published in *The Times* (p. 4), a lengthy discussion of the situation, ironically dubious of there being any famine in Iceland, suspicious of the motives of the perpetrators of such a rumour, and — seemingly most important to him — anxious lest the Icelander should lose his pride: "They are teaching my countrymen to beg and play the pauper, and to lose all sense of shame . . ." Although displeased with what he saw as "workhouse morality" in the proceedings, Guðbrandur also complained of another danger: "Again, if it turns out, as I think, that there is no real famine, men's hearts will

¹⁰ A letter in Lbs. 404, fol.

¹¹ William Morris, *The Letters of William Morris to His Family and Friends*, ed. Philip Henderson (1950), 161.

be steeled against us, and some day, if (which God forbid) some calamity should befall us, we shall then cry out in vain." Eiríkur's wife seems to have desired a public rebuttal of Guðbrandur's attack, but Morris, in a letter written to her November 2, urged restraint and the wisdom of waiting for her husband's return. At that time, he presumably hoped to be able to rely on the letters of witnesses which his friend was to bring back from Iceland:

Having read your enclosure carefully, & thought over the matter, I can't help coming to the conclusion, in spite of my indignation with Vigfússon, that it would be better not to publish it: You see the public cannot be got to go into the wrong or right of what seems to them to partake of the nature of a personal quarrel, they only stand by & grin sardonically. I think I should try to publish nothing till the Committee put forth their official account on Eiríkur's return.

Also to say the truth I don't think there is the least chance of the Times publishing it; especially now with parliament sitting.

Please take this as it is meant in friendly wise & excuse my differing from you.

As usual, it was Morris who counselled Eiríkur and his wife to moderation, more aware than they of the difficulties of dealing with the English public, a more distant entity than its Icelandic counterpart.

Eiríkur was back in England in late November, an impressive pile of letters in hand — so impressive, in fact, that the Lord Mayor complained after having seen them: "voluminous letters or statements written by Icelanders and translated into English is really not a correct representation of what these people mean."¹² In reply the next day, Eiríkur protested, at the same time expressing his willingness to follow the Lord Mayor's wishes.¹³ His report, entitled *The Distress in Iceland*, was published in late 1882 and included 31 of the precious documents, in translation. A notice in *The Times* (Dec. 12, p. 9), about a meeting of the Mansion House Relief Committee on the previous day, told of the success with which Eiríkur's report had been received there. Among other things, he mentioned his inability to "persuade Mr. Paterson, the British Consul, to allow the ship to go to the north until the whole of the cargo consigned to that gentleman was unshipped, which delayed the vessel 18 days." From this report, at least, it does not seem that the Consul was terribly sympathetic towards Eiríkur and his objectives.

¹² A letter from J. Whittaker Ellis to W. J. Soulsby, December 18, 1882, in Lbs. 404, fol.

¹³ A letter dated December 19, 1882, in Lbs. 2181, fol.

On December 27, *The Times* (p. 6) printed an affidavit signed by over seventy men of importance in Iceland, confirming the country's distress and admonishing Guðbrandur for having written "without seeking any foundation whatever for his statements", or having been "misled by entirely false reports as to the condition of our country and the nature of the present distress". "We feel sorry that a countryman of ours has written a letter which we can hardly imagine its author has been induced to publish by such motives as ought to be the only ones admissible in a matter of so great importance." Although Guðbrandur had seen himself as motivated by a desire to maintain his country's pride, it was a false pride in which he sought to indulge, and few of his countrymen thanked him for his act. On January 3, a letter from Guðbrandur was printed in *The Times* (p. 4). It expressed concern over what had been done with the money collected and questioned why all the hay had been left at one rather obscure port when it had in fact been needed generally throughout the north. Guðbrandur supported the integrity of the Slimons and condemned the Danish merchants who had attested to the veracity of reports acted upon by the Relief Committee.

Early in 1883, although Iceland still stood in need of help, the work of the committee came to a halt, frustrated by the adverse publicity created by the greed of the Slimon brothers, the strange pedantry of Lock, and the arrogance of Guðbrandur who himself would never have to live with the results of his high-minded thoughtlessness. The committee held a few meetings early in 1883 to put its financial affairs in order. The last letter related to the project, dated April 20, 1883, from W. J. Soulsby, private secretary to the Lord Mayor, to Eiríkur Magnússon, deals with the final transaction:

I think you may like to know that we have remitted the balance of the Iceland Fund £759.15.8 to the Danish Minister for transmission to the Relief Committee at Copenhagen. With this act the Fund closes and I hope, now that our very persistent critics seem, at last, to be silenced, that you and Mrs. Magnússon will only have pleasurable recollections of the good that you were able to do to your distressed fellow countrymen.¹⁴

Unfortunately, not all the memories could be pleasurable, and for years afterwards Eiríkur was publishing letters in Icelandic papers, attempting to justify his views and his handling of the relief activities.¹⁵

¹⁴ A letter in Lbs. 404, fol.

¹⁵ For a list of some of the letters and articles of Eiríkur Magnússon on this subject, see Stefán Einarsson (1933), 335.

In England, though, the matter came to a close and was forgotten, a strange ending for a project which had begun so ambitiously. That there was in fact real and devastating hardship in Iceland cannot be doubted. The great influx of Icelanders into the United States and Canada in these years was occasioned largely by the difficult times upon which the home country had fallen. But the English public, whose interest William Morris had been so careful to nurture and not discourage, had been put off, and nothing more could be done.

THE INITIAL IMPACT OF THE VIKINGS ON IRISH ART¹

By JAMES GRAHAM-CAMPBELL

AT the first International Congress of Celtic Studies, in 1959, Dr. Françoise Henry described the initial impact of the Vikings on Irish art as "catastrophic" (Henry 1962, 61), a term that she has since used to describe the initial impact of the Vikings on the Irish monasteries (Henry 1967, 17). She saw the monasteries as "the store-houses of Irish craftsmanship", and stated that the annals tell "automatically about the fate of Irish art" (Henry 1962, 63 and 61), when they record Viking raids on monasteries. The written sources from the period also suggested to M. and L. de Paor that "the religious life of the monasteries and the production of works of art must have become impossible in the ninth century" (de Paor 1964, 142).

Dr. Henry's belief is founded on two assumptions. The first concerns the role of the monasteries in the production of Irish art: they are interpreted as the only significant centres of

¹ This paper is a revised version of one read at the Fifth International Congress of Celtic Studies, held at Penzance in April 1975. I am particularly grateful to the late Dr. Kathleen Hughes and to Dr. David Wilson for their advice and comments.

Works cited:

- M. and L. de Paor, *Early Christian Ireland* (1964).
J. A. Graham-Campbell, 'Two Groups of Ninth-century Irish Brooches', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* CII (1972), 113-28.
J. A. Graham-Campbell, 'The Lough Ravel, Co. Antrim, Brooch and Others of Ninth-century Date', *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* XXXVI-XXXVII (1973-4), 52-7.
J. A. Graham-Campbell, 'Bossed Penannular Brooches: A Review of Recent Research', *Medieval Archaeology* XIX (1975), 33-47.
J. A. Graham-Campbell, 'The Viking-Age Silver Hoards of Ireland', in B. Almqvist and D. Greene (eds.), *Proceedings of the Seventh Viking Congress* (1976), 39-74.
H. Hencken, 'Lagore Crannog', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* LIII, C (1950), 1-247.
F. Henry, 'The Effects of the Viking Invasions on Irish Art', *Proceedings of the International Congress of Celtic Studies, 1959* (1962), 61-72.
F. Henry, *Irish Art in the Early Christian Period (to 800 A.D.)* (1965).
F. Henry, *Irish Art during the Viking Invasions (800-1020 A.D.)* (1967).
K. Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland: Introduction to the Sources* (1972).
O. S. Johansen, 'Bossed Penannular Brooches', *Acta Archaeologica* XLIV (1973), 63-124.
A. T. Lucas, 'Irish-Norse Relations: Time for a Reappraisal?', *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* LXXI (1966), 62-75.
A. T. Lucas, 'The Plundering and Burning of Churches in Ireland, 7th to 16th Century', in E. Rynne (ed.), *North Munster Studies* (1967), 172-229.
D. Ó Corráin, *Ireland before the Normans* (1972).
R. M. Organ, 'Examination of the Ardagh Chalice: A Case History', in W. J. Young (ed.), *The Application of Science in Examination of Works of Art* (1973), 238-71.
D. M. Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Ornamental Metalwork, 700-1100*, in the *British Museum* (1964).
D. M. Wilson and O. Klindt-Jensen, *Viking Art* (1966).
J. I. Young, 'A Note on the Norse Occupation of Ireland', *History* XXXV (1950), 11-33.

patronage and artistic skills in Ireland at this period. The second is that these monasteries suffered so severely from Viking attacks that they must have more or less ceased the production of works of art.

There is no doubt that Irish monasteries were important centres of patronage, containing highly skilled artists of all kinds, but they were far from being the only such centres. Excavations of major secular sites have shown that, for instance, the kings of Lagore (cf. Hencken 1950) and the kings of Knowth² employed ornamental metalworkers. Monastic workshops presumably had the monopoly of manuscript illuminators and stone-carvers but, even supposing that the Viking attacks did destroy the artistic life of the monasteries, it does not follow that the art of the metalworker must have declined as well.

But was there really a decline in the arts? If this was the case, then it must be demonstrated that the quality of Irish art stood at a higher point immediately before the main period of Viking raids than it did afterwards.

M. and L. de Paor have pointed out that "the art of figure-carving in stone... reached its zenith in these troubled centuries" (de Paor 1964, 143). This fact has troubled Dr. A. T. Lucas, who has emphasised the inconsistency in arguing that Vikings disrupted the activities of monastic workshops at precisely the time when many of the relevant monasteries were excelling in stone-carving. He was forced to conclude that "the part played by the Vikings in bringing about the deterioration [in artistic production] may have been exaggerated, perhaps inordinately" (Lucas 1966, 74). He was, however, unable to advance any other cause for the supposed decline in standards in other fields.

Dr. Kathleen Hughes was equally concerned with these problems and noted both "the sharp decline in metalwork and manuscript illumination at the beginning of the Viking Age", and the simultaneous *floruit* in stone-carving. To explain this, she suggested that "monasteries may have deliberately put their artistic effort and patronage into a medium which was less vulnerable to Viking attacks" (Hughes 1972, 265). But if Viking attacks were really responsible for having broken as many shrines and having plundered as many books as is sometimes claimed, one would have expected that effort and patronage would have been devoted to replacing these necessary artefacts.

² I am most grateful to Dr. George Eogan for this information.

It is true that not much 9th-century ecclesiastical metalwork has been recognised, but such might be revealed on the removal of later accretions from the various shrines which have not yet been archaeologically investigated. Much has been lost, even in quite recent times, like the silver shrine (made for the Book of Durrow) inscribed as being the gift of Flann Sinna, high-king of Ireland from 879 to 916.³

Dr. Hughes shrewdly observed that, in contrast to the supposed effects of the Viking attacks of the 9th and 10th centuries, "in the eleventh and twelfth centuries violence to churches by the Irish did not prevent the production of fine books and metalwork. This needs explaining" (Hughes 1972, 159). Thus Dr. Lucas and Dr. Hughes both found difficulty in accounting for a 9th-century decline in artistic production in Ireland on the basis of Viking attacks on the monasteries. Their problem would not exist, however, if it could be demonstrated that there was in fact no artistic decline in the 9th century, which is anyway agreed to be the case with stone-carving.

The initial point that needs to be established is the date at which the Scandinavians first made a serious impact on Ireland. D. Ó Corráin has commented on the first twenty-five years of Viking attacks that "the raids average out at a fraction over one per year, a rate which, if the annals are at all representative, can have caused no widespread disorder or great distress in Irish society even if we multiply it by a factor of five" (Ó Corráin 1972, 83). It was not until the 830's that the raids became more intensive, and more widespread plundering took place. Only in 840-1 are the Vikings recorded as having over-wintered for the first time, so that there is little reason, archaeologically speaking, for considering the Viking Age in Ireland as having commenced before the mid-ninth century when the first Scandinavian settlements seem to have been established. The so-called "40-years' rest", or easing of Scandinavian pressure, started about 880. What is involved therefore in a discussion of the initial impact of the Vikings on Irish art must be a comparison of the native products of the late 8th and early 9th century, with those of the later 9th and early 10th century. It is the latter which will reflect whatever initial impact the activities of the Scandinavians may have had.

³ This survived until the military occupation of Trinity College Dublin in 1689. For a 17th-century description, see A. A. Luce (ed.) *Evangeliorum Quattuor Codex Durmachensis* (1960), 31-2.

A simplified scheme of the development of Irish metalworking for part of the relevant period has been outlined by the de Paors: "three broad phases can be distinguished in the metalwork, corresponding very roughly to the first and second halves of the eighth and the first half of the ninth century respectively" (de Paor 1964, 116-18). To the first half of the 8th century are attributed the two major achievements of the Irish metalworkers' art, the so-called "Tara" brooch, and the Ardagh chalice. This dating is also favoured by Dr. Henry (Henry 1965, 116), and most other archaeologists. Of the last phase the de Paors write that "the ninth-century style relied on rather monotonous rectilinear interlace in the *Kerbschnitt* technique" (de Paor 1964, 119), and thus they do not encourage one to expect great quality in late 8th- and early 9th-century Irish metalwork.

Dr. Henry's characterisation of 8th- and early 9th-century Irish metalwork is one that some feel cannot be equated with the surviving evidence. She has written of "the sumptuous appearance of metal objects", and of how "chalices and book-covers on the altar glittered with silver and gold ornament" (Henry 1965, 92), whereas Dr. Lucas has pointed out that, at the time of the 9th-century raids, "gold [was] being used only in microscopic quantities in the form of gilding, filigree and granulation and silver not a great deal more lavishly, while the overwhelming proportion of the weight of the items consisted of bronze" (Lucas 1967, 212).

There is no denying that the Ardagh chalice and the "Tara" brooch are sumptuous. They are masterpieces of the jeweller's art, but each is *sui generis*. There exists a real danger of being seduced into the belief that, because Irish metalworkers could rise to such supreme heights during the earlier 8th century, these achievements represent the general standard of pre-Viking-Age Irish metalwork. They clearly do not. The Irish metalwork found in Norse graves, much of which must have been made in the late 8th and early 9th century, tells rather a different story.⁴ There is nothing that is "sumptuous", nothing that displays exceptional technical virtuosity. There are, however, many well-designed pieces, competently made.

⁴ Most of this is listed in H. Shetelig (ed.), *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* (1940-54), Part V. The identification of many such objects as being of Irish origin must, however, be reconsidered in the light of recent work. See E. Bakka, *Some English Decorated Metal Objects Found in Norwegian Viking Graves* (Årbok for Universitetet i Bergen, humanistisk serie No 1, 1963), and 'Some Decorated Anglo-Saxon and Irish Metalwork Found in Norwegian Viking Graves', in A. Small (ed.), *The Fourth Viking Congress* (1965), 32-40; also D. M. Wilson, *Reflections on the St. Ninian's Isle Treasure* (Jarrow Lecture 1969, 1970), 8-9, and in A. Small, C. Thomas, and D. M. Wilson, *St. Ninian's Isle and Its Treasure* (1973), 90.

It would appear that, after the first half of the 8th century, Irish metalworkers were no longer able to aspire to the heights that they had by then achieved. But this is perhaps to have been expected. The Ardagh chalice displays the majority of techniques known to the Irish metalworkers of the period — brilliantly executed (cf. Organ 1973). The “Tara” brooch is ornamented with exceptionally fine filigree and presents a remarkable concentration of coherent ornament in a small space. Working with the same techniques and in the Hiberno-Saxon style, it is doubtful whether there were further heights to which Irish metalworkers might have aspired. At the same time, it must again be emphasised that these are exceptional pieces produced by exceptionally talented artist-craftsmen. In comparison, the metalwork of the late 8th and early 9th century cannot be said to represent a highpoint in the development of Irish art — a period of excellence perhaps, but not one of brilliance.⁵ The problem now becomes whether or not this excellence was maintained despite the Viking attacks. At this point, in connection with metalwork, it is interesting to note the de Paors’ observation that “excellent brooches in the native tradition were still being made” during the second half of the 9th century (de Paor 1964, 156).

9th-century Irish brooches have recently been the subject of two studies by the present author (Graham-Campbell 1972; 1973-4), and the bossed penannular brooches (c. 850-950) have been fully catalogued by O. S. Johansen (1973). Although Johansen considers the bossed brooches to be the products of a Norse milieu in Ireland and north-western England, it is more reasonable to see them as being of purely Irish manufacture (with the exception of one of his subgroups, consisting of three brooches), firmly rooted in the native brooch tradition, although displaying influences from England and Scotland (cf. Graham-Campbell 1975).⁶

The variety of brooches and the skill of manufacture revealed by these studies indicate that the standards of the Irish metalworker were maintained throughout the 9th century. On these grounds, there is no evidence for “catastrophe”, but it does appear that the Scandinavians did have a significant impact on Irish metalworking at that time. This was due to the fact that they

⁵ The possibility exists that accident has deprived us of finer pieces, but one is inevitably confined to a survey of the general standard of the surviving material.

⁶ A shortened version of this article has been published under the title ‘Bossed Penannular Brooches Reconsidered’, together with a reply by O. S. Johansen, in *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 9 (1976), 45-55.

were responsible for putting a considerable quantity of silver into circulation in Ireland, with the result that Irish metalworkers were able to experiment freely in this medium for the first time.

This must be regarded as a direct Scandinavian influence on Irish metalwork, although it must be remembered that a plain silver style was also in fashion in 9th-century England (cf. Wilson 1964, 21-35). Another Scandinavian impact, although indirect, is also apparent, as was anticipated by Dr. Henry in her paper to the first Celtic Studies Congress (cf. Henry 1962, 64). This is attributed to 9th-century refugees from Scotland and Pictland and manifests itself in the brooch tradition in the return to the penannular form (from the pseudo-penannular "Tara" type of the 8th century), in the introduction of new terminal types (other than the sub-triangular), and in the introduction of the characteristic Pictish type of brooch pin (cf. Graham-Campbell 1972; 1973-4).

During the 9th century there is both a change in fashion in brooch types and a change in their ornament. The elaborate polychrome effects and obsession with minute detail, so characteristic of the 8th century, were abandoned in favour of plain silver and greater simplicity. A comparison of the Irish brooches of the late 8th and early 9th century with those of the later 9th century shows this change in fashion. There is no decline in standards, but a straightforward change in approach resulting from the availability of silver from the Scandinavian settlers.

Such a thesis is dependent on one's being able to demonstrate that the Scandinavians were in possession of silver in Ireland at the relevant period, and also that they were in close enough commercial contact with the native Irish to facilitate the exchange of the metal. The coin-hoards demonstrate that silver, in coin form, was reaching Ireland by the 10th century, and it is most probable that it was circulating in Ireland, as a result of Scandinavian activities, throughout the second half of the 9th century (cf. Graham-Campbell 1976). It is only to have been expected that these coins would have been melted down, since neither the Scandinavians nor the Irish had, at that time, any use for coin except as bullion. The bossed penannular brooches represent one end-product of this process; another is represented by the Hiberno-Viking arm-rings. Over 60 examples of this arm-ring type, which consists of a thick penannular band of silver ornamented with vertical grooves and saltires, are known from

Ireland, and its origins lie in the second half of the 9th century (cf. Graham-Campbell 1976).

It is clear that, from the time of the first settlements, close Irish-Scandinavian connections existed. J. I. Young, Ó Corráin, and others, have written of the Irish-Scandinavian alliances that are recorded in the annals from the middle of the 9th century onwards and which are numerous during the 850's and 860's (Young 1950, 22; Ó Corráin 1972, 93-4).

There is therefore no reason why silver should not have passed easily from the Scandinavians to the Irish. What is interesting, however, is that there seems to have been no interchange in art-styles until well into the 10th century. Dr. Henry's observation on this with regard to Irish art (Henry 1962, 66) still holds true, even if her arguments for Irish influence on Scandinavian art have been shown by Wilson and Klindt-Jensen (1966) to be untenable. Such 10th-century developments lie outside the scope of this paper, and much important unpublished evidence for this period has recently accumulated in the form of "trial-pieces" from the Dublin city excavations.⁷ The rich material from these excavations is opening up new possibilities for the understanding of Irish-Scandinavian relations during the 10th century, so that further comment at this stage would be premature.

⁷ For preliminary reports on the Dublin excavations, see B. Ó Riordáin, 'Excavations at High Street and Winetavern Street, Dublin', *Medieval Archaeology* XV (1971), 73-85; *Viking and Medieval Dublin* (National Museum of Ireland Catalogue, 1973); and B. Ó Riordáin, 'The High Street Excavations', in B. Almqvist and D. Greene (eds.), *Proceedings of the Seventh Viking Congress* (1976), 135-40.

DUMÉZIL REVISITED

BY R. I. PAGE

OF the scholars who, in recent decades, have written on the pagan religion of the Vikings, perhaps the most renowned is the Frenchman Georges Dumézil.¹ Unlike most of the others he is not primarily a Germanist. He came to Norse paganism through comparative religion and social anthropology. Inevitably in his contribution to the subject he differs from the philologists who have treated it, those scholars learned in etymology, semantics and language history, trained to deal with literary sources but rather at sea when it comes to religion.² While Dumézil may neglect or undervalue linguistic evidence, he should compensate by deploying his knowledge of early religious experience and the structures into which it was embodied.

Until quite recently, Dumézil's work was not much known in the English-speaking world because — if we are to believe the anthropologist C. Scott Littleton — there was no translation into English, and French seems to be too formidable a language for the modern scholar. In the last few years, however, there have been versions in English/American, and with the appearance of *Les dieux des germains* translated as *Gods of the Ancient Northmen* we may expect Dumézil to make a belated appearance in the writings of English and American enthusiasts of Norse paganism. If we are to be engulfed with neo-Dumézilian students it is as well to have a clear idea of the successes and failures of Dumézilian thought; hence this tentative note. It is daring for anyone who has not worked right through Dumézil's immense body of published work, or who is not a student of comparative religion or social anthropology or Indo-European, or who cannot approach Dumézil's wide-ranging erudition, to make general criticisms of his achievement within the various fields he has

¹ Dumézil's writings tend to repetition and recasting, and it is not always easy to decide which text to quote. The following are the main texts I use in this article: *Mythes et dieux des germains: essai d'interprétation comparative* (1939); *Mitra-Varuna: essai sur deux représentations indo-européennes de la souveraineté* (1940) (= *Mitra*); *Loki* (1948); *Les dieux des germains: essai sur la formation de la religion scandinave* (1959) (= *Dieux*); *Gods of the Ancient Northmen*, ed. E. Haugen (1973) = *Gods*; "Le borgne" and "le manchot": the state of the problem', *Myth in Indo-European Antiquity*, ed. G. J. Larson, C. S. Littleton and J. Puhvel (1974) (= "Le borgne"). There is an extensive summary of all Dumézil's work to date in C. S. Littleton, *The New Comparative Mythology* (1966, revised 1973).

² My distinction is not to deny Dumézil's philological skills, which are in fields that I cannot control, but to point out that in the work under review he does not rely upon them.

entered. But the student who is interested in Old Norse religion — either as part of the life of the Viking Age or because it is the subject matter in one form or another of much Old Norse literature — cannot ignore the pronouncements of so eminent a thinker.

In fact Dumézil's study of Norse religion is part of his examination of a far more ambitious subject, the religion of the Indo-Europeans. He asserts that certain essential features of Norse religion derive from Indo-European concepts or structures (and here his beliefs contrast with those of scholars like the distinguished German Karl Helm who would have us think that the Germanic peoples took over much of their religion from the non-Indo-European-speaking peoples they conquered).³ Of course, Dumézil is not so naive as to think that Norse (or Germanic) religion represented Indo-European religion in a pure form, untainted by particular Germanic preoccupations or conditions. He accepts that there is distortion, for instance because the Germanic peoples seem to have had no priestly caste and because the Germanic enthusiasm for battle led them to give warlike attributes to deities who were not originally belligerent. Nevertheless he argues that clear structural parallels between the religions of the Northmen and other Indo-European peoples (notably Indo-Iranian and Italic) make it certain that all descend from a common original. He stresses structure, overall pattern, and underrates individual detail, and thence arise methodological differences — and controversies — between Dumézil and the philologists.

Dumézil's approach to the subject might certainly enlighten the student of Norse paganism, but it might also plunge him into deeper darkness. By comparing Norse religion with that of other Indo-European-speaking peoples Dumézil may clarify aspects which the Norse sources alone leave obscure. By adducing parallels in other Indo-European mythologies Dumézil may confirm the early nature of features of Norse religion which non-comparative scholars regarded as later accretions. In contrast, by interesting himself mainly in the origins of Norse religion Dumézil may stress aspects that were already archaic by the beginning of the Viking Age, and so mislead those whose concern is with Viking rather than pre-Viking belief. It is instructive here to note the history of his most famous book on the subject. It

³ Summarised in K. Helm, 'Mythologie auf alten und neuen Wegen', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* (Tübingen) LXXVII (1955), 365.

began in 1939 as *Mythes et dieux des germains: essai d'interprétation comparative*, and was rewritten to appear as *Les dieux des germains: essai sur la formation de la religion scandinave* in 1959. It is the second version that now appears under the title *Gods of the Ancient Northmen*, a significant shift of name. Ancient Northmen is a vague enough expression, but the fact that most sources quoted are Viking or post-Viking is likely to lead the student who reads this book only in translation to believe that Dumézil is defining Viking religion.

Most famous of Dumézil's theories is that of Indo-European tripartite structure. He divides the major gods into three groups, linked to the three types of human activity that made up society. The human activities are (i) priest/king, (ii) warrior, and (iii) farmer; and the parallel gods which Dumézil first observed in Vedic religious texts are (i) sovereign gods (*dieux souverains*), (ii) the warrior god (*le dieu essentiellement fort et guerrier*), and (iii) the gods of health, peace and plenty (*dieux jumeaux donneurs de santé, de jeunesse, de fécondité, de bonheur*).⁴ In the Old Norse sources, Dumézil sees these represented by (i) Óðinn and Týr, (ii) Þórr, and (iii) Njǫrðr and Freyr. In Indo-European mythology, according to Dumézil, gods of the third class are somehow distinct from those of the first two. Originally they formed part of a different group of lesser stature, and were only joined to the others and accepted as true deities after some sort of a battle.

To his main thesis defining the functions of the chief gods of the Norsemen Dumézil adds a series of refinements. There are groups of minor gods who assist the major ones in their functions, as Vili and Vé assist Óðinn. There are gods who act as *dieux premiers* and *dieux derniers*, opening and concluding rituals, as the Roman gods Janus and Vesta, a type perhaps represented in Norse mythology by Heimdallr. There is the trickster god Loki, to whom Dumézil gave special attention.

Though Dumézil's work does not account for all the Norse gods and particularly neglects the goddesses, yet it has the virtue of imposing upon part of this rather intractable mythology a clear pattern. Moreover, the pattern does not apply to the mythology alone. It forms a link between that and social structuring. The division of early society into priests, warriors and farmers sounds plausible, and it seems confirmed by comparative material from other areas of the early Middle Ages, as Alfred the Great's division of his subjects into *gebedmen ond*

⁴ *Dieux*, 24, *Gods*, 16.

fyrdmen ond weorcmen.⁵ All this must be said in Dumézil's favour. And yet I suspect that many Norse philologists will have reservations about his conclusions, and will base these reservations on a distrust of his use of source material. This is what I want to look at now.

It is appropriate to begin with the Norse god Týr, usually thought of as a god of war. Dumézil, however, identifies him as the counterpart of Óðinn; like him he is a king of gods or a god of kings.⁶ But Týr, Dumézil thinks, is unlike Óðinn in being, not king/priest or magician, but king/lawyer, a god of contract, *dieu juriste*, related to the Vedic god Mitra. Part of Dumézil's evidence for this belief rests in the well-known tale, told in full only in the *Prose Edda* though often referred to elsewhere, of how Týr lost his right hand. When the gods tried to bind the monstrous young wolf Fenrir with the delicate-looking but immensely strong fetter Gleipnir, the wolf was so distrustful that he required one of the gods to put his hand in the wolf's mouth *at veði, at þetta sé falslaust gert*, "as a pledge that this was done without deceit." Týr agreed, and the wolf, finding he was unable to escape from his bonds, bit off the hand. Of this event Dumézil comments:

It is linked to the very character of the god, because, says Snorri, after this adventure Tyr "is one-handed and he is not called a peace-maker" (puisque, dit Snorri, c'est à la suite de cette aventure que Týr "est devenu manchot et n'est pas appelé pacificateur d'hommes").⁷

I begin by distinguishing between what Snorri says, and what Dumézil says he says. Snorri himself does not make the link between the adventure and the fact that Týr is not called a peace-maker. The *Prose Edda* has two accounts of this exploit of Týr's. The longer and more complete version is in chapter 34, which recounts the brood of Loki. The shorter is in the description of Týr, in chapter 25.⁸ In the latter Snorri points to two qualities in the god. One, mentioned but briefly, is Týr's wisdom. The other, repeatedly spoken of, is his boldness (*diarfaztr, bezt hugaðr*), a quality appropriate to a battle-god. Týr's adventure with Fenrir

⁵ W. J. Sedgefield, *King Alfred's Old English Version of Boethius De Consolatione Philosophiae* (1899), 40. The division continues, in the form *oratores, laboratores, bellatores*, in the works of later Anglo-Saxon writers, forming part of orthodox mediaeval social theory: cf. D. Bethurum, "Wulfstan", *Continuations and Beginnings*, ed. E. G. Stanley (1966), 228. C. S. Littleton discusses the point in his introduction to *Gods*, xviii and note.

⁶ *Mitra*, 99 ff., *Dieux*, 67 ff., *Gods*, 43 ff.

⁷ *Dieux*, 70, *Gods*, 45.

⁸ The *Prose Edda* is quoted from A. Holtsmark and J. Helgason, *Edda: Gylfaginning og prosafortellingene av Skáldskaparmál* (1950) unless otherwise stated.

is cited as evidence, not of the god's cunning and deceit, but of his valour (*diarfleik hans*). Having alluded to the tale, Snorri sums up, "and he is one-handed and not called a reconciler of men"; and of course, one would hardly expect a god noted for daring and boldness to be called a reconciler. Snorri is here presumably repeating a commonplace, as *Lokasenna* does in different wording:

Þegi þú, Týr! þú kunnir aldregi
bera tilt með tveim.

(Shut up Týr! You could never
bring peace between two men.)⁹

As far as I can see, nothing in what Snorri says implies that he regards Týr's reputation as one who does not reconcile men to be the consequence of his exploit with the wolf. This is Dumézil not Snorri, and it colours Dumézil's approach to Týr.

He speaks of Týr losing his hand "in a fraudulent procedure of guarantee, as a pledge" (*dans une procédure frauduleuse de garantie, de mise en gage*), and concludes that if this is typical behaviour for the *dieu juriste*, presents a pessimistic view of the law "directed not toward reconciliation among the parties, but toward the crushing of some by the others". Thus it seems that, as Óðinn represents power in the form of magic and inspiration, Týr represents power as law, in terms of "contract and chicanery" (*celle du contrat et de la chicane*).¹⁰

This is indeed an intriguing interpretation of the story and of the god. We could even agree that Snorri's story gains point if Týr is thought to deceive the wolf by virtue of his office as god of law (though that is no good reason for accepting the interpretation). But in any case, is Dumézil's reading derivable from what Snorri says, or is it only a genial addition to it? Certainly, as far as I can see from his wording, the idea was not in Snorri's mind. In his version — which is the only extended one we have — the wolf did not pick out Týr as his guarantor *because* he was god of law (which might have been good sense on the wolf's part). Apparently any god would have satisfied Fenrir just as well. Týr got the job because only he had the courage. Moreover, is Dumézil right in speaking of the arrangement as a contract? Týr put his hand in the wolf's mouth *at veði*, "as a pledge", but there might well be a distinction between a practical security arrangement like this, whose intent was to force the gods to behave or punish them if they didn't, and a contract that could

⁹ *Lokasenna*, v. 38. Eddic poems are quoted from G. Neckel, *Edda: die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern* (1914).

¹⁰ *Gods, 45-6, Dieux, 73.*

be enforced to ensure that they did. The word *veð* is not specifically a legal one — it can be used of a stake in a wager. The verb *veðja* can mean “bet”, and the compound *veðsetja* “put a piece of property at risk”. Whether the Norseman distinguished clearly between a contract, a pledge, a wager and a hazard I do not know, but the point needs clarification.¹¹

Next we must examine Dumézil’s “hard” evidence for Týr as god of law. There are three aspects to it, one negative and two positive. The first is the fact that in no Old Norse story is Týr a fighting god (save in Snorri’s account of the end of the world, which is exceptional). Thus Týr cannot be primarily a god of war. This we may provisionally allow Dumézil despite Snorri’s insistence that Týr is connected with boldness and valour; that he is to be invoked by men of courage; that he rules victory; and that a brave man is called *týhraustr*. The positive aspects are those of “epigraphy and place-names”. As toponymic evidence Dumézil (following de Vries here) quotes only the name *Tislund* in Sjælland, Denmark.¹² As well as containing Týr’s name this is a legal meeting-place, whence de Vries deduces that Týr was patron of the assembly that met there. Of course, a single example cannot confirm a general theory, and this one tells nothing about Týr as a god of law. The meeting may have been held at or near a religious site, but that does not show Týr to be a legal god. To take a parallel case, in Essex is the hundred-name *Thurstable*, a name derived from OE *Dunres-stapol*, “pillar of the god Thunor”.¹³ It seems to have been a meeting-place. Are we to conclude from this that in Essex Thunor was a god of law? Or again, in Bedfordshire is the hundred-name *Wenslow*, “hill or barrow sacred to the worship of Woden”, also a likely moot-place.¹⁴ Was Woden a god of law in Bedfordshire? In Iceland is the case of Þórsnes, a headland off the peninsula of Snæfellsnes in the west of the country. If *Eyrbyggjasaga* is to be believed, the area was settled by a family that owed special allegiance to Þórr. There was a temple site in the neighbourhood, not to mention a holy mountain. One of the land boundaries was Þórsá, “Þórr’s river”. On a particularly sacred piece of land on the headland the Þórsnes thing was held. Are we to conclude from this that in

¹¹ As a beginning one could follow up L. Hamre’s article ‘Veddemål’ in *Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for nordisk middelalder XIX* (1975), cols. 608-11.

¹² J. de Vries, *Algermanische Religionsgeschichte* (1935), I 173, II 286.

¹³ P. H. Reaney, *The Place-Names of Essex* (1935), 302, G. Turville-Petre, ‘Thurstable’, *Nine Norse Studies* (1972), 20-9.

¹⁴ A. Mawer and F. M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Bedfordshire & Huntingdonshire* (1926), 100.

western Iceland Þórr was a god of law? Obviously not. What we need, to establish Dumézil's case, is a significant predominance of *Týr*- over other god-names in the names of legal meeting-places, and this does not appear. The translator's word in summarising the argument, "place-names", is either disingenuous or ignorant. Dumézil's *la toponymie* is both more accurate and more discreet, but it conceals the fact that this distinguished scholar has built a general statement upon a single example.

The epigraphical evidence is also a single example, a stone referring to *Marti Thincso*, found at Housesteads, Northumberland, dating from A.D. 225-235, and relating to a battalion of *cives Tiuhanti* (tribesmen of Twenthe, Over-Yssel, Holland) stationed on the Roman Wall.¹⁵ Mars, as god of war, may be a Latinisation of the appropriate cognate form of ON *Týr*, and *Thincsus* may be a title etymologically connected with ON *þing*. Some have welcomed this inscription as evidence that *Týr* was god of the *thing*, which they interpret as the legal assembly; hence he is god of legal process. However, the matter is not as simple as this. *Mars* could certainly be *Týr* according to the *interpretatio Romana* that turns *Dies Martis* into *Týrsdagr*, *Tiwesdæg*, "Tuesday". But it might be rash to assume that *Mars* in a Romano-Germanic context is invariably the god *Týr* or his cognate, especially if the writer is thinking, not of a war-god, but of a god of law.¹⁶ *Thincsus* may be a reference to the *thing*, but did this word invariably have a legal connotation in Germanic languages, and specifically in third-century Low German? Its etymology is not an obvious one, but one suggestion shows the word developing through the general meaning *Versammlung* to the more precise *Volksding*.¹⁷ Dumézil, quoting de Vries, adds an argument that may turn out double-edged. He remarks that war and legal process are not opposites but alternative methods of establishing control, that early warfare seems to have been

¹⁵ R. G. Collingwood and R. P. Wright, *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain* (1965), I no. 1593. A second, related, inscription (no. 1594) mentions Mars, but without the cognomen *Thincsus*. There is a third, no. 772 from Brougham, on which some have read a similar text, but it is very uncertain. Dumézil is inconsistent in citing this material. Sometimes he says that Mars *est qualifié sur plusieurs inscriptions de Thincsus* (*Mitra*, 99, *Les dieux des indo-européens* (1952), 26). At others he gets the number right (*Dieux*, 68).

¹⁶ Found with the two Housesteads stones was a sculptured lintel bearing the figure of a warrior accompanied by a bird that looks something like a goose. This resembles a figure of Mars from a Celtic rather than a Germanic site (Caerwent: *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, 1894—, XIV, cols. 1949-50, 1957-8) and linked epigraphically to the Treveri, which hardly suggests that the Housesteads stone records a specifically Germanic version of the god.

¹⁷ J. de Vries, *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (1962), s.v. *þing*.

governed by formal rules like legal suits were, and that compounds such as *Schwertding*, “sword-thing, battle”, show the Germanic peoples recognising the analogy between a legal meeting and a battlefield.¹⁸ It is, however, at least possible that the word *thing* had an early meaning “meeting”, that the simplex was later specialised to mean “legal meeting”, but continued to be used in a general sense as the second element of compounds where the first distinguished the type of meeting: in that case *Schwertding* has no immediate contact with legal process but simply means “sword-meeting” and so “battle”. If this is right *Mars Thincsus* could be a battle-god who was celebrated at some formal meeting of a group of warriors, perhaps the god of a single battalion or one honoured when the men of a German legion first mustered in camp. I do not press this interpretation, and am content to point out that the translation of *Mars Thincsus* as “Týr, god of the legal assembly” is far from proven, and that several scholars have interpreted the phrase differently.¹⁹

Thus the evidence from Germanic/Old Norse sources for Týr as a god of law and contract is slight, and Dumézil’s argument must rest on a cogent resemblance between Týr and a *dieu juriste* in related mythologies. Before considering this I note some negative evidence. If Týr were the Norse god of law we might expect his name to be invoked at oath-takings, but I know no cases where it was. The oaths sworn, according to *Atlakviða*, between Atli and Gunnarr were pledged *at Sigtýs bergi . . . ok at hringi Ullar*, “on the rock of the god of victory . . . and on Ullr’s ring”.²⁰ *Sigtýr*, though containing the element *-týr*, is an Óðinn kenning, while Ullr is the shadowy god whom Dumézil, in some cases, thinks parallel to Óðinn, having the might and majesty of a king but not his terror. A ring-oath is well-attested in Norse history and literature, but not elsewhere ascribed to Ullr as far as I know. The oath that Vǫlundr exacted from Niðuðr is quite different, but none of its provisions remind specifically of Týr. The oath is to be sworn:

at skips borði ok at skialdar rǫnd
at mars bógi ok at mækis egg.

(on a ship’s side and a shield’s rim
on a steed’s shoulder and a sword’s edge.)²¹

¹⁸ *Dieux*, 68-9, *Gods*, 44.

¹⁹ Cf. the various interpretations noted in de Vries (1935), I 172-3.

²⁰ *Atlakviða*, v. 30. There are detailed notes on the terms of the oath in U. Dronke, *The Poetic Edda I* (1969), 64-5.

²¹ *Vǫlundarkviða*, v. 33.

Landnámabók purports to give the text of the oath taken in pagan Iceland, and this includes the words *hjálpi mér svá Freyr ok Njorðr ok hinn almáttki áss, sem ek mun svá sök þessa sækja eða verja eða vitni bera*, “may Freyr, Njorðr and the all-mighty god help me to . . .”²² The unnamed but powerful god is variously identified, usually as Þórr as is the unnamed god in the oath quoted in *Víga-Glúms saga*.²³ Of course, it might be Týr; there is no evidence either way. Finally, there is a *dieu juriste* mentioned in the *Prose Edda*, but it is not Týr. Snorri gives him the name (or perhaps title) *Forseti*, and says he is Baldr’s son. He bases his account on *Grímnismál*, but adds to it with the comment that *Forseti*’s hall, *Glitnir*, *er dómstaðr beztr með guðum ok monnum*, “is the best judgment-place among gods and men”.²⁴

In his further treatment of Týr Dumézil insists on an essential link between him and the other sovereign god Óðinn. Both are mutilated. Óðinn is one-eyed, Týr one-handed, and these mutilations, thinks Dumézil, correspond with the qualities of the two gods. Here Dumézil’s position is not clear. He suggests that Snorri’s material indicates a rigorous symmetry between the cases of the two gods, *l’un étant le Magicien parce qu’il a osé perdre son œil, l’autre étant le Juriste parce qu’il a osé engager sa main*, though he is prepared to rewrite the second part of this antithesis as *c’est du moins parce qu’il était le Juriste que, seul entre les dieux, il l’a perdue* (i.e. *sa main*).²⁵ This rewriting alters the assertion a good deal. Óðinn, Dumézil insists, became a magician by the process of losing his eye; he gave his eye in return for magical powers. On the other hand, Týr did not give his hand in return for juridical powers, nor is it easy to see how he could. Perhaps Óðinn impaired his normal vision to gain supernatural sight, but in what parallel way could Týr be compensated for the loss of normal powers of handling? Dumézil’s interpretation of the Týr-Fenrir story has little point unless you assume that he was *dieu juriste* before the episode with the wolf, and that indeed it was Týr’s quality of legal responsibility that led Fenrir to accept his hand as gage. Thus the analogy between Óðinn and Týr is imperfect. Moreover, the statement that it was because he was *juriste* that Týr, alone among gods, lost his hand is Dumézil’s, not Snorri’s. If we are to be so ready to accept Snorri’s authority for the details of this

²² Jakob Benediktsson, *Íslendingabók, Landnámabók* (Íslenzk fornrit I, 1968), 315.

²³ Jónas Kristjánsson, *Eyfirðinga sǫgur* (Íslenzk fornrit IX, 1956), 86.

²⁴ *Prose Edda*, 32.

²⁵ *Mitra*, 114.

story, we can hardly rewrite Snorri to suit our interpretation afterwards; and Snorri says specifically that it was Týr's boldness that led him to risk his hand.

In the story too of Óðinn and his lost eye, Dumézil's treatment of his source should cause concern. He alludes briefly to the story in chapter 4 of *Ynglinga saga* where the pickled head of Mímir tells Óðinn *marga leynda hluti*, "many hidden things", but rests more securely on Snorri's expansion, in the *Prose Edda*, of a stanza of *Völuspá*, which speaks of Óðinn getting his powers by drinking from Mímisbrunnr, and leaving one of his eyes as payment.²⁶ This Dumézil sums up: *la perte de l'œil charnel a été le moyen, pour le dieu magicien, d'acquérir l'œil immatériel, la Voyance, et tout ce qu'elle assure de pouvoirs surnaturels*.²⁷ In fact, however, Snorri says nothing about supernatural powers in this story. In Mímisbrunnr are hidden *spekð ok manvit*, "wisdom and common sense", and by drinking its liquid Mímir became *fullr af vísindum*, "full of knowledge" (though admittedly *vísindi* can also mean "wisdom" and "magic"). If we take Snorri as authority, Óðinn would get knowledge, wisdom or good sense from the spring, but it is much less certain that he could achieve clairvoyance or other supernatural abilities. Indeed, Snorri's very use of the word *manvit*, which seems to mean "mother-wit, practical good sense", tells against Dumézil's reading. There are in any case several other, quite different, stories of how Óðinn achieved magical power. One, deriving from *Hávamál*, describes his ordeal for nine nights, hanging as sacrifice from the sacred tree.²⁸ What exactly he achieved thereby is obscure because the poem's structure at this point is difficult. He *nam upp rúnar*, "took up runes (? secrets, occult lore)". Thereafter (in the poem though not necessarily in sequence of time) he learned nine monstrous chants (*fimbulliód*), took a drink of the poetic mead, began to grow, be fruitful and perhaps create poetry or songs. What this is about is unclear, but Dumézil and others have compared Óðinn on the tree to the northern shaman, enduring certain rites to gain certain powers. At any rate these skills have nothing to do with Óðinn's lost eye. Another tale says simply that the goddess Freyja taught the Æsir, and apparently Óðinn amongst them, the practice of *seiðr*, whereby he could learn the fates of men and see into the future.²⁹ Again, Óðinn boasts that

²⁶ *Prose Edda*, 17-18.

²⁷ *Mitra*, 112.

²⁸ *Hávamál*, vv. 138-41.

²⁹ Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, *Heimskringla* (Íslensk fornrit XXVI-VIII, 1941-51), I 13.

he can make hanged men walk and talk with him, and from this he presumably learns unusual tidings.³⁰ Obviously the god had many methods of achieving knowledge beyond the ordinary. From these various methods Dumézil chooses one — pawning his eye — as the significant one, takes his text from the thirteenth-century Snorri (arguing *il est hypercritique d'attribuer à la pure imagination de Snorri* this gloss on *Vǫluspá*),³¹ but changes that writer's wording when it does not fit his theory.

This is certainly an unsympathetic assessment of Dumézil's use of the Norse evidence, but I hope that — from the philologist's point of view at least — it is a fair one. However, the question arises whether it is fair anyway to judge Dumézil from the philologist's point of view, since he goes beyond philology into the fields of comparative religion. To the philologist it is the accumulation of details that is important, but Dumézil rejects the detailed study of sources and instead views the larger patterns, the structure of a relationship or an episode cluster. To him the significant detail is the one that supports the pattern he hopes to find; the pattern is supplied by comparative study of Indo-European religions. In the case of the gods Óðinn and Týr this pattern is of two kings of equal rank, one a magician and one-eyed, the other a jurist and one-handed. Dumézil does not, I gather, find this fully recorded in his comparable pair of Vedic gods, Varuna and Mitra, since they are not mutilated. But he discovers it in one other group of sources, the surviving records of early Roman religion.³² In Dumézil's opinion much of archaic Roman belief is recorded, not as religious myth, but as ancient history, and he finds the parallels to Óðinn and Týr among the leaders of early Rome, in Horatius Cocles and Mucius Scaevola, heroes of the republic when it was attacked by Porsinna's host. Horatius was the guard who valiantly defended the Tiber bridge. His cognomen *Cocles* means "blind in one eye", and his defiance of the Etruscan attackers included, in Livy's phrase, *circumferens . . . truces minaciter oculos ad proceres Etruscorum*.³³ Mucius, surnamed *Scaevola*, "left-handed", destroyed his right hand in an act of defiance. Captured whilst attempting Porsinna's life, he thrust his hand into the fire as a

³⁰ *Hávamál*, v. 157.

³¹ *Mitra*, 112.

³² If recent interpretations of *Vǫluspá* v. 27 are correct, there is a further mutilation to be fitted in somehow. Some see in this verse a reference to the god Heimdalr's lost or impaired hearing. The stanza has an oblique reference to Óðinn pledging his eye, so here the two mutilations are loosely linked.

³³ *Titī Livī ab urbe condita*, 2.10, ed. R. M. Ogilvie (1974), 87.

sign of the courage of Roman youth, asserting that he was only one of three hundred who were planning to attack the Etruscan leader.

The resemblance between the Roman heroes and the Norse gods seems slight, and Dumézil has to do two things to justify it: supply additional details and assumptions, and make abstractions. He must assume (indeed with some of his sources) that *Cocles* was a cognomen earned by Horatius and not derived from an ancestor, and hence assert that Livy's plural *oculos* is a rationalisation not a precise description. He must stress that it is Horatius's glare that keeps the enemy at bay rather than his active defence — Dumézil sums up by saying that Horatius "holds the attention of the enemy army by himself through a stance that disconcerts it, notably by casting terrifying looks at it" (*et notamment en lui lançant des regards terribles*),³⁴ but the word *notamment* is Dumézil's not Livy's. This demeanour he describes as "paralysing the enemy" (though in Livy's account the enemy does not stay paralysed for long), and compares with Óðinn's magical power of fettering his foes. That Óðinn achieves this paralysing strength by using his single eye Dumézil regards as *probable, bienqu' indémontrable*; there seems to be no Old Norse source that supports him, and Óðinn has other ways of controlling his enemies in battle as *Hávamál* shows.³⁵ In the case of Mucius, Dumézil must conflate two versions of the story: Livy's that Mucius burned his hand at the altar to affirm that there were other young Romans preparing to kill Porsinna, and that of Dionysius of Halicarnassus that Mucius deceived Porsinna by a false oath, but retained his hand unburnt. Convincingly he links the loss of Mucius's right hand to ceremonies recorded in honour of the Roman goddess Fides wherein the celebrant's right hand was covered with a cloth. He then compares Mucius's action with Týr's loss of his right hand, by defining each abstractly as *une procédure juridique, de gage frauduleux, destinée à faire croire à l'ennemi un mensonge que la société divine avait un intérêt vital à lui faire croire*.³⁶

In all this there is a good deal that needs clearing up. Unless you accept Dumézil's extreme abstraction of the two cases, there is not much resemblance between the tales of Týr and Mucius. There seems also a fair gap between Horatius losing an eye,

³⁴ *Dieux*, 71-2, *Gods*, 46.

³⁵ *Hávamál*, vv. 148, 150. Dumézil's remark is in *Mitra*, 119, but cf. his retraction in "Le borgne", 20-1.

³⁶ *Loki*, 95.

which gives him the power of paralysing his foes with the remaining one, and Óðinn losing an eye, which gives him *la Voyance*. But perhaps the greatest difficulty is the absence of any significant link here between Óðinn and Týr in the Norse sources themselves. Horatius and Mucius form an obvious pair since they are heroes in a single struggle against the Etruscans; each, if Dumézil's interpretations are right, is mutilated in a way that is significant for his action against the foe. But Óðinn and Týr do not, in any recorded tale, form such a pair. There is no common struggle to unite them, unless it is, generally, the struggle against the monsters that are to end the world, and Óðinn's eye plays no part in that. There is no connection between their mutilations. From Norse sources we know nothing of the circumstances under which Óðinn gave his eye for a drink from Mímisbrunnr, and so there is no way of tracing for him a Norse myth parallel to that of Týr's loss of his hand. Thus, the equation of Horatius and Mucius to Óðinn and Týr is not demonstrated in the Norse and Roman sources themselves. It derives from Dumézil's belief that there is a common original in Indo-European culture; the myths represent "the theologeme that is the basis of the coexistence of the two highest gods, namely that the sovereign administration of the world is divided into two great provinces, that of inspiration and prestige, that of contract and chicanery, in other words, magic and law."³⁷

The tales of Týr and Mucius are so greatly different that there can be no question of one being a borrowing of the other. Hence, argues Dumézil, each must embody, in its own way, a principle that derives from their common cultural background. It follows that Snorri's version, in outline if not in detail, must be a myth of great age. Snorri cannot have made it up from the scant allusions he found in earlier poetry. My difficulty in accepting Dumézil here is partly that I am very sceptical about the identity of the two stories. Dumézil has to do too much selection and abstraction to make them look alike, and even then he is not very successful. There is, moreover, a second difficulty. Dumézil's argument is so well-rounded that some might think it circular. To him the tale of Týr and the wolf is part of the Norse evidence for the early belief in a pair of king-gods with distinct powers, one a magician, one a jurist. At the same time the existence of such an

³⁷ *Gods*, 46; "l'expression sensible du théologème qui fonde la coexistence des deux plus hauts dieux, à savoir que l'administration souveraine du monde se divise en deux grandes provinces, celle de l'inspiration et du prestige, celle du contrat et de la chicane, autrement dit la magie et le droit" (*Dieux*, 72-3).

early belief is his justification for interpreting the tale of Týr and Fenrir in his particular way, for choosing from what Snorri says such items as fit his theory. This may not be a circular argument but, in Karl Helm's witty phrase, *die Gefahr, dass sich so eine übereilte Folgerung einstellt, die einem Zirkelschluss sehr ähnlich ist, lässt sich nicht übersehen*.³⁸ Of course, Dumézil supports his theory of a pair of god-kings on more evidence than I have adduced. He has no doubt he has traced them in the religions of early India as well as of Rome, and so he is disposed to find them among the many myths that survive from the North Germanic peoples. I am left with the uncomfortable feeling that in the Týr-Fenrir story Dumézil found only what he was looking for.

At this point I want to shift more explicitly to the question of *Quellenkritik*, a topic that has sorely perplexed many of the philologists who have attempted the history of Norse religion. Dumézil uses quite a wide range of Norse sources, some of them — like *Völsunga saga* — rather surprising ones. On the other hand he spends little time in establishing their repute as sources, though H. J. Rose was perhaps a little unkind to say, “*Quellenforschung* seems to lie outside Dumézil's province.”³⁹ Indeed there is one book where Dumézil conducts quite an extensive discussion of his source material — his monograph on the god Loki, where he makes a firm attempt to rehabilitate Snorri's *Edda* against the attacks of Eugen Mogk. In a trenchant review of E. O. G. Turville-Petre's *Myth and Religion of the North*, the historian and archaeologist Olaf Olsen asserted the importance of historical method in studying the sources of Norse paganism.

In the same way he [Turville-Petre] lets Georges Dumézil's demonstration of parallels between Norse myths and those of India and Iran serve as a shield for Snorri's *Edda*. The scope of Dumézil's exciting observations cannot yet be said to be determined, but under no circumstances can it be right to use them to give Snorri a general certificate of sobriety. For as long as religious historians fail to establish the validity of their sources in a proper historical manner, the study of the materials for religious history that are contained in Icelandic mediaeval literature will mark time.⁴⁰

³⁸ Helm (1955), 358-9.

³⁹ *Journal of Roman Studies* XXXVII (1947), 185.

⁴⁰ “På samme måde lader han Georges Dumézil's påvisning af paralleller til nordiske myter i Indien og Iran tjene som skjold for Snorri's *Edda*. Rækkevidden af Dumézil's spændende iagttagelser kan vel endnu ikke siges at være afklaret, men det kan under ingen omstændigheder være rigtigt at benytte dem til at give Snorri en generel ædruelighedsattest. Så længe religionshistorikerne ikke på god historisk vis gør sig kildernes virkelige værd klart, vil studiet af det religionshistoriske materiale i den islandske middelalderlitteratur forblive en march på stedet”, *Historisk Tidsskrift* (Copenhagen) 12. Række II (1966-7), 215.

This is a classic historian's statement, and one that most philologists would approve. But I suspect that Dumézil and his followers might want the last sentence modified to take into account what they would think of as the "proper historical manner" of checking their sources. Dumézil's rehabilitation of Snorri in *Loki* does not, of course, extend to all the details that writer records. There is no question of his giving complete acceptance to Snorri's Eddic material. He is concerned only to show that in certain cases Snorri recounts myths whose themes can be corroborated from Indo-European sources outside Norse.

The first of his test cases is Týr and the wolf Fenrir, which ends with Týr's loss of his hand. Here, as I have shown, Dumézil argues that Snorri relates a myth equivalent to that given in the Roman tale of Mucius Scaevola, and I have given reasons why I find his comparison unconvincing. The second case involves a more complex pair of tales, one recounted by Snorri, the other in Indian material which I cannot control and must take on trust. The Norse story begins when the Æsir and Vanir made peace after their exhausting war. In a compact of reconciliation the warriors of the two sides spat into a common bowl. From the spittle the Æsir formed the figure of a man who was called Kvasir — the name is linked etymologically to drink-making and the story reminds the anthropologist of primitive methods of fermenting liquor. This man was so wise that nobody could ask a question he could not answer, and he travelled the world teaching. He came to a feast with two dwarfs Fjalarr and Galarr, who killed him — no motive is given — and collected his blood in three vessels. The blood they mixed with honey, and it became the skaldic mead, a drink of which gives man the power of poetry or learning. The dwarfs announced that Kvasir had choked with knowledge because nobody was wise enough to seek wisdom from him. The different manuscripts of Snorri's *Edda* have variants at this point, and the exact meanings of some of the words in this context are uncertain — an accepted text is *ðvergarnir sogðu ásum at Kvasir hefði kafnat í manviti firir því at engi var þar svá fróðr at spyria kynni hann fróðleiks*.⁴¹

This myth Dumézil sees reflected in a tale of the god Indra and his companions (equivalent to the Æsir) in conflict with the Nasatya (the Vanir), whom they regard as inferior in status and so not to be recognised as real gods. To resolve the crisis, an ascetic, friendly to the Nasatya, creates by the force of his

⁴¹ *Prose Edda*, 81; cf. the variants in Finnur Jónsson, *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar* (1931), 82.

asceticism a gigantic man who threatens to swallow the whole world, the gods included. This monster is called Mada, which means "drunkenness". Under the threat the gods give in and accept the Nasatya, but the monster has then to be destroyed. Its creator does this, cutting him into four pieces which represent the four temptations to intoxication: drink, women, gaming and hunting. Dumézil admits important differences between the two tales, notably the fact that in the Norse version Kvasir is the result of reconciliation, whereas in the Indian one Mada is its cause; but he regards the similarities as so striking that the two tales must descend from a common original. His abstraction of the story is:

It is at the moment when divine society is with difficulty but definitely joined by the adjunction of the representatives of fecundity and prosperity to those of sovereignty and force, it is at the moment when the two hostile groups make their peace, that a character is artificially created incarnating the force of intoxicating drink or of insobriety and is named after it. When this force proves to be excessive for the conditions of this world — for good or for evil — the person thus made is then killed and divided into three or four intoxicating parts that either aid or threaten man.⁴²

The abstraction is somewhat specious, for it contains too many "either . . . or" clauses that perhaps disguise the differences between the two tales — "of intoxicating drink or of insobriety", "for good or for evil", "three or four intoxicating parts", "either aid or threaten man". The comment, "this force proves to be excessive for the conditions of this world", is an almost unrecognisable gloss on Kvasir's supreme wisdom. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that these two tales are considerably more alike than those of Týr-Fenrir and Mucius, simply because they have more common detail.

The later part of the book *Loki* comprises a third justification of Snorri's record of Norse mythology, since it relies on his work supplemented by material from Eddic and skaldic poetry, from Saxo Grammaticus and modern folklore. The section is an extended comparison of Loki with the demon Syrdon known from a number of Caucasian tales — and here again I must take

⁴² *Gods*, 23, quoting and adapting *Loki*, 104. Perhaps the translation makes the abstraction look rather more specious than the original (words in square brackets do not occur in *Loki*, but appear in *Dieux*): "c'est au moment où se constitue [difficilement et] définitivement la société divine par l'adjonction des représentants de la fécondité et de la prospérité à ceux de la souveraineté et de la force, c'est donc au moment où les représentants de ces deux groupes antagonistes font leur paix, qu'est suscité artificiellement un personnage incarnant la force [de la boisson enivrante ou] de l'ivresse et nommé d'après elle. Comme cette force s'avère trop grande au regard des conditions de notre monde — pour le bien ou pour le mal — le personnage ainsi fabriqué est ensuite tué et fractionné en trois ou quatre parties [enivrantes] dont bénéficient ou pâtissent les hommes."

the material on trust. Dumézil conducts an elaborate examination of the two traditions, and concludes that Loki and Syrdon have a common origin since their numerous exploits reveal so much in common. *Loki* has, I think, been the most readily accepted of all Dumézil's major writings on Norse religion, and many will agree that he makes his case here. It is then interesting to see how vigorously Dumézil asserts his claim. The identity of the two figures is proved:

Parce qu'on y constate une correspondance *totale* entre deux *types* pourtant *complexes*, c'est-à-dire une correspondance entre leurs natures, dons, situations sociales, moyens d'action, contradictions internes, etc. . . ; parce que le déroulement de leurs deux carrières est aussi le même, aboutissant dans les deux cas et pour la même raison à la même catastrophe.

And again:

Les correspondances relevées ne sont pas générales, mais précises, en elles-mêmes et dans leur agencement; sur les points essentiels, d'ailleurs solidaires, de deux dossiers, elles définissent un *schéma* commun qui n'est nullement . . . schématique ni banal, mais au contraire original et complexe et qu'on ne retrouve pas ailleurs.⁴³

The strength of this assertion about Loki-Syrdon reveals the weakness of Dumézil's case for Týr-Mucius. In the latter there is nothing of the correspondence in complex detail of the former. If the standards he has adopted for Loki-Syrdon are proper, then it is certain that the argument for identifying Týr with Mucius is inadequate. Any resemblance there is between Týr and Mucius is of the most general. This is where the conflict between Dumézil and the philologists comes clearly into view; whether a resemblance of structure can be proved without a close similarity of detail. Viewing it beyond the individual case of Týr and Mucius, this represents an important conflict of methods. It is also a criticism of Dumézil's use of evidence. In the cases of the Indo-Iranian and Roman materials, I have no competence to judge, though I note that scholars in those fields have had their reservations.⁴⁴ In the case of the Old Norse texts, however, it is clear to me that Dumézil is sometimes general and imprecise, sometimes careless and unreliable. His use of place-name and epigraphical evidence are obvious cases in point, but there are others.

⁴³ *Loki*, 251, 253.

⁴⁴ See, for example, reviews criticising Dumézil's approach in *Journal of Roman Studies* XXXVII (1947), 183-6, and *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* XXII (1959), 154-7.

To take another example. In his first chapter of *Les dieux des germains* Dumézil tried to demonstrate that a triad of North Germanic gods existed, consisting of Óðinn, Þórr, and one or more of the Vanir. One piece of evidence is a verse that his saga ascribes to Egill Skallagrímsson: this curses King Eiríkr who stole Egill's treasure and drove him away. The text of the stanza, as its latest editor gives it, runs:

Svá skyldu goð gjalda,
gram reki þond af löndum,
reið sé rogn ok Óðinn,
rán míns féar hánum;
folkmygi lát flýja
Freyr ok Njörðr af jörðum,
leiðisk lofða stríði
landáss þann er vé grandar.

Dumézil's translation of the last part:

. . . *Que les dieux (rögn) et Odhinn s'irritent! Ase-du-Pays (= Thórr), fais que l'opresseur du peuple doive fuir ses terres! Que Freyr et Njörðr haïssent le fléau des hommes qui ravage les sanctuaires!*⁴⁵

It is unfortunate that a verse quoted as evidence of a triad includes the names of two only of its three members, for Þórr does not appear by name in it. Dumézil asserts that *landáss*, "god of the land", refers to him, but this is interpretation not fact. Dumézil depends on Finnur Jónsson's commentary of 1894. In his edition of *Egils saga* in 1933 Sigurður Nordal was not so sure; he thought that *landáss* was probably Þórr, but quoted no cogent evidence. De Vries, writing in 1937, disagreed, claiming that the word was equivalent to *landvættir*, "guardian spirit of the land". In 1944 Magnus Olsen noted both interpretations without showing clear preference. In the second edition of his great work de Vries changed his mind, perhaps under Dumézil's influence, and referred *landáss* again to Þórr. The latest editor of the stanza, E. O. G. Turville-Petre, quotes both translations, again apparently without preference.⁴⁶ Clearly this is not a certain example of the triad Dumézil wants to establish, though it is a possible one. What we need is not the brash assertion that *landáss* = Þórr, but a close examination of the verse and its place in *Egils saga*. There is, for example, the question of how to divide

⁴⁵ *Dieux*, 6, *Gods*, 5. I quote the verse from E. O. G. Turville-Petre, *Scaldic Poetry* (1976), 22.

⁴⁶ S. Nordal, *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar* (Íslenzk fornrit II, 1933), 163; de Vries (1935), II 375; M. Olsen, 'Egils viser om Eirik Blodøks og dronning Gunnhild', *Maal og minne* (1944), 184-5; J. de Vries, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte* (second edition 1956-7), II 357; Turville-Petre (1976), 22.

up the second *helmingr*. Dumézil's translation shows that he reads two sentences: *folkmýgi lát flýja af jorðum landáss* and *Fréyr ok Njorðr leiðisk lofða stríði þann er vé grandar*. There is at least one alternative. Nordal and Turville-Petre prefer to divide it as a pair of couplets: *folkmýgi lát flýja Fréyr ok Njorðr af jorðum* and *leiðisk lofða stríði landáss þann er vé grandar*. Both divisions make sense. The distinction is that in the second the word *landáss* is made to contrast with the tyrant *er vé grandar*, "who destroys temples". Since Þórr has the byname *Véurr* which has been interpreted as "protector of sanctuaries",⁴⁷ he would be a proper god to invoke against a king who destroys them, though Dumézil does not see this support to his argument. We must also face Olsen's demonstration that the stanza is to be taken in close connection with the one that follows it in the saga. This following stanza opens by addressing a *landalfr*, who may therefore be the same as the *landáss*. The word *landalfr* is not particularly appropriate to Þórr, and seems to mean "guardian spirit of the land". A little later in the saga Egill raises a *níðstong* whose purpose is to force the land-spirits (*landvættir*) to drive his enemy into exile. Olsen has argued that both verses were to be cut in runes on the *níðstong*.⁴⁸ If there is here a group of references to Egill calling the spirits of the countryside to his aid, the first of the stanzas is no evidence of Dumézil's triad of gods. I do not wish to assert either of the meanings, but only to show that Dumézil's assumption of one of them is too facile. Also we should notice Jón Helgason's tentative suggestion, on philological grounds, that the verse under discussion is not by Egill at all, but is a later composition.⁴⁹ Even to Dumézil, I assume, a twelfth-century text is less certain evidence of Viking pagan belief than a tenth-century one. The Norse scholar can hardly be happy with Dumézil's treatment of this case, and so is liable to suspect the way he deals with material in other, less accessible, languages.

From all this it is clear that Dumézil's technique is open to criticism, and indeed, easy to criticise. Interestingly enough, among his recent critics is Dumézil himself. In a paper he gave lately at a symposium in his own honour, he admitted that he was no longer certain that his argument relating Óðinn-Týr to Horatius-Mucius was sound.⁵⁰ His solution, "proposed with

⁴⁷ de Vries (1962) s.v. *Véurr*.

⁴⁸ M. Olsen, 'Om trolldrúner', *Edda V* (1916), 235-9.

⁴⁹ Jón Helgason, 'Höfuðlausnarhjal', *Einarsbók: Afmæliskefja til Einars Ó. Sveinssonar* (1969), 157-8.

⁵⁰ "Le borgne", 17.

great confidence, has been subject to doubt", and this now includes Dumézil's own. It is proper to enquire where his "great confidence" came from in the first place, what qualities of his original argument led to it. Instructive is to see how Dumézil sought to still his doubt. A man of less certitude might have scrutinised the original proposition, questioning if his account of the related qualities and functions of Óðinn and Týr held good, but this is not Dumézil's way. He continues to assert his theory. Rather than discard it, he seeks through the mythologies of the Indo-European world in the hope of finding a better pair of parallels to the Norse gods than Horatius and Mucius. So far, I gather, he has not succeeded, but apparently the search goes on, in an attempt to support a theory he should have questioned long ago.

There is no doubt that Dumézil has had an important influence on the study of Old Norse religion. His entry into the field was an impressive one. His criticisms of some earlier methods of study have been salutary. He has shown students of Viking paganism what to look for. He has firmly and often wittily asserted the absurdity of concentrating upon detail and ignoring structure or pattern. Unfortunately there are times when his enthusiasm for the structural principle leads him to forget that a pattern is made up of details, and that it is ludicrous to assert that a common pattern exists in two myths that differ widely in all their individual points. Moreover, he tends to ignore aspects of a myth (or perhaps of a telling of a myth) that do not support his contentions about it. He may stress details beyond their natural importance, and draw a general conclusion from a single example. And he is not always competent, or perhaps willing, to distinguish between a surmise and an established fact. All this looks — to his opponents, of course — a cavalier way of treating evidence. It is, however, noticeable, and disturbing, that recent examination of Dumézil's work has sometimes concentrated on the principles that inform it, with discussion of his use of terminology and its refinements, and of the wider aspects of his use of material.⁵¹ Fewer seem to have wondered — in considering his Norse work, at any rate — whether he builds

⁵¹ As in some essays in Larson *et al.* (1974). In contrast there is E. Haugen's rethinking of the problems in 'The Mythical Structure of the Ancient Scandinavians: Some Thoughts on Reading Dumézil', *To Honor Roman Jakobson II* (Janua Linguarum, series maior XXXII, 1967), 855-68. Since Haugen drew attention to this article in his introduction to *Gods*, there is no reason to think, as U. Strutyński seems to (Larson *et al.*, 1974, 30), that in sponsoring *Gods* Haugen admitted to modifying his criticisms.

upon facts or opinions. This is a question we must now return to, for it is a major fault in one who may be a major scholar. To those of us engaged in undergraduate teaching an immediate problem is that the student is likely to share Dumézil's faults of imprecision and hasty generalisation rather than the massive erudition that supports his beliefs. Occasionally, comparing two myths, Dumézil will come up with something quite staggering like, *On ne le rencontre, à travers le monde, que dans ces deux cas.*⁵² I stand amazed at anyone who has read the mythology of the whole world, past and present, and so can confidently say that. Now that Dumézil's writings are readily available to the Frenchless reader, I fear we may get similar comments from students who have not yet read the mythology of the whole world, for it is far easier to generalise than to confirm a generalisation by detailed and comprehensive citation of evidence. I would suggest a self-denying ordinance whereby students of Old Norse should agree not to draw Dumézilian conclusions until they have the full apparatus of Dumézilian thought. To this I would add the further clause, that all who work in this field should try for a sharper capacity for self-criticism than the master achieves.

⁵² *Dieux*, 35.

LAWYERS IN THE OLD ICELANDIC FAMILY SAGAS: HEROES, VILLAINS, AND AUTHORS

BY ALAN BERGER

IN no other literature but Old Icelandic is such prominence given to the manly art of legal prosecution and defence. Along with the accomplishments of skill in arms and verse-making, many a saga hero is credited with a knowledge of law and legal procedure. Many of these heroes are shown duelling with their enemies in a series of legal disputes forming a series of chapters. In some sagas legal conflict plays such a large role that the sagas deserve to be called "lawyer sagas", as other sagas are called "outlaw sagas" or "poet sagas".

The great number of legal episodes in the family sagas has never won critical esteem. On the contrary, disapproval is common. Modern readers who appreciate the literary values of the sagas do not appreciate "the details of legal procedure which fill so many pages of the sagas, somewhat to their detriment as artistic creations".¹ Readers of previous generations who valued the historical features of the sagas did not value "the law quibbles characteristic of the forged sagas . . . which lower the tone of much of Nial's Saga".² Fourteenth- and fifteenth-century copyists of *Njáls saga*, whether they regarded the saga as literature or history, abbreviated or omitted much of the law.³ Considering the long-standing aversion to law, perhaps "lawyer saga" would be more pejorative than descriptive. A closer look at some law in the sagas may help explain why there is so much of it.

A typical example of a saga episode involving legal material is found in Chapter 27 of *Víga-Glúms saga*.

One spring Þorvaldr from Hagi came to Hrisey with a cargo ship, intending to gather provisions. When Klængr learned of it, he decided to go with him. As they were leaving the fjord they found a whale newly dead; they forced ropes through it and towed it in along the fjord the rest of the day. Klængr wanted to tow it to Hrisey because it was nearer than Hagi, but Þorvaldr wanted to tow it to Hagi, saying that was also lawful. Klængr says that it is illegal not to bring it to the land of the finder who is nearest.

¹ L. M. Hollander, *The Sagas of Kormák and the Sworn Brothers* (1949), 80.

² Gudbrand Vigfusson and F. York Powell, *Origines Islandicae* (1905), II 528.

³ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 'Studies in the Manuscript Tradition of *Njáls saga*', *Studia Islandica* 13 (1953), 25-6, 145, 160.

Þorvaldr said that he was the one who was right about the law, and that the kinsmen of Glúmr did not need to encroach on their lawful share — “and whatever the law is, the more powerful ones will decide.” Þorvaldr had more men that time, and they took the whale from Klængr by force, although both were landowners. Klængr went home very upset. Þorvaldr and his men laughed at Klængr and his men, saying they were not able to hold on to the whale.⁴

Since this unmemorable episode could hardly have come to the author through two or three centuries of oral transmission, and since the law Klængr cites corresponds to a real-life law, the law must have been used as the framework for a realistic but fictional episode.⁵ Taking the law concerning a whale found at sea by two or more landowners, the saga author gave names to the parties of the first and second parts, and made the villain the lawbreaker. The author added villainous speech and behaviour to the lawbreaker’s role, since without such unambiguous signs only those members of his audience who knew the law in detail would be able to judge which party was wronged.

The context of the episode is also typical. It is a minor conflict used to begin a series of conflicts which will issue in a major conflict involving woundings and killings. Also typical is that the major conflict often seems to have come to the author through one or more relatively sound historical traditions. In this saga, the major conflict which eventually results from the injustice concerning the whale is Víga-Glúmr’s battle at the Vaðlaþing. The battle is not entirely the saga author’s invention, since other texts seem to preserve independent traditions of it (see *Eyfirðinga sögur*, xxviii-xxxvi), but only in *Víga-Glúms saga* is the dispute over the whale mentioned. To supplement the sketchy history of the battle at the Vaðlaþing, the saga author fashioned a realistic beginning from a real-life law, adding places, names, and bonds of kinship between these minor characters (who were introduced to the saga in the episode’s opening sentences) and the principal combatants at the Vaðlaþing.

⁴ Jónas Kristjánsson, *Eyfirðinga sögur* (Íslenzk Fornrit IX, 1956), 91-2. Eitt vár kom Þorvaldr ór Haga við Hrisey á byrðingi ok ætlaði at halda til fengjar; ok er Klængr varð varr við, rézk hann til ferðar með honum. En er þeir kómu út ór firðinum, fundu þeir reyði nýdauða, keyrðu i festar ok sigldu með inn eptir firðinum um daginn. Vildi Klængr flytja til Hriseyjar, því at þat var skemmra en i Haga, en Þorvaldr vildi til Haga flytja ok lét þat jafnrétt. Klængr segir, at eigi sé þat log at flytja eigi þagat, er næst eigu flutningarmenn land. Þorvaldr kvezk hafa rétt at mæla ok lét þá frændr Glúms ekki þurfa at ganga á réttan hiut við þá, — “ok hvat sem log eru, þá munu inir ríkarí nú ráða.” Þorvaldr var fjoðmennri því sinni, ok tóku þeir af Klængi rekaldit nauðgum, en hvártrveggi þeira var landeigandi. Klængr fór heim ok unði illa við. Þorvaldr ok þeir hlógu at þeim Klængi ok tóldu, at þeir treysti eigi á at halda.

⁵ On the rhetoric and fiction of episodes concerning dead whales in the sagas, see my ‘Bad Weather and Whales: Old Icelandic Literary Ecotypes’, *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 92 (1977), 92-7.

Similarly, *Hænsa-Þóris saga* is not the only text to preserve the tradition that Blund-Ketill (or his son) was burned alive in his house, but it is the only one to tell how the conflict began over a point of law. Since the point of law over which the conflict in *Hænsa-Þóris saga* begins is derived from a real-life law introduced to Iceland in the late thirteenth century,⁶ the use of the law to fashion realistic but fictional conflicts designed to introduce larger conflicts which have some historical warrant seems to have been well-established.

The dispute over the whale in *Víga-Glúms saga* is a serviceable beginning, but open to the charges of dull literature and false history. A more complex use of the law is the beginning of the conflict in *Vápnfirðinga saga*.

The episode begins with the arrival of a wealthy and unlikeable Norwegian merchant who has an Icelandic business partner named Þorleifr the Christian. Brodd-Helgi offers lodging to the Norwegian, but the invitation is refused. The Norwegian instead lodges with Geitir Lýtingsson, Helgi's friend, brother-in-law, and fellow *goði*. Later that winter the Norwegian is found dead, but his slayer is unknown. There is some reason to suspect Helgi and Geitir, but no proof. Helgi and Geitir plan to divide the Norwegian's property between them after the spring law meeting, but Þorleifr takes advantage of their absence to load his partner's goods on the ship. When Geitir and Helgi return from the meeting, they learn of Þorleifr's action.

Helgi supposed that Þorleifr had mistaken the law in this case and that he would surrender the goods when he was informed. They went out in many small boats to the ship. When they greeted each other, Helgi declared that Þorleifr should turn over the goods. Þorleifr said he knew little of the law, but he said he thought a partner would be obliged to bring the goods to the heirs.⁷

Þorleifr escapes and actually returns the goods to the heirs in Norway, much to Helgi's surprise.

The action in this episode is quite clear. Brodd-Helgi and Geitir are acting in greed to acquire the Norwegian's goods, while Þorleifr acts unselfishly in removing the goods from their grasp. Yet Brodd-Helgi calls on the law to support his claims,

⁶ This issue is discussed in my 'Old Law, New Law, and *Hænsa-Þóris saga*', *Scripta Islandica* 27 (1976), 3-12.

⁷ Jón Jóhannesson, *Austfirðinga sǫgur* (Íslenzk Fornrit XI, 1950), 31. Helgi tók svá upp, at Þorleifr mundi lögvillei orðinn um þetta mál ok þegar mundi hann laust láta, er vitjat væri. Fara þeir síðan út til skips ok höfðu mǫrg skip ok smá, ok er þeir kvøddusk, þá mælti Brodd-Helgi, at Þorleifr skyldi laust láta féit. Þorleifr kvazk litit vita til laga, en kvazk ætla, at félagi mundi eiga at færa fé erfingjum.

while Þorleifr knows no law and can present no legal reason for his actions. Þorleifr must be defying the law, as the villainous Þorvaldr did in *Víga-Glúms saga*, but in this case the law-breaker is no villain. The saga author used a real-life law as the scenario for his episode, but his management of the law is no simple matter of supplying particulars to the generalized scheme of the law books.

Concerning the Inheritance of a Norwegian in this Country

If a Norwegian dies here and has no kin here, then his partner takes the inheritance if their partnership was of this nature, that the one who invested least invested all he had in the venture. If there is no such partner, then the messmate who most often shared meals with the deceased has it. If several messmates shared meals equally often with the deceased, then they share the inheritance. If there are no such messmates, then the ship's captain takes it, but if there are several captains, then they share in the same proportion as they share the ship. If the deceased was the sole owner of the ship and had no partner or messmate, then the *goði* of the man who owned the land where the ship was harboured takes it. If a Norwegian dies while a guest, then the farmer who offered him lodging takes it if there is no partner. If the Norwegian dies while returning to his ship, it is as if he died as a guest. If he had a dwelling but still no kin, then the *goði* in whose *þing* he was takes it. If he is in no one's *þing*, then the *goði* of the man on whose land he dwelt or set up buildings takes it. If one of the men in the line of inheritance kills the foreigner, or causes him to be killed, then the inheritance and compensation fall to the next in line. If a Norwegian dies while travelling from his ship to lodgings, it is as if he died on the ship. If a *goði* who stands to inherit kills the foreigner then the other two *goðar* of the *þing* take the inheritance and the compensation. If the heirs arrive later, those who speak Norse, then they have the right to take the inheritance and compensation, but not any increase which may have accumulated. All that property which the heirs do not claim, whether it is compensation for slaying or the inheritance, shall be held in trust like a minor's property.⁸

⁸ Vilhjálmur Finsen, *Grágás, Islændernes Lovbog i Fristatens Tid, udgivet efter det kongelige Bibliotheks Haandskrift* (1852), Ib 197-8. This text is usually cited as Ia and Ib. Usually cited as II, and also edited by Finsen, is *Grágás efter det Arnemagnæanske Haandskrift Nr. 334 fol., Staðarhólsbók* (1879). vm avst manna arf her alandi. Ef avst maðr deyr út her sa er her a engi frænda. þa afelaga hans at taca arf. Ef þeir gerðo þat felag at sa lagðe alt sitt fe til er o avðogæ var þat er hann hafðe iþeirre förf. Ef eigi er sa til. þa a motonavtr sa er optax atte mat við hann. scipta sculo þeir með ser ef þeir átto allir iafn opt. Ef engi er þeirra til þa ascips drotten. ef þeir ero fleire til. þa sculo þeir scipta með ser sva sem þeir átto iscipe. Ef en andaðe atte ein scip oc engi felaga ne mavto navtr. þa a goðe sa er sa maðr er iþingi með er land þat a er þeir verða landfastir. Ef avst maðr andaz ivist. þa a boande sa er honom veitte vist ef eigi er felagi til. En þott hann andiz afor aðr hann kómtr til scips. þa scal iafnt sem hann andiz ivist. Ef sa átte bv enn frænd lavse. þa a goðe sa er hann var iþingi með. Ef hann er hvergi iþingi. þa a goðe sá er sa er iþingi með er land á þar er hin bio eða sat buðseto. Ef sa maðr ræðr eða gørir fiorlavst enom utlenda er nv er aðr til erfðar taleðr. þa scal sá arf taca oc bøtr er næstr er til talðr eptir. Ef avst maðr andaz iför þeirre er hann fær til vistar. oc er þat sem hann andez at scipe. Ef goðe sa er til arftöko er talðr vegr en utlenda þa eigo arf oc bøtr samþingis goðar hans. Ef siðar coma ut erfingiar. þeir er se af danscri tungo. þa eigo þeir at taca arf oc bøtr ef þær ero vaxta lavsar. Alt fe þat er eigi taca erfingiar. hvart sem ero vigsaca bøtr eða arfr þa scal virþa láta sem omaga eyre.

Since the Norwegian lodged with Geitir, and since neither Geitir nor Brodd-Helgi could be implicated in the Norwegian's death, his goods would fall to Geitir, except that the law provides for a partner to "take" the goods, and in any case, "take" means "take in trust for the heirs", as the last clause specifies. The explanation for the discrepancies is not that Brodd-Helgi and Geitir are mistaken about the law and that Þorleifr knew it, but that the saga author fashioned an older law in which partners were not considered and "take" meant "take". That the partnerless law was intended by the saga author to be considered the actual law in Þorleifr's time is confirmed by the pattern of the next episode, in which Þorleifr refuses to pay the heathen temple-tax. In both episodes the conflict is between the letter of a primitive old law and the spirit of a new, as yet unadopted law, whose good sense Þorleifr somehow perceives proleptically.

The author of *Vápnfirðinga saga* may have done more than dismantle a law and give part of its justice to his hero and the crude remainder to his villains. He may have thought he was reconstructing an actual old law. The law concerning dead Norwegians is preceded in its manuscript by an article outlining the rights of Icelanders in Norway. That article is preceded by this notice:

The King of Norway has this right in Iceland, that his cases shall be self-summoning and prosecuted according to the laws of the men of that land. Kin and partner shall take inheritances in Iceland, but if there are none, then inheritances shall wait there for the heirs.⁹

This notice is followed by the article listing the privileges of Icelanders in Norway, which concludes, "These rights and laws were given to the Icelanders by St. Óláfr, king."

Taking all the articles together, the saga author could have inferred that before c. 1025 the laws concerning the inheritance of a dead Norwegian were different from those quoted. Since "kin and partner" are specified particularly in the introductory paragraph, perhaps their rights were fewer or none under the old law. The implication is not rashly drawn, since other laws — and even the wording of the law as it stands — would tend to confirm the interpretation that at one time the word "take" in the article meant simply "take", not "take in trust for the heirs", since only at the end of the article is "take" qualified. For instance, a

⁹ *Grágás*, Ib 195. Sa er réttir konungs or noregi a islände at sialf stefnt skal socom hans vera. oc at logom þar landz manna sökia. Lög oc rett scolo hans menn þar hafa. sličan sem landz menn. Arf skal taca a islände frænde eða felagi. EN ef þeir ero eigi til. þa skal biða þaðan erfingia.

Norwegian law parallel to the Icelandic reveals a simpler sense of “take”, and how “hold in trust” could be considered more an opportunity than a responsibility.

The nineteenth inheritance is that which is called the shipmaster's. If a man dies on board a merchant ship on this side of the middle of the North Sea, no matter which direction he travels from Norway, the king shall have one-half his goods, if the value is more than three marks. But if he dies beyond the middle of the Sea, the shipmaster shall have all of it, if no heir appears within three winters. But if the man's partner is on board, he shall keep it and not the shipmaster. If the ship is moored, and the man dies on land in a tent, the landowner shall have all that part of his belongings that is not bound and placed in the hold.

The twentieth inheritance is that which is called the partner's. If two men share the same purse, and one of them dies, the one who survives shall take charge and shall have it, if not more than three marks; if it is more he shall have one-half and the king one-half, if no heir appears within three winters.¹⁰

In the native Old Icelandic law, the inheritance of a deceased non-Norseman followed the same lines as those of a Norseman, but the heirs were limited to father, son, or brother, and then only if they were already known in Iceland. Perhaps the law before 1025 treated Norwegians merely as foreigners, or perhaps the period spent waiting for heirs was very short.

The saga author may have had his conception of the old law from some other source than the chain of inference sketched above. An oral legal tradition was perhaps his source, or perhaps a text no longer surviving to us gave him the idea that in the saga age hosts and *goðar* preyed upon Norwegian merchants. However, the simplest link between the law and the episode is a saga author's supposition that the legal provision for a *goði* who kills a Norwegian merchant reflected a precedent, that the law spoke to a specific abuse — although names, places, and times were not preserved. The author added these, and these are his fiction. The rest he may have considered history.

After some preliminary episodes, the principal conflict in *Valla-Ljóts saga* also begins with an episode based on an article

¹⁰ R. Keyser and P. A. Munch, *Norges gamle Love* (1846-95), I 50. The translation is assisted by Laurence M. Larson, *The Earliest Norwegian Laws* (1935), 111-12. Su er hin nitianda er skiperfö heiter. ef maðr andasc a kaupskipi. firi heðan mitt haf hvernveg er hann stemnir ór Norege. þa a konongr fe hans halft. ef meira er en .iiij. mercr. En ef hann andasc firi handan mitt haf. þa a styrimaðr allt ef eigi kemr ervingi til innan þriggia vetra. En ef felaga hans er innan borðz. þa a hann at hallda. en styri maðr eigi. Nu liggja þeir i landfestum oc deyr hann i tialldbudum. halldre landzdrottenn allt þat er eigi er i bulca bundit. Su er hin .xx. er felaga erfö heiter. er menn eigu baðer einn siöð saman. oc andasc annarr. þa a hann at hallda er livir. oc hava ef eigi er meira en .iiij. mercr. En ef meira er. þa a hann halft. en konongr halft. ef ervingi kemr eigi til. innan þriggia vetra.

of law, and a disposition of the conflict similar to that between Helgi and Þorleifr the Christian. Here, too, the villain appears to have the law on his side.

Hrólfr was a farmer who lived above Klaufabrekka. His sons were Þórðr and Þorvaldr. He was a worthy man. He took sick and died. The brothers inherited their father's farm and asked Ljótr to divide the land and other property between them. Ljótr's errand was delayed a while. The country had newly turned Christian and legislation concerning holy days had been adopted. The division was set for St. Michael's day. Halli and Þórir [Halli's kinsman] showed up when they saw the gathering. Ljótr was dividing the brothers' land. Snow had fallen on the boundary markers. He divided the land by taking a sighting from a certain rock down to the river. He walked to the river, and stopping there, cut up some turf, or an earthcross, and said, "This is how I divide the land." The brothers were well satisfied with this, as was everyone else but Halli. Then Ljótr said, "We haven't had any dealings together here, Halli, but you're a knowledgeable man. What do you think of the division?" Halli answered, "I think you've divided the land fairly, but since you ask, I think the law may have been bent somewhat, and so perhaps in that regard I can comment on the division, but how well do you know the law, Ljótr?" He said, "I do not know the law well." Halli answered, "It is my opinion that the law forbids working on St. Michael's day, even though it is not a Sunday. I will summon you for violating the day's sanctity." Ljótr answered, "The faith is still young." Halli said, "The law says you have committed a breach of Christianity. It is not good for the smaller men to see their leaders acting this way." Ljótr admitted it was not done properly — "but it won't happen again." Halli said, "I'll be brief with you, Ljótr. Either pay me a half-hundred in silver, or I shall summon you." [The scene continues with Ljótr's attempts to reason with Halli, and Halli's rebuffs, concluding with Ljótr's words] "I'll pay you the money because I do not want the angel's anger. If you are acting out of friendship for me, you are my shield and defence, but if you are acting out of greed and aggression, as I think is the case, it may soon make itself apparent." Halli took the money.¹¹

¹¹ *Eyfirðinga sögur*, 241-2. Hrólfur hét bóndi, er bjó upp frá Klaufabrekku; hans synir váru þeir Þórðr ok Þorvaldr; hann var gofugr maðr; hann tók sótt ok andaðisk. Þeir bræðr tóku erfð eptir föður sinn ok vildu, at Ljótr skipti með þeim bæði lönðum ok lausum aurum, þeim er þeir áttu. Fyr Ljóts frestaðisk nokkura stund, en kristnat var fyrir litlu landit, ok váru löggleiddir dróttinsdagar. Þá var Michaelsmessa, er fundrinn var lagðr. Váru þeir þar komnir Þórir ok Halli, ok höfðu þeir sét mannaforina. Ljótr skipti lönðum þeira bræðra; snær var fallinn á landamerkin; hann skipti lönðum ok tekr sjónhending i stein nokkurn, en ör steininum i ána ok ferr rétt svá fram ok nam staðar við ána ok skar þar upp torfu eða jarðkross ok mælti: "Svá kann ek at gera landaskipti." Þeim bræðrum líkaði þetta vel ok svá öllum nema Halla. Þá mælti Ljótr: "Vit höfum ekki við átzk hér, Halli, en þú ert maðr hygginn, eða hversu lízk þér þetta skipti?" Halli svarar: "Vel at jafnaði ætla ek þik lönðum skipt hafa, en er þú mælir til þessa, þá ætla ek, at löginn myndi sveigð hafa verit; má ek svá helzt nokkut um ræða landaskipti, eða hversu lögkænn maðr ertu, Ljótr?" Hann mælir: "Eigi kann ek löginn vel." Halli svarar: "Þat ætla ek við lög varða at vinna á Michaelsmessu, þótt hon væri eigi á dróttinsdegi, ok mun ek stefna þér um helgibrigði." Ljótr svarar: "Ung er enn trúan." Halli mælti: "Svá er at kveðit, at kristnispell sé i orðit, ok er eigi vel sét fyrir inum smærum monnum, er þér gerið svá fyrir, höfðingjarnir." Ljótr svarar ok segir þetta eigi vel gort, — "ok mun eigi svá verða i annat sinn." Halli mælti: "Skjót eru ummæli min við þik, Ljótr; ger annathvart, gjald mér hálf hundrað silfrs, eða ek mun stefna þér." . . . "Mun ek þegar gjalda féit, því at eigi vil ek reiði engilsins. Nú ef þér gengr til vinátta við mik, þá muntu vera minn hlífiskjöldr. En ef þér gengr til fégirni ok ágangr við mik, sem ek ætla heldr, þá má enn vera, at sjálfst sýnisk." Halli tók við fénu.

No one in the saga ever challenges Halli's opinion, nor has any reader ever objected that one text of real thirteenth-century native Icelandic law specifically permitted the division of land and the erection of boundary markers on a day such as St. Michael's.

When men are witnessing boundaries on a holy day, it is lawful to cut earthcrosses and to make other such markers.¹²

Since no one in the saga gives any indication that Halli is bluffing or mistaken, and since the saga author could not have coincidentally invented a fictitious violation corresponding so closely to a specific exemption from the laws governing holidays, the saga author must have attributed to the newly-Christian saga age a law which lacked the exemption. The power of this undeveloped old law he gave to his villain, and the virtue of one neighbour helping another, the future law, he gave to his hero. However, the saga reader who has not memorized all the laws sees only Halli's malice in exploiting a trivial offence.

Ljótr and Halli meet once more, when Ljótr is no longer uncertain about Halli's character. "What do you charge me with?" Halli asks as they are about to fight.

"This is my charge, that you will never again teach me how to keep a holy day. If your intentions were good and the angel wishes to give you the victory, then you will have the advantage. But if you acted out of greed and aggression, then you have the worse position."¹³

Ljótr kills Halli.

How the author of *Valla-Ljóts saga* decided to use the article concerning earthcrosses cannot be known. However, he seems to have been versed in the laws governing holidays. A reflex of this knowledge occurs in another passage. He needs to have Ljótr find out when Halli will be returning from a Yule feast, so farm workers are sent out to gather hay. They meet others, and so the news of Halli's departure for home spreads. "Þórir sent men out for hay, because there was a shortage of hay at home as Yule wore on."¹⁴ The useless phrase "because there was a shortage of hay at home as Yule wore on" is no doubt a reflex of a law which forbade hay-gathering during Yule except for immediate and

¹² *Grágás*, II 33. Ef menn ganga á merke helgan dag oc er rétt at skera iarð krossa. oc sva at gera önor merki at.

¹³ *Eyfirðinga sǫgur*, 245. "Sú er sǫkin, at þú skalt eigi optar kenna mér helgihaldit. Nú ef þér hefir gott til gengit ok vili engillinn gefa þér sigr, þá muntu þess at njóta. En ef þat var með fegirnd ok ágang, þá hafðu minna hlut."

¹⁴ *Eyfirðinga sǫgur*, 243. Þórir lét fara [eptir] andvirki, því at heyrfátt var heima um jólin, er á leið.

pressing need (II, 37). Another reflex of the author's knowledge is in the quoted episode: "Snow had fallen on the boundary markers." The editor of the *Íslensk Fornrit* edition footnotes the line and reports that the snow should have caused a postponement of the division — which is not quite correct. The editor refers the reader to a passage of law which reads, "If there is snow on the land, then they [i.e., witnesses to the boundaries] are obliged to return seven days later, or less."¹⁵ In its context, the obligations and rights of witnesses, the article means that a witness's duty is not discharged if the division must be postponed; he is still obliged to return. The passages bearing directly on snow are Ib 89 and II 449: "If there is snow on the land when men are supposed to divide land . . . then it is lawful to postpone the division until the sixth week of summer, unless the land there is so well known to them it is as if they see it all."¹⁶ In its context, this law means that no penalties are assessed for delaying a division that cannot be carried out by reason of deep snow and buried markers. Obviously not enough snow has fallen in the episode to warrant postponement. The snow is a blind legal motif.¹⁷

Reading all these laws together, it appears the greatest problem was getting witnesses — and even the principals — to appear. Witnesses seem to have tried to excuse themselves by blaming snow or by citing the holiday laws. The law exempting the cutting of earthcrosses from the holy-day ban on labour may not have arisen from a case involving a prosecution for such labour, but from a case of a resentful witness who tried to excuse himself from witnessing on the grounds that the physical labour involved violated the law. The saga author constructed a fictional precedent for the article of exemption and attributed it to the saga age.

The use of law as material for episodes of conflict probably accounts for the presence of many saga lawyers. If episodes are to turn on points of law, then heroes and villains must be made lawyers to accommodate such conflicts. Helgi Droplaugarson seems to have been known to tradition as a ferocious fighter,¹⁸ but the author of *Droplaugarsona saga* made him a lawyer to

¹⁵ *Grágás*, Ib 81. Ef þar er snær aiordo. þa scolo þeir coma til vii. nóttom siðar eþa miNa mele.

¹⁶ *Grágás*, Ib 89 (cf. II 449). Ef þa er snær a iorðo er menn scolo lande scipta . . . oc er rett at þeir biði til þess er vi. vicor ero af sumri nema þeim se land sva kunt sem þeir se allt.

¹⁷ Einar Ól. Sveinsson (1953), 145, comments on two similar legal reflexes in *Njáls saga*, " . . . it strikes me as coming from the workshop of the author himself, he was, so to say, thinking aloud, but he did not intend that it should find its way into the Saga."

¹⁸ Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarson, *Eyrbyggja saga* (Íslensk Fornrit IV, 1935), 22.

handle a series of legal conflicts which finally issued in battle. The youthful Helgi kills a freedman who insulted his mother, but when the freer of the freedman is awarded compensation, Helgi is so outraged he undertakes legal studies and thereafter prosecutes the *þingmenn* of his enemy in court whenever he can. His success leads only to increased hostility and eventually his death. Similarly, Guðmundr the Powerful of *Ljósvetninga saga* avenges an insult not immediately and not with brute force, but with a judicious use of law. He searches out cases against his enemy's *þingmenn*, "cases of fornication and horse-riding and whatever he could get his hands on."¹⁹ *Reykðæla saga* begins with a series of legal conflicts, but it is no criticism of Áskell *goði* that his reputation for fair arbitration is no help in allaying mounting hostility: the law is used to generate conflict, not to resolve it.

The law could be considered a catalogue of conflicts useful to a conflict-hungry literature. The conflicts outlined in the law could be adapted mechanically or imaginatively, but in either case they would produce the effect of realism. Narrative contrivances could be made convincing with the addition of daubs of legal detail. The law was a source of history, and for what could pass as history, and that is part of the reason why there is so much law in the sagas.

¹⁹ Björn Sigfússon, *Ljósvetninga saga* (Íslensk Fornrit X, 1940), 20. Guðmundr . . . grófsk eptir um sakar við þingmenn Þóris, legorðs sakar ok hrossreiðir ok hverja, er hann mátti til fá.

SCANDINAVIAN AND CELTIC FOLKLORE CONTACTS IN THE EARLDOM OF ORKNEY*

By BO ALMQVIST

In Memoriam — E. O. G. TURVILLE-PETRE

THE northern parts of most European countries have not fared well in the popular imagination. They are nearly everywhere thought of as remote, isolated, and barren, and populated by silent, uncouth, and barbaric people. People also tend to look at a country from the point of view of its present capital. The fact that we are accustomed to seeing maps hanging on walls from our earliest schooldays also tends to confirm our misconception that the North is of necessity a distant prospect.

Orkney and Shetland have suffered and still suffer from popular misconceptions of this kind. In the British context they are indeed far from the capital, and looking at a map of Britain one can easily get the impression that these isles are the very end of the habitable world, a kind of Ultima Thule with nothing beyond, and in which nothing of interest is ever likely to have happened.

If we want to understand not only the history of the remote past but also the culture of the present day we must free ourselves from such misconceptions. Least of all will we be able to understand the folklore of Orkney and Shetland if we think of these isles as isolated outposts and look at them from the horizon of London or Oxford. The folklore of Orkney and Shetland is nothing less than the oral culture of these islands, and this folklore must be understood on its own terms.

Instead of being the northernmost outpost of Britain, Orkney and Shetland were for centuries southern extensions of

* This paper was given as one of the O'Donnell Lectures before the University of Oxford in May 1976. It is now published by kind permission of the Board of English in Oxford, in whom the management of the O'Donnell Lectureship is vested, and the copyright of the article lies with the Board. I should like to thank Mr. R. W. McTurk and Dr. Séamas Ó Catháin with whom I have had fruitful discussions on various aspects of my topic. The lecture is printed as it was delivered, with the exception of some minor adjustments and the addition of footnotes. In the footnotes the following abbreviations are used:

ANF *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* (1889—).

ÍF *Íslensk Fornrit* (1933—).

KL *Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon för nordisk medeltid* (1956-78).

ML R. Th. Christiansen, 'The Migratory Legends', *FF Communications* N:o 175 (vol. LXXI: 1, 1958).

Skj. *Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning*. A I-II, B I-II (1912-15), ed. Finnur Jónsson.

Scandinavia, Norway in particular. But though allied with Norway, the Orkney Earldom also enjoyed a considerable degree of independence and self-government. Many of the Orkney earls were mighty rulers, holding sway over large regions of Scotland and Ireland. About Earl Þorfinnr Sigurðarson the *Orkneyinga saga* says that he had in his possession not only Orkney and Shetland but all the islands of the Hebrides, nine earldoms on the Scottish mainland, and a large part of Ireland.¹ The petty kings in Scotland, England and Ireland would then have to "look up" to Orkney, because their very existence was often dependent on the decisions that were taken, and the warlike expeditions that were planned, in the court of the Orkney earls. One must also bear in mind that the islands were in those times much more densely populated in relation to the mainland than they are now. Furthermore, travel by sea was until well into modern times so much faster and so much more comfortable than travel by land, that communications between, say, Orkney and Ireland were easier and faster than communications between, say, Kent and Oxfordshire. If we also take into account the superiority of the Viking ships over the relatively clumsy vessels the Anglo-Saxons and the Celtic peoples had at their disposal we will realize that the Orkney Earldom was a formidable naval power, backed as it also was by the forces of the whole of western Scandinavia. It would not be inaccurate to say that Orkney played a role in the North Sea similar to that played by Venice and other mighty Italian republics in the Mediterranean.

Nor was there much difference between Orkney and such southern countries in wealth and culture. Many of the Orkney earls and their courtiers were among the most travelled men of their time. The rich literary and artistic heritage of Scandinavia was their own from the very earliest times but onwards from the 12th century, at least, they also had intimate contacts with Mediterranean culture. Poems reflecting *la gay science* of Provence were heard in the Nordic tongue in Orkney before such notes were struck in English, Irish or Welsh.² The building styles of the Kingdom of Jerusalem are reflected in Orcadian architecture, and the Kirkwall cathedral is still one of the most

¹ Finnboði Guðmundsson, *Orkneyinga saga* (ÍF XXXIV, 1965), 81.

² Echoes from the troubadours are heard for instance in some of Rögvaldr *kalf's* verses; see e.g. R. Meissner, 'Ermengarde, Vicegräfin von Narbonne, und Jarl Rögvald', *ANF* 41 (1925), 140-91, and J. de Vries, 'Een skald onder de troubadours', *Verslagen en mededeelingen der Kgl. Vlaamsche Academie voor taal- en letterkunde* (1938), 701-35. Cf. also below, 90.

impressive churches in Britain.³ It was built in honour of Saint Magnús, whose fame, equal almost to that of Saint Óláfr, spread all over Northern Europe, bringing pilgrims and wealth to Kirkwall.

The way in which the Orcadians themselves looked upon the rest of Britain as a kind of extension of the Norwegian naval empire, of which they formed a part, can still be clearly seen. This is why the second most northerly shire of Scotland is called Sutherland — since it is south of Caithness, which was regarded as part of Orkney proper. In a similar way the Hebrides were referred to as *Suðreyjar*, “the southern Islands”, as opposed to *Norðreyjar*, Shetland and Orkney, which were also frequently referred to as *Eyjar*, “the Islands”, as if there were no other islands that merited serious consideration!

According to Old Norse sources it was Haraldr *hárfagri* who first annexed Orkney and made it a Norse dominion, at the end of the 9th century. Though there is much variety of opinion among historians and archaeologists, they now all agree, however, that the Scandinavian settlement of Shetland and Orkney took place considerably earlier, hardly later than *c.* 780-850.⁴ The first earl is said to have been Rögnvaldr Eysteinnsson, Mærajarl; the last earl of the Norse dynasty was Jón Haraldsson, who died in 1231. The succeeding Scottish earls, however, continued to owe allegiance to the King of Norway up to 1468-9. The Scandinavian language, Norn, continued to be spoken long after that. There were Norn speakers in Orkney up to the latter half of the 18th century and in Shetland there were still a few speakers alive at the beginning of the 19th century. Tens of thousands of Scandinavian words — many of which are still in common use — were recorded in Shetland and Orkney at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, and the overwhelming majority of the place-names in the Islands are of Scandinavian origin.⁵ The Norse character of Shetland and Orkney can hardly be over-rated.

Though the process of “Scottification” from the 14th century onwards did not only — as has sometimes been said — bring “dear meal and greedy ministers”⁶ but also cultural elements, including folktales, legends, beliefs and customs, it is also true to

³ See e.g. C. A. Raleigh Radford, ‘Art and Architecture: Celtic and Norse’ in F. T. Wainwright (ed.), *The Northern Isles* (1964), 163-87, and works quoted there.

⁴ Wainwright (1964), 126-40 and works quoted there.

⁵ See M. Oftedal in *KL*, s.v. *Norn*, and works quoted there.

⁶ A. T. Clunness, *The Shetland Isles* (1951), 65.

say that the folklore of Orkney and Shetland is still fundamentally Scandinavian.

It is one of the greatest losses to Scandinavian folklore that the importance of Shetland and Orkney tradition was not recognized sooner and that it is still not fully appreciated. Only scattered fragments in the Norn language have been preserved, and though there has been a great deal of devotion and enthusiasm among the Orcadians and Shetlanders themselves, and though valuable collecting has recently been carried out under the auspices of The School of Scottish Studies,⁷ Orkney and Shetland lore in English has not been systematically collected either. One of the pioneers, to whom special homage should be paid, was the Faroese scholar Jakob Jakobsen, who wrote a number of important articles and whose dictionary of Shetland Norn is a veritable goldmine for the study of Shetland beliefs and customs.⁸ Hugh Marwick did similar work for Orkney,⁹ but no injustice is done to the memory of this great man, if it is said that he was more of a philologist and less of a folklorist than Jakobsen. Some of the numerous printed collections of Shetland and Orkney tales and legends contain valuable material too,¹⁰ but much is "fakelore", adapted, falsified and even invented by gentlemen antiquarians. A great deal of this material is also scattered in obscure papers and periodicals and thus not easily accessible even to scholars. Systematic scholarly studies of Shetland and Orkney folklore are practically non-existent. Those which have been undertaken deal with isolated aspects of the subject. Some of the best work has been done by Scandinavian scholars. Outstanding folklorists who have understood the value of Orkney and Shetland material and who have used it for comparative purposes include Professor Dag Strömbäck in Sweden and the late Professors Knut Liestøl, Reidar Th. Christiansen and Svale Solheim in Norway. In view of what folklore studies could contribute to the understanding of the cultural history of Orkney and Shetland, it is nothing short of tragic to see how neglected the field has been. If one goes through

⁷ Some of this material has appeared in the periodical *Tocher* (1971—).

⁸ J. Jakobsen, *Etymologisk ordbog over det norrøne sprog på Shetland* I-II (1908-21), *An Etymological Dictionary of the Norn Language in Shetland* I-II (1928-32). A selection of Jakobsen's more important articles has appeared under the title *Greinir og ritgerðir* (1957); this edition also contains a full bibliography of his works.

⁹ H. Marwick, *The Orkney Norn* (1929). See also other books and papers by the same author, listed in Wainwright (1964), 205-6, and in B. Dickins, 'An Orkney Scholar: Hugh Marwick 1881-1965', *Saga-Book* XVII (1966-9), 15-17.

¹⁰ See bibliographies in G. F. Black, *Examples of Printed Folk-Lore Concerning the Orkney & Shetland Islands* (County Folk-Lore III, 1903), ix-xii, and E. W. Marwick, *The Folklore of Orkney and Shetland* (1975), 205-7.

the articles and the bibliography in Wainwright (1964), one will understand how much valuable work linguists, place-name scholars, historians, art-historians and archaeologists have done, and are in the process of doing, on Orkney and Shetland culture. But excellent though it is in these respects, the book typically enough contains next to nothing on folklore.

It would be foolish to try to repair this mistake here. Even if it were limited to the barest outlines, a survey of the Scandinavian folklore in Orkney and Shetland would fill several thick volumes, and such a work cannot profitably be written before all the material has been brought together, systematised and sifted, and before more collecting has been done. [Allow me the opportunity here to utter the usual war-cry of the folklorist about collecting: It is *not* too late! Much can still be done. Future generations will not — and ought not to — forgive us if we neglect to do our best now.]

In this paper I shall be concerned with the narrower subject of 'Scandinavian and Celtic folklore contacts in the Earldom of Orkney'. These contacts took place mainly between the 9th and the 15th centuries, though many of them, naturally, are reflected only in material collected in the last century and this. I shall, however, limit myself, with a few exceptions, to such contacts as are mirrored in sources in the Old Norse language: poems written by Orcadians, and sagas written by Icelanders but dealing with the Orkney Earldom and likely to be founded on Orkney tradition. Limited space will permit me to treat only some selected genres and examples. Before I proceed to do this, however, a few things will have to be said about the nature of the contacts between the Orcadians — and henceforth I use Orcadians in the sense of inhabitants of the Earldom of Orkney, whether on the Isles of Orkney or elsewhere — and the Celts.

As we all know, the water between Orkney and the Scottish mainland is called the Pentland Firth. This takes its name from an enigmatic people, the Picts — known to the Vikings as *péttar* — who lived on Orkney, Shetland and parts of the Scottish mainland before the arrival of the Norsemen. So little is known of the Picts that it is dangerous to assert anything about them. A few things have nevertheless been established with a fair amount of likelihood, mostly thanks to the brilliant scholarship of Professor Kenneth Jackson.¹¹

¹¹ K. H. Jackson, 'The Pictish Language', in F. T. Wainwright (ed.), *The Problem of the Picts* (1955), 129-66; cf. also Wainwright (1964), 91-116.

It seems certain that the Picts spoke and wrote a language of their own, a non-Celtic and non-Indo-European language, which has not been deciphered. But they had also adopted a Celtic language, which in certain respects was akin to Brythonic, in others to Gaulish. To complicate matters still more, this language also seems to have contained a fair number of Goidelic loan-words — taken over from the Scottish Gaels, whose language was at this time indistinguishable from that spoken in Ireland. At the time of the arrival of the Vikings in Shetland and the Orkneys, Pictish culture in general was also in the process of being Gaelicised.

There were settlements of Gaelic-speaking monks, the so-called *papæ*, in many parts of Orkney and Shetland too. This is not only stated in the earliest Scandinavian sources, but is also well corroborated by the testimony of place-names and archaeology. The connections between the Scottish and Irish Gaels and the Norsemen in the Earldom of Orkney from the 10th century up to the late Middle Ages were close and manifold. *Orkneyinga saga*, for instance, gives a vivid picture of the different types of connection. This saga contains hundreds of Gaelic personal and place-names. Many of the personal names give ample evidence of intermarriage between the Gaels and the Norsemen, from the kings and earls down to the ordinary farmers. Thus, to give only a few examples, Earl Haraldr Maddaðarson was married to Hvarflöð (Gormflaith), daughter of Melkolmr, an Earl of Moray; and Maddaðr Melmarason (Moddan, son of Maelmuire) was married to Margrét Hákonardóttir, whose father was the Orkney Earl Hákon Pálsson; and a lady by the name of Frakökk Moddansdóttir was married to a Ljótr *níðingr* in Sutherland, and went to Orkney after her husband's death with Earl Haraldr Hákonarson, *inn sléttmáli*.¹² It is not possible here to say much more about all the marriages, treaties, banquets, feuds and wars in which the Gaels, the Norsemen, and people who probably did not know themselves whether they were one or the other, were involved. It will suffice to say that *Orkneyinga saga*, though of course not reliable in details, gives a true overall picture of the state of affairs, except that by the very nature of its theme, it says too much about warfare and too little about trade and friendly connections. What we are likely to have had in the Orkney Earldom is thus a hybrid culture of a type similar to that which

¹² IF XXXIV, 289, 143, 114-15.

existed in the Hebrides, on the Isle of Man, and in the Irish Viking towns.

Consequently, when we speak of Celtic-Scandinavian folklore contacts in the Earldom of Orkney we are dealing on the one hand with the Orcadians, who were mainly of Norwegian origin, though there were also many Icelanders in Orkney, and on the other with the Celticised Picts and the Scottish and Irish Gaels.

Very little can be said about the relationship between Pictish and Scandinavian folklore, since the Pictish inscriptions — insofar as they can be deciphered at all — are short and factual, and the Old Norse sources are extremely reticent about the Picts. There is a fairly rich recent folklore about the Picts, taken down in the last centuries not only on Shetland and Orkney but also on the Scottish mainland and in Northern Ireland.¹³ The material of this kind hitherto published is to a great extent unreliable, however, and it has not been properly studied.

Here I will limit myself to touching upon two examples of folklore about the Picts that are of special interest insofar as they occur in — or have parallels in — old Scandinavian sources.

In *Historia Norvegiæ*, a Latin history of the Norwegian kings, probably written before 1200 with English readers in mind, but in all likelihood by a Norwegian,¹⁴ a description of Orkney is included. After having referred to the Gaelic monks, the *papæ*, the author goes on to talk about the other people who were on the Islands when the Norsemen arrived:

Horum alteri, scilicet Peti, parvo superantes pygmæos statura instructuris urbium vespere et mane mira operantes, meridie vero cunctis viribus prorsus destituti in subterraneis domunculis præ timore latuerunt.¹⁵

Here we learn that the Picts, “who were hardly bigger than dwarfs in stature, worked wonders in building villages in the morning and evening, but in the middle of the day they lost their strength altogether and hid in terror in small subterranean dwellings.”

This passage shows, among other things, what impression the souterrains, which were found also among the Gaels in Scotland and Ireland and are referred to elsewhere in Old Norse literature, made on the Vikings. It also shows that the Picts were no more than a memory by the time the passage was written, since it is, of

¹³ See e.g. D. Mac Ritchie, ‘Memories of the Picts’, *The Scottish Antiquary* XIV (1900), 121-39; same author, *Finns, Fairies and Picts* (1893); E. Andrews, *Ulster Folklore* (1913), 15-16, 27, 31, 50, 57, 78, 99, 102, 104.

¹⁴ See Anne Holmsmark in *KL*, s.v. *Historia Norvegiæ*.

¹⁵ G. Storm, *Monumenta Historica Norvegiæ* (1880), 88.

course, a misconception that the souterrains were permanent living quarters.¹⁶ Furthermore we find an early example of the process of supernaturalisation of the Picts, which has led to their equation with dwarfs and elves in later folk tradition. The most interesting of the motifs involved, however, is the idea that the Picts lost their strength in the middle of the day. I have not been able to find an exact parallel to this elsewhere. It is lacking, for instance, in Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index*,¹⁷ where normally one seldom looks in vain. Is it only a strange coincidence, however, that the reverse idea, that the strength of certain people is increased towards the middle of the day, is found in Arthurian romance? Thus according to a French prose version of the Parceval story, Gawain's strength increased after noon, so that he never struck a knight without splitting him and his horse,¹⁸ and Thomas Malory uses the same motif at least twice in *Le Morte d'Arthur*.¹⁹ In view of the fact that so many of the motifs in the Arthurian romances are drawn from Celtic sources, can it be that what *Historia Norvegiæ* tells us about the Picts is actually a Celtic tradition?

The second example of folklore contacts between the Picts and the Vikings I quote from Jakob Jakobsen's article on Norse linguistic remnants on the Orkneys:

On Rousay it is told, according to Duncan Robertson, Kirkwa, that the first Vikings who came to the Island did not dare to land, because of beings looking like elves or trolls who stood in front of them with shining spears.²⁰

F. T. Wainwright, who quotes this legend — and it is about the only piece of folklore he does quote — says that it is “doubtful in age and origin” and calls it “a flimsy substitute for a genuine native tradition”.²¹ He is partly right in doing so, since his objective is to polemicise against scholars who have taken the passage as referring to an actual encounter between Picts and Norsemen at Rousay. But it is, of course, a misuse of folklore to try to deduce such specific facts from it, and no trained folklorist would attempt to do that any more than he would say that the passage proves that the Picts had spears, and that these were more shiny than those of the Vikings! But there is little reason to doubt that the legend, which has been recorded in many versions

¹⁶ Cf. A. T. Lucas, 'Souterrains: The Literary Evidence', *Béaloideas* 39-41 (1971-3), 165-91.

¹⁷ S. Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* 1-6 (rev. ed., 1955-8).

¹⁸ D. Skeels, *The Romance of Perceval in Prose, A Translation of the Didot Perceval* (1966), 88.

¹⁹ E. Vinaver, *The Works of Malory* (1947), I, 161 (Bk. IV, 18), III, 1216-20 (Bk. XX, 21-2).

²⁰ J. Jakobsen, 'Nordiske minder, især sproglige, på Orknøerne', *Svenska landsmål* (1911) [*Festskrift til H. F. Fellberg*, also published elsewhere], 325. The passage translated by me.

²¹ Wainwright (1964), 102.

on the Orkneys, is an old and genuine Norse tradition. It clearly belongs to the type of story which describes how invaders are driven away by the guardian spirits of a country (Old Norse *landvættir*). The *locus classicus* in Old Icelandic literature is Snorri Sturluson's story of how the *landvættir* drove away a wizard who had taken the shape of a whale after he had been sent out by the Danish king Haraldr Gormsson to prepare an attack on Iceland. In this story, just as in the Rousay legend, the failure of the attackers to land and the army-like qualities of the *landvættir* are stressed. I have touched on these legends and their counterparts elsewhere in Scandinavia in another connection and have shown that they are attached in particular to islands with steep cliffs.²² In the case of the Rousay story the idea that the Picts were of elvish stature was probably welded together with a tale about *landvættir*. That may be why it is not said that the defenders *were* elves or trolls, but that they were "beings looking like elves or trolls".

But it is high time for us to leave the Pictish-Scandinavian folklore contacts in the Earldom and turn to the Gaelic-Scandinavian ones.

Heroic poems and tales are among the most outstanding Old Norse contributions to world literature. Such poems and tales, preserved in the *Poetic Edda* and in the so-called *fornaldarsögur*, were written down in Iceland in the 13th and following centuries, but were based on a much older oral tradition. Some of the elements of this tradition were common to all the Scandinavian countries and the Viking colonies in the west, and some also had their roots in a tradition common to all the Germanic-speaking peoples. But heroic tales were also a favourite literary and oral genre among the Gaels, and among them the stories about Cú Chulainn, Fionn Mac Cumhail and other heroes can still be heard from the mouths of living storytellers.

Anybody who takes the trouble to compare these literary and oral stories in the Ulster and Fenian Cycles with those found in Scandinavian and Germanic tradition about Sigurðr the Slayer of Fáfnir, Helgi Hundingsbani, Ragnarr *loðbrók* etc. cannot but be struck by the many strong similarities. The pitfalls for those who would explain these similarities are many and varied, however. The pattern of heroic life is similar all over the world; some themes and motifs, such as the father-and-son combat,

²² B. Almqvist, *Norrøn niddiktning, Traditionshistoriska studier i versmagi*, 1 *Nid mot furstar* (1965), 152, note 88.

seem to be a common Indo-European heritage; exchanges of tradition may have taken place between the Celtic and the Germanic peoples on the Continent, later to spread to Wales, Ireland and Scotland on the one hand and to Scandinavia on the other — to mention just some of the possibilities. Nevertheless there are a number of instances where the similarities between Gaelic and Scandinavian heroic tales are so close that the likeliest explanation is direct loans in either direction; and this likelihood is sometimes strengthened by the absence of the motifs outside the Celtic-Scandinavian area. We should not, of course, imagine that the Orkney Earldom was always an intermediary in the exchange of such tales. There was also a direct Gaelic influence on West Scandinavian, especially Icelandic and Faroese, folk tradition, since some of the Scandinavian settlers on these islands came via Ireland and Scotland and had sometimes lived there and absorbed Gaelic culture. Nevertheless it is highly probable that much of the transmission took place within the borders of the Orkney Earldom. We must also bear in mind that we are dealing with oral tradition; consequently one and the same tale or motif may have been, and is indeed likely to have been, exchanged more than once, in more than one place, and at times separated by, perhaps, hundreds of years. When dealing with folklore one must rid oneself of the image of the book which is transported from one place to another — an idea that derives from the study of medieval literature. Oral tradition comes from a centre, but it spreads in streams and rivulets, as it were, flowing in many directions.

One of the heroic tales in the spread of which the Orkney Earldom is likely to have had a part is the story about how the secret of the hiding-place of the Rhine gold was lost. It is found in the Eddic poem *Atlakviða* and other Old Norse sources. These contain the motif, lacking in German versions of the story of the Rhine gold, that one of the two persons who know the secret tricks his enemies into killing the other, whereupon he triumphantly exclaims that he is now the only man alive who knows the secret and that he will never reveal it; shortly afterwards he is put to death by the enraged enemies. The same story — though the secret does not concern the hiding place of treasure but how to make a marvellous drink, mostly described as heather ale — is found in Ireland and Scotland in modern folk tradition. The northernmost examples of this legend have been recorded in Orkney and Shetland. The vast majority of the many

versions, however, are in Irish or Scottish Gaelic, and there is little doubt that the form of the story involving the heather ale originated in Gaelic tradition. As I have tried to show in an article entitled 'The Viking Ale and the Rhine Gold',²³ there are nevertheless many reasons to believe that the Irish and Scottish folk legend is derived from the Old Norse heroic tale about the Rhine gold. I will not repeat all the reasons here. The one that is of most interest in the present discussion is that the episode is referred to in the poem *Háttalykill*, a *clavis metrica* illustrating a great number of different poetic measures, composed on the Orkneys in the 1140s by the Icelander Hallr Þórarinnsson and the Orkney Earl Rögnvaldr *kali*.²⁴ What share Hallr and Rögnvaldr each had in the poem's composition is not known; some scholars believe that the Earl was mainly responsible for the subject matter and the Icelander for the versification.²⁵ In view of the fact that the Earl is known to have been a good poet, however, I find this unlikely and feel inclined to side with those who think that Rögnvaldr and Hallr composed alternate stanzas, a theory that fits in with the fact that every poetic measure is illustrated by two stanzas, which also share the same subject matter. It may be mentioned, too, that there are examples of such poetic co-operation and competition in Provençal poetry,²⁶ and the Earl stayed in Narbonne on his way to Jerusalem and composed verses, showing traces of *amour courtois*, for and about an earl's daughter there.²⁷ Whatever the actual process of composition, *Háttalykill* could clearly never have come into being if the stories referred to in it had not already been well-known to an Orkney audience. It may also be worth mentioning that although our particular scene is not — as far as I know — found in pictorial sources in the British Isles, several other scenes included in the story of the Rhine gold are found on Manx stone crosses,²⁸ and if we take into account the fact that pictures from these stories are likely to have been found much more often on wall-hangings and other perishable materials than on stones, it would seem quite likely that illustrations of our particular motif were to be seen in

²³ *Arv* 21 (1965), 115-35.

²⁴ The reference is in stanza 3b (*Skj.* A I 513, B I 488). The attribution to Hallr Þórarinnsson and Rögnvaldr *kali* is not certain, but is accepted as likely by most scholars (cf. Anne Holtmark in *KL*, s.v. *Háttalykill*).

²⁵ E.g. Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie* (2nd ed., 1920-4), II 38.

²⁶ For instance in the genres known as *tenson* and *partimen*; see e.g. P. Bec, *Nouvelle anthologie de la lyrique occitane du Moyen Age* (2nd ed., 1972), 140-8.

²⁷ *ÍF* XXXIV, 209-11, 215-17, 219.

²⁸ P. M. C. Kermode, *Manx Crosses* (1907).

many halls in the Earldom where Gaels and Norsemen met to celebrate, perhaps even at the wedding of Haraldr Maddaðarson and Hvarflöð Melkolmsdóttir or some similar occasion! I may also add that I have read some hundred additional versions of the heather ale legend and recorded it myself about a dozen times since I wrote my paper on it and I have found nothing to disprove, but rather a few things to confirm, my theory that it was borrowed from the Norsemen. Thus the version from Micheál Ó Gaoithín, which I quoted from memory with certain reservations in my paper, but which I have since recorded, contains the heroic laugh, the idea of *hlæjandi skal ek deyja*, “laughing I will die”, which is so prominent in *Atlamál* and other Old Norse heroic poems and tales.²⁹ If I am right, then, we have here an example of an Old Norse story transmitted to the Gaels through the Earldom of Orkney, to be turned into a popular legend, which then travelled back to Orkney and Shetland. Even if I should be partly or totally wrong in this assumption, however, I think I can say with a great deal of confidence that many folklore contacts between the Orcadians and the Gaels were of this intricate kind.

We do not need to go outside *Háttalykill* to find other examples of Gaelic-Scandinavian folklore contacts in the field of heroic tales. Stanzas 23a and 23b allude to the so-called Hildir legend. These stanzas illustrate a poetic measure, called *greppaminni*, in which the first four lines contain questions, the four last answers. Stanza 23a goes as follows:

Hverr réð Hildi at næma?
 hverir daglengis berjask?
 hverir síðarla sættask?
 hverr siklingum atti?
 Heðinn réð Hildi at næma,
 Hjaðningar æ berjask,
 þeir síðarla sættask,
 saman Hildir liði atti.³⁰

It appears from this that Hildir was responsible for the everlasting fight between the Hjaðningar. These allusions are fully understandable in the light of later versions of the story, told in Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum*,³¹ in Snorri Sturluson's

²⁹ Micheál Ó Gaoithín said: *Chonaic an seandúine á marú tad agus is ea a bhí sé ag gáirí*, “The old man saw them [his sons] being killed and he laughed”. Cf. *Arv* 21, 116. The heroic-laugh motif is also found in a version from Tipperary (*Schools Manuscript 578*, 283 in the Department of Irish Folklore, University College Dublin).

³⁰ *Skj.* B I 498, cf. A I 521.

³¹ J. Olrik & H. Ræder, *Saxonis Gesta Danorum* (1931-57), 131-4, especially 134.

*Edda*³² and in *Högna þáttr* in *Flateyjarbók*.³³ As Snorri tells the story, Heðinn Hjarrandason had eloped with Hildr, a daughter of King Högni. Högni followed the elopers on his ship, finally caught up with them, and a fight — called *Hjaðningavíg* — which lasted the whole day, ensued. During the night Hildr resuscitated the fallen warriors on both sides, and so the fight has continued ever since, and will go on until the end of the world. In *Högna þáttr*, however, there is an addition: one of Óláfr Tryggvason's men, Ívarr *ljómi*, put an end to the fight by taking part in it and killing the warriors on both sides.

In *Háttalykill* we are not told where the fight took place, but this omission is easily explained by the compressed style of the narrative, and also by the fact that everybody was likely to know the location: the later sources all agree that the incident took place in Háey, that is to say Hoy, on the Orkneys.

Much has been written about the Hildr legend in particular, and about the so-called Everlasting Fight motif in general, by Alexander Krappe,³⁴ Margaret Schlauch,³⁵ Einar Ól. Sveinsson,³⁶ Gerard Murphy³⁷ and others.³⁸ The most recent contribution, perhaps, has been made by Michael Chesnutt,³⁹ who points to a series of close correspondences between the Hildr story and the Irish mythological tale *Cath Maige Turedh*, which may in its present form be as early as the 11th century. We are also likely to be on firmer ground before long, since Chesnutt is engaged in a detailed investigation of this text, and other forms of the Everlasting Fight motif in Old Norse sources are being studied by the Icelandic scholar Davíð Erlingsson. The matter is extremely complicated, because apart from the sources already mentioned — and an obscure allusion in Bragi Boddason's *Ragnarsdrápa*, which also refers to Hildr⁴⁰ — the motif of the resuscitating hag is found or alluded to in many Icelandic *fornaldarsögur* and similar works. There is, besides, a fair number of occurrences of the motif in Icelandic folktales.⁴¹

³² Finnur Jónsson, *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar* (1931), 153-5.

³³ Guðbrandr Vigfusson and C. R. Unger, *Flateyjarbók* (1860-8), I 279-83.

³⁴ *Balor with the Evil Eye* (1927), 132-53.

³⁵ *Romance in Iceland* (1934), 138-40.

³⁶ 'Keltnesk áhrif á íslenskar ýkjusögur', *Skírnir* CVI (1932), 114-16; 'Celtic Elements in Icelandic Tradition', *Béaloideas* XXV (1957), 17-18.

³⁷ *Duanaire Finn* Part III (Irish Texts Society XLIII, 1953), XXXIII-IV, LIII-IV.

³⁸ See e.g. T. P. Cross, *Motif-Index of Early Irish Literature* (1952), A162.1.0.1*; E155.1.

³⁹ 'An Unsolved Problem in Old Norse-Icelandic Literary History', *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 1 (1968), 129-33.

⁴⁰ *Skj.* B I 2-3, A I 2-3.

⁴¹ See ref. in Einar Ól. Sveinsson (1957), 18, note 37.

To refer to the motif as it occurs in all these sources as the Everlasting Fight — as has often been done — is in fact misleading. It would be better to call it the Resuscitating Hag, because in most versions the fight takes place only on three consecutive days, after which the hag is killed; furthermore the hag usually revives the fallen on one side only. The episode normally ends when the hero kills the hag and obtains the resuscitating ointment (or the like), whereupon he is able to bring back to life the fallen warriors on his own side.

From this it appears that the Hildir story may be regarded as a subtype within a wider complex. There can be little doubt, however, that this particular form of the motif spread to Iceland and Denmark via Orkney. Saxo Grammaticus's informants are here, as so often elsewhere, likely to have been Icelanders.

Other forms of the motif of the Resuscitating Hag, however, seem to have come to Iceland directly from the Gaels. In spite of the work in progress, it will be a long time before the spread of the motif is fully understood. One will not only have to examine all the medieval and post-medieval examples of the motif in Irish literary romances — and in Welsh and Arthurian literature — but also all the Irish and Scottish-Gaelic folktales and heroic tales in which the motif occurs.⁴² This is an enormous task, since the Resuscitating Hag — unlike the Heather Ale legend, for instance — is not a single story, but a motif occurring in scores of different tale types. Because of this it has not been properly indexed and we are not in a position to say how many recorded instances of it there are in the folklore archives. I would imagine, however, that there are thousands rather than hundreds in the Archives of the Department of Irish Folklore alone. All this material will have to be classified and analysed before definite results can be arrived at. It will no doubt be found that many of these folk stories are derived from literary sources, but samplings I have made indicate that this explanation is not likely to hold true for all of them. It is quite probable that some had an oral existence that stretches back much farther than the 11th century, that is to say before *Cath Maige Turedh* and *Háttalykill* were composed.

In some Irish oral tales (and perhaps in Scottish Gaelic ones too, but this I have not investigated) one also finds the notion that

⁴² Some of this material is discussed in A. Bruford, 'Gaelic Folk-tales and Mediaeval Romances', *Béaloides* XXXIV (1966, also published separately 1969), see references s.v. 'Everlasting Fight' in Index, 284.

only a mortal man can put an end to an "everlasting" fight in the fairy world. This motif, which is found in *Högná þáttr* (and elsewhere in Old Icelandic literature), is also likely to have been borrowed by the Norsemen from the Gaels. Within Scandinavia it does not seem to have spread outside Iceland.

These hints will have to suffice for the present. Though much is still unclear, I think we can be fairly confident that the Hildir story is an example of a Gaelic motif which spread to Scandinavia via Orkney, while other stories of the Resuscitating Hag complex exemplify a spread of Gaelic motifs to Iceland through different channels.

I shall now conclude these remarks about Gaelic and Scandinavian heroic tales with a couple of examples showing other types of connection.

It was not only the secular aristocracy in Orkney that took eagerly to such tales. The interest seems to have been just as great among the clergy. A typical representative of this class was Bjarni Kolbeinsson, who became Bishop of Orkney in 1188. He was an important man who acted as intermediary in a conflict between Bishop Jón in Caithness and the Pope, visited synods and had other official functions in Bergen and elsewhere in Norway, and who counted among his friends many cultured Icelanders, including the powerful family of the Oddaverjar.⁴³ Curiously enough, memories of Bjarni Kolbeinsson's father, the chieftain Kolbeinn *hrúga*, seem to have lived on in oral tradition in Orkney up to this century, for a ruin on the Isle of Wyre is called Cobbie Row's Castle.⁴⁴ The strange poem *Fornyrðadrápa* — also called *Málsháttakvæði* — has been attributed to Bjarni Kolbeinsson, and though this attribution is not entirely safe, it is, for a variety of reasons, very probable.⁴⁵

It is not easy to say what *Fornyrðadrápa* is really about. At first glance it seems to be a hotch-potch of proverbs, proverbial sayings, and allusions to scattered incidents in heroic tales, *fornaldarsögur* and the like, very loosely strung together. A closer study of the poem, however, reveals certain threads. *Fornyrðadrápa* can be characterized as a love complaint — echoes from Provence are not absent here, either. The poet was in love with a beautiful woman, who apparently left him and deceived him. The poet hints at his emotions, recalls the beauty

⁴³ See Anne Holtmark, 'Bjarne Kolbeinsson og hans forfatterskap', *Edda* 37 (1937), 1-17.

⁴⁴ W. Douglas Simpson, *Scottish Castles* (1959), 5; H. Marwick, 'Kolbein Hruga's Castle, Wyre', *Proceedings of the Orkney Antiquarian Society* VI (1928), 9-11.

⁴⁵ See Anne Holtmark in *KL*, s.v. *Málsháttakvæði*.

of his beloved, complains about the unsteadfastness and fickleness of women, makes jokes about himself and expresses his desire for vengeance on the woman and her relatives, all in a curious mixture of humour and desperation. Many, if not all, of the proverbs and stories he quotes or refers to illustrate situations that are in some way or another similar to his own.

The *stef* or refrain of the poem alludes to the tragic love story between King Haraldr *hárfagri* and a Lappish girl, anonymous in *Fornyrðadrápa*, but called Snjófríðr or Snæfríðr in other Old Norse sources:

Ekki var þat forðum farald,
Finnan gat þó ærðan Harald,
hónum þótti sólbjört sú,
slíks dæmi verðr mǫrgum nú.⁴⁶

Love was not a contagious disease in the old days, says the poet, nevertheless the Lappish girl made Haraldr lose his mind; he thought that she shone bright like the sun — the same thing happens to many a man now.

From the later sources (*Ágrip*,⁴⁷ *Heimskringla*⁴⁸ and *Flateyjarbók*⁴⁹) it appears that the King's madness manifested itself in two ways: he fell wildly in love with the girl at first sight (this the girl effected through a magic love potion), and exhibited boundless sorrow after her death. He sat day and night for three years watching her corpse, which, again due to magic, did not deteriorate. Though it is not quite certain, it would appear likely that Bjarni Kolbeinsson knew both these motifs.

We are dealing here with an early instance of belief in the magic power of the Lapps, a Scandinavian belief that is still found in Orkney and Shetland folklore, as well as elsewhere in Britain.⁵⁰ However, it has been demonstrated by the Norwegian folklorist Moltke Moe that the love-potion motif is of Celtic origin. Close parallels are found in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* and its source, Nennius's *Historia Brittonum*, where the story about Hengist, the Anglo-Saxon chieftain, and Rowena, the daughter of King Vortigern, is told.⁵¹

⁴⁶ *Skj.* B II 140-1, A II 133.

⁴⁷ Finnur Jónsson, *Ágrip af Nóregs konunga sögum* (Altnordische Saga-Bibliothek 18, 1929), 3-5.

⁴⁸ Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, *Haralds saga ins hárfagra* in *Heimskringla* (ÍF XXVI, 1941), 125-7.

⁴⁹ *Flateyjarbók* (1860-8), I 582.

⁵⁰ See e.g. D. Strömbäck, *Sejd* (1935), 198-206, R. I. Page, "Lapland Sorcerers", *Saga-Book XVI* (1962-5), 215-32, and Marwick (1975), 25-7.

⁵¹ Moltke Moe, 'Eventyrlige sagn i vor ældre historie', *Moltke Moes samlede skrifter* (Instituttet for sammenlignende kulturforskning, Serie B, I, VI, IX, 1925-7), II 168-97.

The source of this part of the Snjófriðr story may then, as Moltke Moe supposes, be of Welsh origin and Geoffrey of Monmouth's or Nennius's work may have acted as intermediary. The love-potion story may, however, equally well have a Gaelic source. Possibly the love-potion motif was combined in a Gaelic tale with the motif of the inordinate love of a man for a dead woman — a motif which Moltke Moe derives from continental legends attached to Charlemagne,⁵² but which is also attested in Irish tradition.⁵³ I have, perhaps, complicated rather than elucidated the question of Celtic-Scandinavian contacts by leaving this problem unsolved, but the different possibilities have at least been indicated.

Let us go on to another reference to an unfortunate love affair in *Fornyrðadrápa*. In stanza 13 we read:

Afi of deilir sizt við sjó,
Sörli sprakk af gildri þró,⁵⁴

i.e. "Least of all can one try one's strength against the sea; Sörli burst from his great longing."

There are many heroes by the name of Sörli in Old Norse literature, but none of them "burst" from love. However, Reidar Th. Christiansen has drawn attention to a ballad in Scottish Gaelic which elucidates the enigmatic lines in *Fornyrðadrápa*.⁵⁵ This ballad has been recorded fairly recently in four versions, all of them from the vicinity of Athole, a place referred to a number of times in *Orkneyinga saga* as Atjoklar, or something similar. The ballad is about a man named Seurlus, MacRigh Beirbhe (the son of the King of Bergen), who dreamed that he saw a beautiful woman with yellow tresses, with skin as white as snow, and with long, slender hands, who gave him a ring set with precious jewels. Seurlus's heart was filled with joy "as when the wind fills the sails of a fleet". When he woke up he could still feel the maiden's burning kiss on his mouth, the ring was there on his finger and he also caught a glimpse of the woman, who apparently was a mermaid, swimming away straight out into the ocean. Seurlus rushed down to the shore, threw himself into the sea and swam after her. But his strength failed him, he swooned and was carried

⁵² Moe (1925-7), II 176-97, especially 176-81, 191-7. [Moe seems, on the contrary, to suggest that the motif spread south from Scandinavia, cf. p. 197, Ed.]

⁵³ There is a reference to Fionn Mac Cumhail's inordinate love for a dead woman in *Féis Tighe Chonáin*, ed. Maud Joynt (Medieval and Modern Irish Series VII, 1936), 14.

⁵⁴ *Skj.* B II 141 (the edition has *spakk* instead of *sprakk* because of a misprint). Cf. *Skj.* A II 133.

⁵⁵ *The Vikings and the Viking Wars in Irish and Gaelic Tradition* (1931), 413-16.

to the shore by the waves and the wind. He was still alive, but in a short while his heart burst as well as “the ribs on both sides”.

It seems likely that *Fornyrðadrápa* refers to these futile attempts of an enamoured man to pit his strength against the sea and to his “bursting”. The source, however, cannot have been the Scottish ballad now preserved, which can hardly be much older than the late Middle Ages; it must rather be some earlier version of the same story.

The hero has a Scandinavian name in *Fornyrðadrápa*. Some of the motifs, such as the joy taken in seeing the sails of a fleet filling with wind and the violent reaction to grief, which latter calls to mind Egill Skallagrímsson’s reaction on the death of his son Böðvarr,⁵⁶ have a Scandinavian flavour. Nevertheless other ingredients in the story, such as the dream visit from the other world, and the type of female beauty depicted, stand out as Celtic traits. Was this story originally Scandinavian or Celtic? Is not the likeliest answer that it was a product of a hybrid culture?

When dealing with the story of Snjófríðr and Haraldr *hárfagri* we have already crossed the border-line — which is not a very clear one — between heroic tales and kings’ sagas. The latter is also a genre which the Gaels and the Norsemen had in common, though the Irish kings’ sagas differ a great deal from the Old Norse. Apart from anything else, they are shorter and less realistic.

Orkneyinga saga, an Icelandic work based on Orkney tradition and written about 1190-1200,⁵⁷ though it deals with earls rather than kings, has many of the qualities of the Norse kings’ sagas. But it is hardly surprising that we should find Gaelic motifs in it too. Some of these belong to the field of folk beliefs, and I will touch upon a few of them in a little while. Firstly, however, I would like to draw attention to two incidents which have parallels in Irish sources.

My first example is found in chapter 5 of the saga and concerns the death of Sigurðr, the first Earl of Orkney.⁵⁸ He has been fighting with a Scottish earl named Melbrikta (Maelbrighde) in Mærhæfi (Moray), but it has been agreed that the parties shall meet to negotiate a truce, each bringing forty men. Earl Sigurðr, who does not trust his enemy, comes with eighty men, but in order that this shall not be detected too soon, he has placed

⁵⁶ Sigurður Nordal, *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar* (ÍF II, 1933), 243-4.

⁵⁷ See Finnboði Guðmundsson in *KL*, s.v. *Orkneyinga saga*.

⁵⁸ ÍF XXXIV, 8-9.

two men on each horse. As soon as Melbrikta detects the deceit a fight starts, and the Scottish earl and all his men are killed. Sigurðr cuts off their heads and attaches them to his saddle "in order to increase his own fame" (*til ágætis sér*), as the saga phrases it. But Melbrikta — who was not nick-named Melbrikta *tönn* for nothing — had a long tooth standing out of his mouth, and when Earl Sigurðr spurred his horse and galloped away triumphantly with the severed heads attached to his saddle, the tooth entered his calf and caused an infection from which he soon died.

The custom of cutting off the heads of slain enemies and carrying them around to boast about them was apparently very common among the Celts. In some of the references to this practice it is also stated more specifically that the heads were hung on the horses of the victors. Long lists of examples of this custom among the continental Celts as well as in Old Irish sources have been compiled and commented upon by H. M. and N. K. Chadwick and others.⁵⁹

In *Orkneyinga saga*, however, the head-hunting and boasting motif has been combined with another: the head of a slain man avenges the former bearer of the head. The same combination is found in the Old Irish story about the death of King Concobhar Mac Nessa.⁶⁰ The brain of a Leinster king, Mesgegra, who had been killed by the Ulster champion Conall Cernach, had been mixed with chalk, formed into a hard ball and preserved, so that it could conveniently be boasted about on appropriate occasions. The brain was stolen, however, by a Connaught man who hated Ulster people, and as soon as he got an opportunity, he threw it at the Ulster king, Concobhar Mac Nessa. Though it entered his brain, Concobhar managed to survive for several years, but finally, when he heard the news that Christ had been crucified, he became so enraged that the ball fell out of his head; then a stream of blood gushed forth and Concobhar died. Thus the Leinster king avenged himself on the Ulstermen after his death. However, the Ulster king had the satisfaction of being the first Irishman to go directly to heaven: he was considered to have died a martyr's death, and was held to have been baptised in his own blood.

⁵⁹ See e.g. H. M. & N. K. Chadwick, *The Growth of Literature I* (1932), 92-4; N. K. Chadwick, *The Celts* (1970), 49-50; K. H. Jackson, *The Oldest Irish Tradition: A Window on the Iron Age* (1964), 19-20.

⁶⁰ *Aided Chonchobuir* in K. Meyer, *The Death-tales of the Ulster Heroes* (Royal Irish Academy, Todd Lecture Series XIV, 1906), 2-21.

One need not assume that the tale about Mesgegra's brain is the direct source of the Melbrikta episode in *Orkneyinga saga*, but some such Gaelic story, perhaps in a more primitive form and without the hagiographic ingredients, seems likely to lie behind it.

Another incident in *Orkneyinga saga* to do with scorn and honour, though not with death, is connected with Earl Rögnvaldr *kali* (the joint-author of *Háttalykill*).⁶¹ After his visit to Jerusalem he went to the river Jordan. Nothing is said about his devotions, unless the stark fact that he bathed there is significant. But we hear that he and one of his men, Sigmundr *öngull*, swam over the river, went to a place where there was some brushwood and twisted big knots in it, whereupon the Earl and Sigmundr composed some verses, the contents of which were very offensive to those who had stayed at home in Orkney instead of following the Earl on his pilgrimage. One of these men, who is not mentioned by name in the verses or described clearly enough for a case to hold up in court, but who is nevertheless likely to have recognised himself in the verses, seems to have been Sigmundr *öngull*'s step-father.

The verses stand very close to the type of calumnious poetry referred to as *níð* in Old Norse sources. More specifically, they are related to a sub-group of *níð*, called *viðáttuskáldskapr* in the Icelandic laws. This term is used about satirical poetry worded in such a way that a large group of people could be offended by it, while nobody could prove it referred to himself in particular. It is curious — and perhaps more than coincidence — that the Old Irish laws also have a name for such poetry.⁶²

The twisting of knots in brushwood in order to shame an opponent, however, is the motif of most interest in this connection, since it has very close parallels in the Old Irish heroic tales about Cú Chulainn.⁶³ Apart from *Orkneyinga saga* this motif is found in Old Norse sources only in *Morkinskinna*⁶⁴ and in the parallel account in Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*,⁶⁵ where the incident is also placed in the Holy Land, but where it is attached to the Norwegian king Sigurðr *Jórsalafari*. Louis Hammerich, who has dealt with this motif in an important article

⁶¹ ÍF XXXIV, 231-2.

⁶² On *viðáttuskáldskapr* and its Irish counterpart, see *Norrøn niddiktning* (1965), 56 and H. Meroney, 'Studies in Early Irish Satire', *The Journal of Celtic Studies* 1 (1950), 199-226.

⁶³ See references in C. O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúalnge from the Book of Leinster* (1967), xviii.

⁶⁴ Finnur Jónsson, *Morkinskinna* (Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur LIII, 1932), 383.

⁶⁵ Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, *Magnússonar saga in Heimskringla* (ÍF XXVIII, 1951), 261.

on Celtic influences on the Continent,⁶⁶ and who recognizes its Irish origins, has overlooked the instance in *Orkneyinga saga*. Finnbogi Guðmundsson, the editor of the most recent edition of the saga, takes the view that Earl Rögnvaldr tied the knots in imitation of Sigurðr *Jórsalafari*.⁶⁷ It seems to me to be just as likely that it was the passage in *Orkneyinga saga* which gave rise to the story in *Morkinskinna* and *Heimskringla*. Whatever the truth of this, the custom of twisting knots in brushwood in order to spite opponents might have spread to Norway via the Orkney Earldom. It is amazing — but typical of the mobility of the Orkney people — that they should observe Irish customs in the Holy Land!

We have already crossed the border-line between folk narrative and folk customs and beliefs. I will not have much more to say about Orcadian-Gaelic contacts in these latter fields, because the subject is both wide and poorly investigated. Nevertheless I would like to point out a few striking similarities.

Many omens of death, or apparitions occurring at or shortly after death, are common to Old Norse tradition connected with the Orkney Earldom and Irish and Scottish-Gaelic folklore.

The line in *Fornyrðadrápa* rhyming with *Sorli sprakk af gildri þró* (discussed above) goes: *stundum þýtr í logni ló*,⁶⁸ that is to say: "A wave sometimes roars in a calm". The explanation of this saying can be found in *Orkneyinga saga*, chapter 47, in the description of how a wave suddenly and inexplicably arose in calm weather shortly before the death of Earl Magnús Erlendsson, who was to become Saint Magnús.⁶⁹ Waves as harbingers of death are frequently met with in Gaelic popular legends and beliefs.⁷⁰

Other death omens and omens of ill-luck, for instance many of those connected with malfunctions of the body such as stumbling, sneezing and itching, are also shared by Scandinavian, Orcadian, and Gaelic tradition.⁷¹

The premonitions and apparitions which preceded the battle of Clontarf, some of which occurred or were seen in the Orkney Earldom, are described in great detail in *Njáls saga*.⁷² Anne

⁶⁶ L. L. Hammerich, 'Irland og Kontinentet i middelalderen', *Saga och Sed* (1970), 34. Cf. also Meissner (1925), 149-51.

⁶⁷ ÍF XXXIV, 231, note 3.

⁶⁸ *Skj.* B II 141, A II 133.

⁶⁹ ÍF XXXIV, 106.

⁷⁰ S. Ó Súilleabháin, *A Handbook of Irish Folklore* (1942), 273.

⁷¹ Cf. B. Almqvist, 'The Death Forebodings of Saint Oláfr, King of Norway, and Rögnvaldr Búrason, Earl of Orkney', *Béaloideas* 42-4 (1974-6), especially 24, 29-30, 32.

⁷² Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Brennu-Njáls saga* (ÍF XII, 1954), 446-7, 454-60.

Holtmark and others have drawn attention to the fact that beliefs about blood raining from heaven in anticipation of battles and deaths were common to both Celts and Norsemen.⁷³ In *Njáls saga* it is stated that the phenomenon was called *benregn* in other countries (*í öðrum löndum*),⁷⁴ which indicates that the Icelanders must have met with the belief abroad. In *Eyrbyggja saga* the death of a woman from the Hebrides is foreshadowed by a rain of blood.⁷⁵ Anne Holtmark has also thrown light on the Gaelic background of the mysterious weaving women appearing in *Darraðarljóð*,⁷⁶ a poem which, if we are to believe Walter Scott, was still known in the Norn language in Shetland in the 18th century.⁷⁷

Among folk beliefs related to war is the special type of battle frenzy called *gjalt*, a word which occurs mainly in the phrase *verða að gjalti*. It has long been recognised that this is an Irish loan-word.⁷⁸ It occurs in *Orkneyinga saga*⁷⁹ as well as in several other Old Norse texts. In some of these other influences from Irish or Scottish-Gaelic tradition can be traced.

Certain magic practices, such as sitting under waterfalls in order to acquire secret knowledge, referred to by Bjarni Kolbeinsson in his *Jómsvíkingadrápa*, are more likely to have been taught by the Orcadians to the Gaels.⁸⁰

While we can take it as reasonably certain that some of the beliefs I have mentioned were originally Gaelic and that the Orkney Earldom played a role in their dissemination, there are many other beliefs that the Gaels and the Scandinavians are likely to have shared before they met. But these, too, play a role in the Gaelic-Scandinavian folklore contacts. Whether the child of a mixed marriage learned a certain belief from his Norse father or his Gaelic mother, both of whom might have retained it from childhood, that belief was spread and strengthened. And when a Norseman found that a Gael believed in the same thing as he did, or *vice versa*, that must on the whole have led to a confirmation and vitalization of the belief. I would even go so far as to suggest

⁷³ Anne Holtmark, '“Vefr Darraðar”', *Maal og minne* (1939), 78.

⁷⁴ ÍF XII, 175.

⁷⁵ Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthias Dórðarson, *Eyrbyggja saga* (ÍF IV, 1935), 140.

⁷⁶ Holtmark (1939), 74-96. Cf. also A. J. Goedher, *Irish and Norse Traditions about the Battle of Clontarf* (1938), 78.

⁷⁷ *The Pirate*, note to Chapter II; cf. Jakobsen (1911), 329-30.

⁷⁸ See e.g. H. R. Ellis, '“Gjalti”: A Study on Battle-Panic in Old Norse Literature', *Comparative Literature Studies* 11 (1944), 21-9; Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 'Vísir í Hávamálum og írsk saga', *Skírnir* CXXXVI (1952), 168-77.

⁷⁹ ÍF XXXIV, 4.

⁸⁰ R. Meissner, 'Ganga til fréttar', *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Volkskunde* 27 (1917), 1-13.

that the common folklore heritage is part of the explanation of the unity that exists today among the peoples of the British Isles, and that the unity would be even greater, if this common heritage were properly understood.

The store of proverbs common to the Norsemen and the Gaels has a similar history. Some of these proverbs doubtless passed from the one community to the other, but a great many — probably the majority — were part of a common heritage. And even where there is no genetic relationship between the Gaelic and the Scandinavian proverbs, they often express the same values and the same type of wisdom. No doubt there is much to be learnt about Gaelic-Scandinavian folklore contacts in the Earldom of Orkney from a close study of the Orkney proverbs in comparison with those in Scottish-Gaelic and Irish. But since only a fraction of these proverbs has been published, the full extent of any possible exchange cannot yet be properly assessed.⁸¹

I have unfortunately only been able to touch upon scattered examples of folklore contacts in the Earldom of Orkney. There are whole fields which I have had to ignore completely. Material folk culture, for example, with all its subdivisions — housing, settlement, land division, communication, dress, food, etc. — has been ignored. It is however fitting, while we are on the subject, that I should mention the important work done in several of these fields by a former teacher of mine, the late Åke Campbell of Uppsala.⁸²

As I indicated at the beginning of my paper, I have also ignored all the contacts that can be traced only in folklore collected in recent times. There are no valid reasons for such an omission, except the limitations imposed by space and the fact that so little scholarly work has been done on recent folklore material. It was, of course, factors such as chance and the limited

⁸¹ In the introduction to Marwick (1929), xxxiv, the author calls attention to some 'practically identical parallels' between Orkney and Faroese proverbs. He says among other things: "There are mair ways o' killing a dog or choking him wi' butter" is not far from Fær. "Ilt er at binda hund við smörleyp" . . . "Even the crow thinks her ain bird bonniest" is a clear rendering of Fær. "Kråka tykist best um unga sin". Both these proverbs occur in Scottish Gaelic and Irish tradition in forms closer to the Orkney than to the Faroese versions (see e.g. T. S. Ó Máille, *Sean-fhocla Chonnacht* I, 1948, nos. 2471, 1975). Since they also occur in England (*The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs*, 2nd rev. ed., 1935, 696, 120), it is difficult to say when and how they were disseminated. For a Scottish Gaelic counterpart to a proverb in *Málsháttakvæði*, see Chesnutt (1968), 128 and works quoted there.

⁸² See especially 'Keltisk och nordisk kultur i möte på Hebriderna', *Folk-liv* VII-VIII (1943-4), 228-52 and 'Nordvästeuropeisk brödkultur i Rigspåla', *Saga och Sed* (1951), 5-19. A bibliography of Å. Campbell's printed works appears in *Arctica, Essays Presented to Åke Campbell* (1956), 285-96.

themes and interests of the old poets and saga writers that governed the inclusion and omission of folklore items in earlier times, and much that is only found in modern sources is likely to be just as old or older. In spite of all the work that remains to be done on folklore in the older sources, that collected in recent times is likely to yield the richest harvest in the future.

This is most obvious in the case of popular legends. Reidar Th. Christiansen was the folklorist who perhaps saw this most clearly. In several of his articles he has pointed to a series of close parallels between certain Scandinavian and Scottish-Gaelic and Irish legends, and has introduced the term North Sea legends.⁸³ It is not easy to account satisfactorily for these similarities. It may be that some of the motifs and legends are part of a common stock, but there can be little doubt either that the Norse and Gaelic speaking communities influenced one another, and that certain types and sub-types spread in either direction. A not inconsiderable part of this exchange is likely to have taken place in the Viking Age within and via the Earldom of Orkney. We obtain occasional glimpses of this process — in confirmation of our view — thanks to work like that done by Inger Boberg on the legend of the death of the Great Pan,⁸⁴ or by Brita Egardt⁸⁵ and Dag Strömbäck⁸⁶ on the nix in horse-shape. A study of the Seal Woman legend, which is being undertaken as a team project in the Department of Irish Folklore, also points in the same direction. But there are scores of such legends, each of them in hundreds of versions, which have hardly been touched by folklore scholars, and from which much is undoubtedly to be learnt.⁸⁷

In the first of his O'Donnell lectures 1967-8, on Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Kingship, D. A. Binchy opened with some witty remarks about the founder of the lectures:

⁸³ See e.g. 'Nordsjøsgn', *Arv* 13 (1957), 1-20; 'Til spørsmålet om forholdet mellem irsk og nordisk tradisjon', *Arv* 8 (1952), 1-41; 'Gaelic and Norse Folklore', *Folk-liv* (1938), 321-35.

⁸⁴ Inger M. Boberg, *Sagnet om den store Pans død* (1934).

⁸⁵ Brita Egardt, 'De svenska vattenhästsägnerna och deras ursprung'. *Folkkultur* 4 (1944), 119-66.

⁸⁶ Dag Strömbäck, 'Some Notes on the Nix in Older Nordic Tradition', *Medieval Literature and Folklore Studies, Essays in Honor of Francis Lee Utley* (1970), 245-56. Cf. also *KL*, s.v. *Näcken*.

⁸⁷ The following migratory legends may prove to be especially worthy of close investigation: River Claiming its Due (*ML* 4050), The Visit to the Old Troll — The Handshake (*ML* 5010), The Fairy Hunter (*ML* 5060), Midwife to the Fairies (*ML* 5070), Removing Building Situated above the House of the Fairies (*ML* 5075), The Changeling (*ML* 5085), Married to a Fairy Woman (*ML* 5090). Scottish and Manx versions of legends about children who have died or been murdered before baptism (cf. *ML* 4025) have been treated in an article of mine, 'Norska utburdsägner i västerled', *Norveg* 21 (1978), 109-119, and I suggest there that these legends are of Norwegian origin.

The late Mr. O'Donnell was convinced that the Anglo-Saxon invaders of Britain brought nothing with them but their language; everything else they simply took over from the Celtic population. So far am I from sharing his opinion that I shall suggest . . . that one of the Insular Celtic peoples actually recast its traditional pattern of kingship after an Anglo-Saxon model. And I can only hope that as a result these venerable walls will not be haunted by Mr. O'Donnell's protesting ghost.⁸⁸

It will, I hope, have appeared that I share Professor Binchy's views and disagree with Mr. O'Donnell, in so far as I do not believe that everything in Britain is Celtic. Still, I would not fulfil my duty as a folklorist unless I made some attempt to lay his ghost. It is true that it might have displeased Mr. O'Donnell to hear that part of the Celtic influence on Britain consisted of stories and beliefs that the Celts had taken over from the Vikings; but I am sure that it would have pleased him and made him rest content to learn that some of the influence that the people in the Earldom of Orkney and their latter day descendants exercised, and will exercise on Britain, is a cultural legacy that they have inherited from the Celts.

Though it is high time that I concluded these scattered remarks, I would not like to do so without quoting at least one sentence in the Old Orcadian language and one in Gaelic. Since so little is preserved in Norn it is not easy to find anything appropriate, but I have finally settled on *Tara gott*, "It has been done", "It has been brought to its end".⁸⁹ The phrase is preserved as a kind of magic formula. It occurs, for instance, in a Rousay version of a popular legend about how witches sink ships — one of the North Sea legends which I mentioned before (there are versions from Iceland and the Faroe Islands).

Now we may translate the phrase into Irish: *Tá sé déanta*. I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw that this very phrase occurs in at least two Irish versions of the legend of the ship-sinking witch, in exactly the same context — as a summing-up after the magic act has been brought to its conclusion.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ D. A. Binchy, *Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Kingship* (The O'Donnell Lectures for 1967-8, 1970), 1.

⁸⁹ Marwick (1929), 187.

⁹⁰ H. Wagner, *Gaelige Theilinn* (1959), 274-7; Seán Mac Giollarnáth, 'An Dara Tiachóg as Iorras Aithneach', *Béalóideas* X (1940), 31. There are further printed Irish versions of this legend in *Béalóideas* V (1935), 132-3; VIII (1938), 158; XI (1941), 102-3; XXVII (1959), 2-5; XXXIII (1965), 52-3; and in S. O' Sullivan, *Folktales of Ireland* (1966), 226-7. There are at least eleven more variants in manuscripts in the archives of the Department of Irish Folklore, UCD. The Irish versions have been analysed by Séamas Mac Cóil, 'The Witch Sinks Ships', 3rd year students essay 1976 (manuscript in Department of Irish Folklore). Scottish variants occur in: A. Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica* V (1954), 299-304; J. G. Campbell, *Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland* (1900), 147; J. L. Campbell, *Tales of Barra Told by the Cuddy* (1961), (cont. on p. 105)

On second thoughts, however, it is inappropriate to end a lecture on Scandinavian-Celtic folklore contacts with such an apparently clear cut example. For, as you have heard time after time, the work has *not* been done. As a matter of fact, it has hardly begun.

I am sure you will forgive me if I say that it is my fervent belief and my firm intellectual conviction that the culture of Britain would profit if all the excellent work on Celtic and Scandinavian philology done here, much of it in the University of Oxford, were complemented by more work on folklore, not least that of the Northern Isles and the Celtic-speaking peoples. It is my hope that more academic research projects and more academic posts can be established in this field here in Oxford and elsewhere in Britain. If the institution I represent, or I personally, can give any help towards this end, we shall be more than willing to do so.

This is the advice and the promise I can offer to express my gratitude for the unusual honour that has been bestowed upon me — a Swedish folklorist with Iceland as a second homeland and Ireland as a third — with the invitation to deliver the O'Donnell Lecture for 1976.

(note 90 cont.)

204-5. Faroese versions are found in J. Jakobsen, *Færøske folkesagn og æventyr* (Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur XXVII, 1898-1901), 38, 131-2. There are a number of Icelandic versions in Jón Arnason, *Islenskar þjóðsögur og ævintýri*, ed. Árni Böðvarsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson (1954-61), I, 437; III, 402, 537-8, 586, 610. I am not aware of the existence of this legend in Norway, Denmark or Sweden, and it may be that it is of Irish or Scottish origin.

FIVE KINGS

BY AXEL SEEBERG

Sigmundur:

Heill nú Eiríkr,
vel skalt hér kominn
ok gakk í höll horskr.
hins vilk fregna,
hvat fylgir þér
jöfra frá eggþrimu.

Eiríkr:

Konungar ro fimm,
kennik þér nafn allra,
ek em enn sétti sjalfr.

ERIC Bloody-axe, ex-King of Norway and of Northumbria, is thought to have met his end in 954 at Stainmoor in Westmorland. The lines quoted — which conclude the *Eiríksmál*, or Lay of Eric, as the poem has come down to us in the *Fagrskinna* version of the History of the Kings of Norway — were presumably composed within a short time of his death; tradition has it that the Lay was commissioned by his widow who then resided in Orkney. That she employed a Norse-Northumbrian court-poet would be a likely conjecture, even had not the language shown sufficiently clearly that such was the case.¹

Fagrskinna ingenuously comments: "A great army joined Eric [on his last expedition] including five kings, so great was his reputation as a warrior." Two sons of the Earl of Orkney, named as casualties, recur in *Orkneyinga saga*, and there is no need to look farther for the tradition which preserved their memory. The five kings are anonymous. Snorri in *Heimskringla*, with his usual explicitness, declares that they were "Gottorm and his sons Ivar and Harek, also Sigurd and Rognvald".² English sources offer partial corroboration — two of the names, slightly corrupted,

¹ Finnur Jónsson, *Fagrskinna* (Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur 30, 1902-3), 27-30; Finnur Jónsson, *Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning* (1912-15), A I 174-5, B I 164-6. On the language see D. Hofmann, *Nordisch-englische Lehnbeziehungen der Wikingerzeit* (1955), 51, 263; other literature: Lee M. Hollander, *A Bibliography of Skaldic Studies* (1958), 101. A draft of the present paper was read in the Classics Seminar, University of Oslo, March 1977; I am greatly indebted to better scholars who attended the seminar, notably to Per Jonas Nordhagen, Odd Nordland, Kolbjørn Skaare, and Fridrik Thordarson. The choice of topic was due to a stimulating correspondence with Miriam Daus (University of Leeds) to whom, therefore, the result is presented.

² Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, *Hákonar saga góða* (Íslenzk Fornrit XXVI, 1941), 154.

with different family ties.³ Perhaps a Norse source (*Eiríksmál*?) was available on both sides of the North Sea, and the English chroniclers dealt with it more selectively. Perhaps — an interesting alternative, and by no means impossible — Snorri or his informant had access to an ultimately English source, and improved on it.⁴ Or perhaps the names were preserved independently in Norway and in England for 300 years. In any case, the silence of *Fagrskinna* is odd. The compiler who thought two sons of an earl worth recording, would he pass over the names of five kings?

These names are the one piece of information that the Lay, if it ever continued beyond the point where the transmitted text breaks off, is quite certain to have contained. Thus the name question affects a problem in the history of Norse literature.⁵

To turn to another question: what side did the kings fight on? Had a similar lay been composed about Napoleon after Waterloo, it is unlikely that his retinue would have been an impressive number of Marshals of France or Old Guardsmen, who would have served merely to emphasize the magnitude of the debacle. Surely the Valhalla guard of honour would have consisted of vanquished English and Prussian generals. The principle seems elemental and timeless. In poetry of this kind, all accessories are required to stand for victory.

Whoever they were, the five luckless potentates are thus likely *a priori* to owe their presence in Valhøll to Eric's own action⁶ — whether in his last battle, or, as may seem historically rather more plausible, in the course of his previous career; all at one stroke, or cumulatively. That they turn up belatedly is *licentia poetica*, without which it might not have been easy to construe anything glorious in the end of Eric Bloody-axe.

³ Identical entries in Roger of Wendover's *Flores Historiarum* (ed. H. Luard, *Chronicles and Memorials* vol. 95, 1890, 503) and Matthew Paris' *Chronica Majora* (ed. H. Luard, *Chronicles and Memorials* vol. 57, 1872, 458) name King Eilricus, his "son" Haericus and "brother" Reginaldus.

⁴ Cf. Ove Moberg, *Olav Haraldsson, Knut den store och Sverige* (1941), 216-25; J. de Vries, *Altnordische Literaturgeschichte* (2nd ed., 1964-7), II 292; Bjarni Einarsson, *Litterære forudsætninger for Egils saga* (1975), 231. It seems arguable that Snorri, using an English report of the battle, could have changed it in the light of what he considered superior knowledge of Eric's family; that alterations by an English chronicler would be less readily accounted for; that the authority of *Eiríksmál* would hardly have been contested by either.

⁵ The *communis opinio* about the fragmentary nature of the Lay as we have it was voiced by G. Storm, *Snorre Sturlassons Historieskrivning* (1873), 123: knowledge of the names implies knowledge of lost parts of the poem. Anne Holtsmark, in F. Bull and F. Paasche, *Norsk litteraturhistorie* (2nd ed., 1955-63), I 224, and de Vries (1964-7), I 141, cite with approval the contrary opinion of Lee M. Hollander, 'Is the Lay of Eric a Fragment?', *Acta Philologica Scandinavica* 7 (1932-3), 249-57.

⁶ Bull and Paasche (1955-63), I 224; de Vries (1964-7), I 141.

“Five young kings”, equally nameless, perished in the battle of Brunanburh.⁷ Is it conceivable that they are the same? The thought occurred to a Swedish scholar, E. Wadstein, eighty years ago; but both the argument and the theory it was supposed to bolster are long forgotten.⁸ The sagas are indeed unanimous that Eric left Norway and reached England “in the reign of Athelstan”, but the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle has no mention of him till 948, and the tendency of scholars has been to amend saga chronology accordingly. Halfdan Koht in the 1920s resolutely scrapped the date of the battle of Hafrsfjord, that corner-stone of Norwegian school-book history, and substituted a generation-count for the researches of Sæmund and Ari. He drew an immediate protest from Johan Schreiner, both against the method and against its application, but Koht’s authority held the field. Ólafía Einarsdóttir in 1968 restated Schreiner’s case, and by her careful re-examination of the Icelandic chronological system was able to offer an explanation for its apparent inconsistencies, together with additional reasons for believing that Ari could, in fact, calculate the year of Harald Fair-hair’s death (c. 932) with only a narrow margin of error.⁹

If that is right, and if tradition is right that Eric’s Norwegian reign was brief, his arrival in Britain would fall well within Athelstan’s reign, probably before Brunanburh. A term of loyal service such as the sagas indicate would not necessarily leave any trace in the Chronicle; indeed English official historiography might be as concerned to minimize his role as the sagas to aggrandize it. Participation at Brunanburh on the English side would be a strong possibility; and Bloody-axe would thus be known for a share in the battle where five kings perished.

There is probably room for Eric in the history of York in this period. There is, of course, no room for him as “king”, nor could he be expected to strike coins to prove his presence. A curious coin,¹⁰ combining the legend ERIC [M]ONETA with the

⁷ A. Campbell, *The Battle of Brunanburh* (1938), ll. 28-30.

⁸ E. Wadstein, ‘Bidrag till tolkning ock belysning av skalde- ock Edda-dikter’, *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 11 (1895), 87: a late poet confused two historical events. Previously, J. Langebek in 1773 (*Scriptores Rerum Danicarum* II 416) and Sharon Turner in 1807 (*The History of the Anglo-Saxons*, 2nd ed., I 350, note 45) had surmised that the two battles were identical.

⁹ Cf. the following articles, all in *Historisk Tidsskrift* (Norw.): H. Koht, ‘Når levde Harald Hårfagre og sønene hans?’, 5:6 (1924-7), 146-69; J. Schreiner, ‘Harald Hårfagre og hans efterfølgere’, 5:7 (1927-9), 161-224; Ólafía Einarsdóttir, ‘Dateringen af Harald Hårfagres død’, 47 (1968), 15-34.

¹⁰ R. H. M. Dolley, ‘The Post-Brunanburh Viking Coinage of York’, *Nordisk Numismatisk Årsskrift* (1957-8), 61, fig. 32; C. E. Blunt, ‘The Coinage of Athelstan, King of England 924-939’, *The British Numismatic Journal* 42 (1974), Plate XX, no. 455. I thank Dr. Kirsten Bendixen (Royal Cabinet of Coins and Medals, Copenhagen) for her friendly help in providing good colour-slides for study.

corresponding signature of Regnald, Athelstan's York moneyer, does exist. We hardly know enough of the identity and status of a "moneyer" at this time firmly to exclude the possibility that the position was granted as a privilege, which might for a short while have been shared by a newly-arrived prominent Norse ally; though to make such an arrangement clear by omitting the obverse with the king's name is not a solution that would commend itself to Athelstan, and speedy suppression of the issue would be likely. However, ERIC as a moneyer's name recurs on two other, equally rare coins, one of which seems to have been issued no later than 927. It therefore seems improbable that the Eric in question, though he remains an intriguing figure, can have been the King of Norway.¹¹

The only positive corroboration for Eric's presence at Brunanburh — and it is flimsy enough — is, I believe, to be derived from such of the poetry imbedded in *Egils saga* as may reasonably be regarded as authentic.¹² If the setting of the 13th-century prose account is disregarded, three facts remain — (1) Egil composed poetry in praise of Athelstan; (2) the situation implied in these poems fits the year 937 only: Scots invading England, one Olaf the arch-enemy; (3) Egil composed poetry in praise of Eric Bloody-axe. That the first two were well apart in time from the third (as the saga has it) is entirely possible, but not obvious on internal grounds, and not the economical hypothesis.¹³

Were it certain that five kings fell at Brunanburh, the number itself would seem a strong argument. For, despite the readiness of historians to accept it, the repetition of such an event in the same

¹¹ Blunt (1974), 93. For a thought-provoking linguistic study of the MONETA inscriptions, see B. H. I. H. Stewart, 'Moneta and mot on Anglo-Saxon Coins', *The British Numismatic Journal* 31 (1962), 27-42; on the moneyer Regnald in particular, see R. H. M. Dolley and G. van der Meer, 'A Group of Anglo-Saxon pence at Sudeley Castle', *The Numismatic Chronicle* 6:18 (1958), 124-5. In addition to all other hazards involved in drawing conclusions from a single un-provenanced coin, Kolbjørn Skaare has pointed out to me that ERIC is conceivable as an abbreviation of the city's name, Eboracum/Eoferwic.

¹² Of the saga itself, Bjarni Einarsson (1975), 220, aptly uses the phrase "pseudo-historicity": cf. also L. M. Hollander, 'The Battle on the Vin-Heath and the Battle of the Huns', *Journal of English and German Philology* 32 (1933), 33-43. For an admirably full statement of facts and discussion relating to Egil's 'Head-ransom' and other relevant poems, see O. Nordland, *Höfuðlausn i Egils saga* (1956).

¹³ It seems generally assumed that royal titles in *Höfuðlausn* reflect Eric's standing in York. Though evidently shared by the saga-writer, the assumption is unsafe: such courtesies, commonly claimed by ex-kings, are evidence only of the poet's *savoir faire*. On the other hand, if the recipient of the poem were claiming suzerainty, inclusion of York in the term *Engla bjǫð* ("the Angles' rule", st. 2) might well be thought imprudent. No enemy is named except the Scots (st. 10) — not a precise chronological indication, but suitable for the Brunanburh period. Egil had spent the preceding winter elsewhere (st. 1), but language and metre show previous experience of the Northumbrian environment, both extensive and — one may feel — recent. Cf. Hofmann (1955), 26-34, 40-2.

region within 17 years is not the likeliest of occurrences — even supposing the term “king” to be used in a fairly loose sense.

But are the five kings of Brunanburh historical? Three kings are known to have survived. The resulting minimum of eight royal participants in the battle is possible, to be sure, but it is sufficiently striking to bear closer examination. One’s scepticism grows on noting that a third comparable event is alleged in *Heimskringla* to have taken place in 1017 in Norway, in Olaf Haraldsson’s reign.¹⁴ The ultimate source — as in both of the other cases — is a poem, and it fails to name the kings. Could they have been a standard poetical embellishment?

In the Norwegian case it is possible to infer a little of how the story grew. The body of tradition about St. Olaf included, before 1200, an anecdote concerning King Olov Skötkonung of Sweden and his daughter, who was seeking her unwilling father’s consent to a match with the Norwegian usurper. As her father returned proudly from the hunt with nine (or many) black grouse, she commented: “A still better morning’s catch was that of Olaf Haraldsson, who captured nine [eleven] kings and annexed their realms.” *Fagrskinna* preserves the anecdote in its barest form, with “nine” kings, which is also the number it claims Olaf overcame in the preceding period.¹⁵ It is obvious that the author had no further knowledge that he trusted. The “Legendary Saga”, some years earlier, had already made one or two promising combinations with other traditional matter.¹⁶ But it was left to the genius of Snorri to relate in full the magnificent tale of the downfall of the five kings of *Upplönd*, one of *Heimskringla*’s best, and almost credible.¹⁷ His authority for the figure five was three stanzas by Ottar the Black, which he obligingly quotes.

This is ornate and difficult poetry. My own impression is that Snorri’s interpretation is not far-fetched, given the nucleus of other tradition; but without that, the stanzas might read more like a kaleidoscope of imperial achievement than a record of one

¹⁴ Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, *Ólafs saga helga* (Íslensk Fornrit XXVII, 1945), chs. 74-5, cf. also ch. 89. There is brief discussion of the variants in the introduction to the edition cited, pp. lix-lxi. Sighvat, Olaf’s “Poet Laureate”, tells of the subjugation of Upplönd, “formerly ruled by 11 men”, but does not imply that they were kings or that they were seized (cf. *Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning* A I 257, B I 239).

¹⁵ *Fagrskinna* (1902-3), pp. 154-6.

¹⁶ O. A. Johnsen, *Ólafs saga hins helga* (1922), 23, 40.

¹⁷ There are good reasons for disbelief. See J. Schreiner, *Tradisjon og saga om Olav den hellige* (Skrifter utgitt av Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo, Hist.-Filos. Klasse. 1926. No. 1), 65-9.

specific event.¹⁸ Historically this seems to be as one would expect. Ottar the Black was not one of St. Olaf's faithful band of skalds. A wandering troubadour, and a fine performer, he composed in turn for Sweyn Forkbeard, Olov Skötkonung, Olaf Haraldsson and Canute. Well-informed though he was about Olaf Haraldsson's early battles in England — no doubt he was there at the time — he must often have lacked first-hand knowledge, and had recourse to general praise and unimpeachable inaccuracy.¹⁹ The fact that Ottar's courtly career began and ended in Anglo-Danish surroundings should not be pressed, maybe, but it is easy to believe that he drew on common poetical stock. Since he appears to ascribe Olaf's victory over the "five kings" of his poem to divine intervention, an echo of the Bible seems possible.²⁰

In the Book of Joshua, Chapter 10, we read that five kings of the Amorites opposed the Children of Israel and were routed at Gibeon. A rain of stones came upon the fleeing host and killed more than were slain in the fight. Pursuit lasted all day, and at Joshua's bidding the Sun and the Moon stood still until the vengeance was complete. The kings hid in a cave; they were taken alive, hanged on five trees, and buried in the cave. This appears to be the only Biblical precedent that one might claim, but in truth it is impressive enough, and a passage of the *Chanson de Roland* shows (if proof is needed) that minstrels were aware of it and capable of being inspired by it.²¹

There are signs that in the Europe of the tenth century, with the struggle against pagan nations being fought on every side, the passage was felt to be topical. In Constantinople in the imperial

¹⁸ *Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning* A I 294-5, B I 271-2. One specific allusion occurs: *heptuð ér en, eptir, orðreyr þess, 's sat norðast*, "you then maimed the tongue of him that dwelled farthest north". I am grateful to my colleague, F. Thordarson, for his pertinent observation that elsewhere in the poem King Olaf is addressed as "thou", not "you": a symptom of tampering?

¹⁹ Two stanzas of Ottar's *Höfuðlausn* (18 and 19, cf. *Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning* A I 295-6, B I 272) attribute to Olaf a wider sway than his predecessors, ignoring the claims of (especially) Harald Fair-hair: cf. Bull and Paasche (1955-63), I 179. On Ottar generally, de Vries (1964-7), I 237-9. Hofmann (1955), 75-9, noted English and Continental influence on his language.

²⁰ *Nú ræðr þú fyr þetri (þik remmir Guð miklu) fold, es forðum heldu fimm bragningar (gagni)* (*Höfuðlausn*, st. 18). Two possibly related cases may be briefly mentioned: (1) *Historia Norvegiae* (G. Storm, *Monumenta Historica Norvegiae*, 1880, 115-16), cf. *Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning* A I 546, 575-6; B I 527-8, 570 (Olaf Tryggvason brought Christianity to five nations, variously and somewhat awkwardly identified). (2) *Heimskringla (Ólafs saga helga*, 1945, 116: Thorgny claims that the Swedes on one occasion drowned five kings in a well). It is probably useless to ask where Snorri found this last story, planted with superb artistry in its present (wholly fictitious) context. The Olaf Tryggvason claim could well be secondary, a rival attempt to cap the achievement of St. Olaf as reported by Ottar.

²¹ Lines 2447-59 of the standard editions.

scriptorium, within a few years of Brunanburh — if we trust Weitzmann's penetrating analysis — the deeds of Joshua formed the subject of a remarkable illuminated book, a book not in the modern form of the *codex* but in the solemnly ancient one of the *rotulus*, or scroll.²² The events of Chapter 10 (last in the preserved portion of the manuscript) are described at length, with notable departures from established iconography. Weitzmann showed that many new features, and the basic principle of continuous pictorial narrative, were taken over from the relief-columns of Theodosius and Arcadius: the Joshua Roll was designed as an Imperial Book of Triumph.

At Brunanburh no celestial prodigies came to Athelstan's aid, as they did to Charlemagne's on the banks of the Ebro, but the stress laid on the pursuit lasting *ondlongne dæg* (l. 21) more discreetly recalls the story of Gibeon. Less than probable from the military point of view, this pursuit presents a problem for commentators choosing to regard the poem as a strictly factual report.²³

For *Eiríksmál*, if we may believe in the Biblical derivation of the five kings, an important conclusion seems to follow: the kings could hardly be named, therefore the poem did not continue.

The Bible in Valhøll is disconcerting. Nor would many of us readily associate Eric Bloody-axe with the Bible, though he was baptized. But the mixture is idiomatic. In Syria, Spain, Northumbria, faiths and convictions coexisted; branded as "infidels" or "renegades", vulnerable to attacks by orthodox empires, their peoples contrived to benefit from the coexistence and make sense of it. Knut Berg's interpretation of the Gosforth Cross makes the point very clearly: the myth of the Crucifixion is expounded in terms of myths from the Edda, the Old Faith dies as the New is born from the Saviour's wound.²⁴ Gosforth Cross and *Eiríksmál*, neighbours in History, both express two sides of an idea, like the obverse and reverse of a coin.

But the poet was inclined, more than the stonecarver, to muse with lingering sympathy over the reverse with its pagan symbol.

²² Kurt Weitzmann, *The Joshua Roll* (Studies in Manuscript Illumination 3, 1948); the story of the five kings, pp. 27-9, with Pls. 11-13; pp. 109-14 on the Classical influences and the ideological implications. I owe this crucial reference to P. J. Nordhagen. Cf., on the general question of 'Classical Influence on Early Norse Literature', U. Dronke in R. R. Bolgar (ed.), *Classical Influences on European Culture A.D. 500-1500* (1971), 143-9.

²³ See, for instance, Campbell (1938), 52, note 5.

²⁴ K. Berg, 'The Gosforth Cross', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 21 (1958), 27-43.

“Things are in the balance. The grey wolf gazes at the gods’ dwelling.”

Óvist’s at vita,
sér ulfr enn hǫsvi
á sjöt goða.

THE AUTHOR OF *VÖLUSPÁ*

BY SIGURÐUR NORDAL

TRANSLATED BY B. S. BENEDIKZ¹

IT is strange to think that the name of the man who composed *Völuspá* should be entirely forgotten; that there should be so great a difference between the fame of the man and that of his work. Sæmundr the Wise will always be among the most famous of Icelandic authors — on the strength of a single work which is lost and of a book in which he had no hand whatever. *Völuspá* is the most famous poem in Scandinavia, an inexhaustible quarry for the researches of scholars, but its author is so thoroughly forgotten that no investigator has hitherto made a serious attempt to discover his name.² This is not because *Völuspá* is a “folk poem” or has “composed itself”. It is a more independent and personal composition than most ancient Norse poems, and so we have here either a curious misunderstanding of what “originality” is, or else a situation in which the author’s name has paled and faded out in the brightness of the poem itself: it may have seemed derogatory to its dignity and power to attribute it to a mortal man. Yet we of the twentieth century would gladly know more of the author; it would make the poem clearer and more readily understandable to us, without demeaning it in any way, if we could direct our admiration towards a man about whom we knew some details, and not just admire without a direction for our admiration.

In my edition³ I have attempted to search for clues to the man by looking at details of the poem. For a long time it never

¹ Originally published as ‘Völu-Steinn’ in *Íðunn* VIII (1923-4), 161-78 [and reprinted with numerous (silent) alterations in Sigurður Nordal, *Afangar* II (1944), 83-102. The present translation follows the *Íðunn* version in all matters of substance. Ed.]. In view of the fact that in English the article will be reaching many readers unfamiliar with things Icelandic, the translator has permitted himself to insert occasional phrases to make clear to the non-Icelander of 1979 what may have been perfectly clear to an Icelander of 1924, but is so no longer. He has not, however, altered Professor Nordal’s opinions in any way. [All footnotes have been added by the translator except 2-3, 12, 14, 16, 20, 22-3, and these have mostly been altered and brought up to date. Ed.]

² Björn Magnússon Olsen has suggested, half in jest, in ‘Hvar eru Eddukvæðin til orðin’, *Tímarit hins Íslenska Bókmenntafélags* XV (1894), 100-1, that Þorgeirr, Chieftain of Ljósavatn, composed it during the day and a half that he lay under the bearskin in his hut at the momentous Alþing of 999/1000. E. H. Meyer in *Völuspa. Eine Untersuchung* (1889) attributed it to Sæmundr the Wise (!); the only noteworthy attempt to give concrete support to the attribution of any Eddic poem to a poet known by name is by Alexander Bugge in his article ‘Arnor Jarlaskald og det første kvad om Helge Hundingsbane’, *Edda* I (1916), 350-80.

³ Sigurður Nordal, *Völuspá* (2nd ed., 1952). Cf. Sigurður Nordal, ‘Three Essays on *Völuspá*’, *Saga-Book* XVIII (1970-3), 79-135.

occurred to me to search for a name to attach to the author, but then one day an entirely unexpected name entered my head, and as I examined the poem more and more minutely, so that name pressed its claim on me with increasing force. I looked to see what arguments could be brought to support the attribution, and decided that they were not strong enough to advance them in a scholarly edition of the poem, but on the other hand I felt it was wrong to keep them to myself. By now (1924) I have been working on *Völuspá* for so long that my surmises may have a greater probability than those of others, and I am not worried by doubts which are expressed without being supported by arguments, least of all those of doubters who have no idea how hard it is to find concrete evidence for anything in the field of Old Norse studies. As long as my suggestion cannot be refuted with more powerful evidence than that which I shall adduce here, nor another candidate found with stronger claims to be the author, mine can stand as the most likely attribution, and I ask no more for it.

I

In my edition I tried to settle the date and the place of the poem's composition. I came there to the conclusion that it is the only Eddic poem for which one could convincingly argue an Icelandic provenance, while both its literary position and the religious attitude mirrored in it point to its having been composed just before the acceptance of Christianity in Iceland in 1000. No other view of its place and date of origin is so helpful in explaining and understanding the poem. I also endeavoured to describe the unnamed author, how his life had prepared him to compose this poem, and how Þangbrandr's mission near the end of the 990s had pervaded his mind and ordered his experiences and contemplations into a system. I even stated that perhaps we knew more about this man than about any man living before A.D. 1100 other than Egill Skallagrímsson, because we knew his philosophy of life in his own words.

We are of course not entirely ignorant of details about the people of Iceland at the end of the 10th century. Many of them appear in the Icelandic Family Sagas where their individual characteristics are clearly defined. The coverage is, admittedly, somewhat uneven, in that several districts of Iceland are virtually unrepresented in the sagas, but many of these gaps are filled by

narratives in *Landnámabók*, so that all in all the survey of Icelanders in the 10th century is surprisingly extensive. Also of help in our search for the author of *Völuspá* is the probability that he composed poems in the court metre. None of the Eddic poems is more closely related to the court poems in form (cf. the salutation at the beginning of the poem and the refrains), in taste and in phraseology. But the names of the skalds accompanied their poems and occasional stanzas. Is it then likely that the author of *Völuspá*, one of the most remarkable men of Norse ancestry ever to have lived, hid himself so well in the bright glare of the Saga Age that no source mentions him at all, no other fragment of his poetry is preserved? I find this virtually unthinkable, and so it is worth our while to look among the recorded Icelanders of the last decade of the 10th century to see if the picture of the author which is suggested to us by the poem can be seen to resemble what is known of any of them.⁴

This is not the place, nor have I room here to list all those whom I feel to be quite impossible candidates; that is a job which can be done by anyone who wishes to make an alternative attribution. The man I have in mind was neither the hero of a saga, nor one of the poets of the courts of other Northern lands. He is, however, known to have composed verse in court metres, and his life and character are not entirely unknown to us. He is Völu-Steinn of Vatnsnes in Bolungarvík.

II

The author of *Völuspá* will have been a mature man by the end of the 10th century. He must have been a wise man, well-educated by the standards of his day, one who had had the opportunity to get to know the best poetry composed by Norwegians and Icelanders in his time, and who was acquainted with the wisest thoughts and sayings of his contemporaries. His experience of life must have been both hard and extensive, for the man who can turn the destruction and fiery baptism of *Ragnarök* into a message of joy must have encountered such a grief at some stage in his life as made him feel utter hopelessness. We cannot guess at his sorrow with any certainty, but it cannot be far from the truth that he, like Egill Skallagrímsson, lost a son, and had to fight just such a battle of the spirit as Egill in order to come to terms with existence. Nowhere in *Völuspá* is there such

⁴ Whether this argument is completely tenable must of course remain a matter of opinion.

tenderness as when it speaks of Baldr, Óðinn's *child*, and of the mother's grief after his death. The poet was clearly brought up with a rich and lively faith in the old gods, but must have made the acquaintance of Christianity in some degree in his later years. Þangbrandr's mission, in which the end of the world was prophesied shortly after the year 1000, must have been a revelation to him, and have shown him a way out of the spiritual impasse in which his old faith had left him; nevertheless, he owed too much to Óðinn and the Æsir simply to jettison his old faith, and it was doubtless from the friction between the two religions his poetic inspiration came. *Völuspá* is the obscurest work in all Old Icelandic poetry, and at the same time it contains the profoundest vision of all the verse that has survived, so much so that it appears as if the poet's inspiration were not entirely under his control. Let us now see how this (admittedly) sketchy description fits what we know of Völu-Steinn.

According to *Landnámabók* the sibyl Þuríðr *sundafyllir* ("filler-up of straits") and her son Völu-Steinn left Hálogaland for Iceland and settled in Bolungarvík.⁵ The mother was named *sundafyllir* because in a time of starvation in Hálogaland she filled all the straits with fish by her enchantments. In the same line of business she fixed the Kviar-bank in the waters of Ísafjörðr, and received in return one polled ewe from each farmer in the district. Völu-Steinn's sons were Ögmundr and Egill. Þorvaldr, son of Ólafr Bag, entrusted to Ögmundr the conduct of a case of sheep-stealing against Þórarinn the Shouter; for this Þórarinn slew Ögmundr at the Þorskafjörðr assembly. Völu-Steinn fell sick to death with grief for his son, whereupon his other son Egill went to see Gestr Oddleifsson while Gestr was paying an autumn visit to Ljótr the Wise at Ingjaldssandr, and asked him to give him counsel as to how to ease his father's grief. Gestr composed the beginning of *Ögmundardrápa* ("Memorial Poem to Ögmundr"), of which two half-stanzas are preserved in *Snorra Edda*, where they are unhesitatingly attributed to Völu-Steinn. These are as follows:

1. Heyr Míms vinar mína,
mér er fundr gefinn Þundar,
við góma sker glymja
glaumbergs, Egill, straua.

⁵ Jakob Benediktsson, *Íslendingabók, Landnámabók* (Íslensk Fornrit I, 1968), 186-7.

2. Mank, þats jörð við orða
 endr myrk Danar sendi
 grænnar gröfnum munni
 gein Hlöðynjar beina.⁶

Egill, hear my streams of the breast of Mimir's friend resound against the reef of my jaws; the discovery of Þundr (Óðinn, i.e. poetry) is given me.

I remember when the earth gaped with a mouth dug open against the sender of the word of the giant of the dark bones of the green goddess.

Guðbrandur Vigfússon has calculated that Þuríðr and Steinn came out to Iceland shortly after the Period of Settlement (i.e. after c. 930).⁷ It is possible that they migrated some time before 950, and that Steinn was then very young, so that by 990 he was a man of around fifty, with grown-up sons of his own. *Hávarðar saga* tells us that Ljótr the Wise was slain in the reign of Earl Hákon of Norway (i.e. before 995),⁸ though Guðbrandur has argued that this killing took place in 1003. It is true that *Hávarðar saga* is a late and poor source, but it could still be correct about one incident, and report correctly a true oral tradition that Hávarðr and his companions met Earl Hákon in Norway (anyway, Guðbrandur's arguments are based on doubtful premises and equally doubtful deductions⁹); hence it may be regarded as not unreasonable that Ögmundur Völu-Steinsson was slain in 993-4.

Steinn's mother Þuríðr was a *völva* and *seiðkona*, i.e. a sibyl who performed the magical incantations involved in *seiðr*.¹⁰ This fact throws several rays of light on our problem; a *völva* would have brought her son up with a deep and intense faith in the old gods, and would have been able to give him much more profound instruction in it than was commonly available. She would have emphasized faith in Óðinn, who was the "father of magic", and when Steinn himself began to compose poetry this gift must have strengthened his knowledge of and belief in the gods, especially in Óðinn, the god of poetry. Moreover, the sibylline power is likely to have been hereditary, as mediumistic powers have been shown

⁶ Finnur Jónsson, *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar* (1931), 93 and 168. [The translator, however, retains Sigurður Nordal's form of the text. Ed.]

⁷ Guðbrandur Vigfússon, 'Um tímatal í Íslendinga sögum í fornöld', *Safn til sögu Íslands og íslenskra bókmenta að fornu og nýju* I (1856), 232.

⁸ Björn K. Þórólfsson and Guðni Jónsson, *Hávarðar saga Ísfríðings* (Íslensk Fornrit VI, 1943), 353-6. [Cf., however, the introduction to this edition, xciv-xcv, and the strong doubts about the chronology of the saga there expressed. Ed.]

⁹ Guðbrandur Vigfússon (1856), 365-6.

¹⁰ For an exposition of *seiðr* and its involvements see D. Strömbäck, *Sejd* (1935), esp. 77-8 which deal with Þuríðr.

to be in recent times. We are told of Þorbjörg the Little Sibyl that she was one of ten sisters who were all so endowed.¹¹ Steinn's inspiration, which must have been on the borderline between the controllable and the uncontrollable, and to which we shall presently return, will have been his mother's sibylline power in altered form. Finally, Þuríðr's power must have made an indelible impression on her son's mind; it would have been more natural for a *völva*'s son than anyone else to let a *völva* proclaim the deepest secrets of existence. In the magical blaze of his inspiration the image of his mother appears, transformed to gigantic size, and through her mouth he repeats the teachings of his youth.

If we consider the knowledge and experience Steinn must have gained in other fields, some very noteworthy things also come to light. We know nothing of his travels abroad after he settled in Iceland, but there can be no doubt that he would ride each year to the Alþing and visit other men of rank, both from his own quarter and outside it. In the Vestfirðir district itself there were two men in his day who could have had a profound influence upon him. One was Gísli Súrsson the poet, one of the most notable men of the time of transition in the 10th century. He was a heathen, but he appears nevertheless to have possessed some knowledge of Christianity, and during his years of outlawry his view of life matured and developed. Gísli's dream-spirit warned him against learning magic, exhorted him to help the afflicted, and bade him never be the one to start a mortal quarrel. The same view (that magic is a two-edged weapon, that slaying is a misfortune, and that clemency is a virtue) appears in *Völuspá*.¹² It seems virtually certain that Steinn knew Gísli and his verses; the two men were after all contemporaries and lived in the same assembly-district. We have no direct evidence as to the extent of Steinn's acquaintance with Gestr Oddleifsson, but they must have met from time to time at the Þorskafljörðr assembly and elsewhere. Furthermore, Egill Völu-Steinsson would hardly have sought help from Gestr in so delicate a matter as his father's desperate grief for Ögmundur unless there already existed some

¹¹ Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthias Þórðarson, *Eiríks saga rauða* (Íslensk Fornrit IV, 1935), 206.

¹² See Nordal (1952), 75-6, 86-92, and (1970-3), 119 and 128-9; also G. Turville-Petre, 'Gísli Súrsson and His Poetry', *Nine Norse Studies* (1972), 118-53. [Those following up the references to Nordal will find that he discusses *Yggdrasill* and *Urðar brunnnr* as well as attitudes to and the moral effects of oath-breaking and greed (cf. below), while Turville-Petre argues (on a few of the pages referred to) that the strong Christian sentiments in certain stanzas ascribed to Gísli are evidence against their having been composed by him. Ed.]

form of friendship between the two men. Gestr was one of the wisest men who ever lived in Iceland. Although the prophecies which are attributed to him in the Family Sagas are what the authors of these stories regarded as his claim to immortal fame, yet there is a brilliance about his reputation in the sources which makes it clear that his wisdom was of another, higher kind than that of a mere prophet of future events. Gestr must have become acquainted with Christianity through his friend Ólafr Peacock, among others, who would in turn have learned of its tenets from his mother, the Christian Irishwoman Melkorka, and it is likely that Gestr formed an integrated pagan philosophy of life for himself, one containing a certain Christian flavour which may have been not dissimilar to the philosophy underlying *Völuspá*. How much Steinn (and therefore *Völuspá*) owed to Gestr in this respect will never be fully known, but it would not be the first time that an inspired poet clothed wisdom which he had drawn in part from the teaching of others in immortal poetic dress.

Unfortunately, all the details of the slaying of Ögmundur Völu-Steinsson are now lost. It is one of the many notes for a story which we find in *Landnámabók*, which were never used by the men who made up the Family Sagas during Iceland's great age of compilation. The short note about Ólafr Bag is at once amusing and distressing: "Ólafr Bag, who was driven out of Ólafsvík by Ormr the Slender, settled Belgsdalr and lived at Belgsstaðir until Þjóðrekr and his company chased him out; then he took land above Grjótvallarmúli and dwelt at Ólafsdalr."¹³ Judging by this note it is improbable that either Ólafr or his son was a forceful person, and it is therefore likely that Þorvaldr Ólafsson was unable to stand up for himself against Þórarinn the Shouter. Ögmundur Völu-Steinsson appears to have taken up his case, not from greed, but out of kindness of heart and a sense of justice. Like Böðvarr, the son of Egill Skallagrímsson, he appears to have been a young man of upright and attractive nature, and his father's love for him was clearly both strong and warm. There is every reason to assume that because of his personal experience the author of *Völuspá* regarded both oath-breaking and violation of the peace as especially terrible crimes. Certainly, violation of the peace by the gods is for him the turning-point in the history of the world. Ögmundur was slain at the assembly, probably unarmed and unsuspecting, in the midst of its hallowed peace. In

¹³ *Íslendingabók, Landnámabók* (1968), 159.

his father's grief-torn mind this treacherous breach of the law of a hallowed area must have loomed especially large.

Landnámabók does not mention that any revenge was taken for Ögmundr's death, and indeed this seems unlikely, but it does tell of the deadly illness which Steinn endured in his distress. In this respect the stories of Steinn and Egill Skallagrímsson run parallel; the spiritual side of the two men's natures was so strong that the force of the emotional conflict that raged in their minds must have been sufficient to overwhelm them. Gestr provided the same suggestion for a cure that Þorgerðr Egilsdóttir found for her father, namely to ease the pressure of the grief by composing poetry about it. He must have known that earlier incident well through having heard Þorgerðr tell of it. One of the many things for which we must thank Snorri Sturluson is that he preserved two half-stanzas of *Ögmundardrápa* from oblivion. Even if nothing else could be deduced from them about the connection between Völu-Steinn and *Völuspá* other than that he composed verse in court metre, and a poem with refrains at that, this alone would be valuable evidence. However, there is more. It may be only coincidence, but it is none the less strange, that two kennings in these fragments, those employing the names Mímir and Hlöðyn, are reminiscent of *Völuspá*. Mímir is not mentioned in the surviving court poetry composed before 1200, except here and in Egill's *Sonatorrek*. The name Hlöðyn is equally rare, but it occurs both in the second fragment and in *Völuspá*. What is much more remarkable, however, is the fact that in the first fragment we find the clearest description of poetic inspiration given anywhere in Old Norse poetry in the line *Mér er fundr gefinn Þundar*, "I am given a meeting with Þundr". This comes out like a cry, a crystalline spring of joy that flows out of the rough lavafield of kennings: "I am given poetic fire", I need not search for it (cf. also *andagift*, "gift of spirit", one of the Icelandic words for inspiration). Such an experience cannot be better expressed in so few words, and it is above all its poetic inspiration which sets *Völuspá* apart from other poems.¹⁴ On the other hand it should be emphasized that these fragments must give a very imperfect idea of *Ögmundardrápa*, since they are merely chosen by Snorri as examples of certain kennings, and we may expect that the poem was bound together with heavy bonds of formal language. One and the same poet could use lan-

¹⁴ See Nordal (1952), 188-90, and (1970-3), 121-4.

guage in very different ways depending on the metre, and *Ögmundardrápa* and *Völuspá* are likely to have been as unlike one another as (say) the *Haraldskvæði* and *Glymdrápa* of Þorbjörn *hornklofi* or Egill's *Berudrápa* and *Sonatorrek*.

We now come to the question of whether Steinn had the opportunity of meeting Þangbrandr or hearing his preaching before the official national acceptance of Christianity took place.¹⁵ Þangbrandr preached at the Alþing in 998, and it is possible that Steinn was there, but a much more likely supposition is that they met at Hagi on Barðaströnd in the spring of 999, when Gestr Oddleifsson made a feast for Þangbrandr and his companions to which he invited 240 guests. This feast is likely to have taken place just after the spring assembly in Þorskafjörður, since Gestr could then have asked his friends to come straight from the Þorskafjörður assembly over Þingmannaheiði to Hagi. Steinn was doubtless among them. In spite of Þangbrandr's sermon, and in spite of his victory over the berserk Tjörfi (or Ótryggr), Gestr was hesitant about accepting Christianity. *Kristni saga* states merely that he and a few of his men were given the *prima signatio*. It is, however, after just such an encounter that Steinn could have composed *Völuspá*, for the religious outlook of the poem is exactly that of the men of Western Iceland at that point — it is both heathen and Christian — a heathen chant that has been signed with the Cross.

Let me put forward a few more points. It is probable that the image in *Völuspá* st. 5 owes its origin to familiarity with the midnight sun. The ocean opens out northwards from Bolungarvík, and we may assume that Steinn often sat fishing through the night at the midsummer solstice. Even though he was born in Norway his topographical knowledge must have been rooted in Icelandic conditions, since he was very young when he emigrated. And all that is peculiarly Icelandic in *Völuspá* would certainly have been within his possible experience.¹⁶ He could have travelled to meet trading-ships along a route that crosses the lavafields of Borgarhraun and Mýrar, and could have seen there the effects of volcanic eruptions, and the wide sandfields caused by the erosion of land after these eruptions. It is also highly

¹⁵ B. Kahle, *Kristni saga* (Altnordische Saga-Bibliothek 11, 1905), 28-9; see also Björn Magnússon Olsen, *Um kristnitökuna árið 1000 og tildrög hennar* (1900), 28 ff. esp. 37; Ólafía Einarsdóttir, *Studier i kronologisk metode i tidlig islandsk historieskrivning* (1964), 118-26; Jón Hnefíll Aðalsteinsson, *Kristnitakan á Islandi* (1971), 65-8.

¹⁶ For a discussion of the Icelandic topographical features and insular attitudes discernible in *Völuspá*, see Nordal (1970-3), 111-13.

probable that one or more volcanic eruptions, with accompanying falls of ash, occurred in the uninhabited hinterland of Iceland late in the 10th century, giving rise to the many stories of hardship which emanate from this period.¹⁷ Many details of the Last Terrors in *Völuspá* are modelled on such occurrences. On the other hand the author of the poem seems to have known hot springs (*hverar*) from hearsay rather than actual experience (as the name *Hveralundr*, “grove of hot springs”, suggests), and in those parts of Iceland in which Steinn lived or was likely to have travelled, there are certainly no such springs. In short, I know of nothing which can reasonably be deduced about the author of *Völuspá* from the poem which does not fit the suggestion that Völu-Steinn composed it — and I doubt if this can be said of any other candidate. It may also be suggested (though it is perhaps a suggestion that carries little weight) that Völu-Steinn could have acquired his nickname both because he was the son of a sibyl and because he composed a poem about one (though the former reason would of course be quite sufficient to explain the name). Poets were sometimes nicknamed after the subjects of their compositions: *dísarskáld*, *dáðaskáld*, *Danza-Bergr* etc., and in this way the poem could have been firmly attached to its author’s name before the two were parted in men’s recollections.

III

We often make it more difficult for ourselves to understand the past than we need to do, by neglecting to look for modern parallels to ancient events, by failing to realise that the material of the blue hills across the water from us is the same as that of the stony ground which we ourselves tread. Great as are the differences between the cultures of the 10th and the 20th centuries, yet the nature of man is essentially the same — he thinks, feels and behaves according to the same basic natural laws in both centuries. Now in modern Icelandic literature there is one inspired poem of whose genesis we have some first-hand evidence, and which is an interesting parallel study to *Völuspá*. This is Matthías Jochumsson’s great affirmation of faith *Guð, minn guð, ég hrópa*, of whose composition Professor Guðmundur Hannesson has left this account.¹⁸

¹⁷ For evidence of volcanic eruptions before 1104 (the first recorded eruption of Hekla) see Sigurður Þórarinnsson, *Heklueldar* (1968).

¹⁸ Guðmundur Hannesson, ‘Séra Matthías Jochumsson heima á Akureyri’, *Matthías Jochumsson: í tilefni af 70 ára afmæli hans* (1905), 62, 67.

I have noted that particularly in matters of religion séra Matthías is not too concerned about what he blurts out, although he is in fact much firmer in his beliefs than many people imagine. Thus, a few years ago, he read some books on Buddhism and praised it inordinately. At that time we often discussed the question, and one evening in particular I sat for a long time with the old gentleman, and succeeded in defending the Buddhist cause so effectively that he, who on this occasion had taken the Christian position, could scarcely offer a defence. When I went away I half imagined that for the time being he had become a convinced Buddhist, and it is probably true that during our discussion he found it hard to refute my arguments. When I had left him, he sat down in deep thought, and ended by composing one of his most beautiful and most religious poems:

Guð, minn guð, ég hrópa
gegnum myrkrið svarta . . .

God, my God, I cry
through the pitch-black darkness . . .

This poem is hard to understand unless one knows something of the circumstances of its composition.

The principal events in séra Matthías's spiritual upheaval appear to have been these: first, a new message came to him, which he received with kindness and goodwill, this being the only way in which a satisfactory understanding of anything new can be achieved. To read or to listen with constant suspicion (or "critical judgment" as it is known by those who approve of such an approach) is about as sensible as to determine to digest one's food in one's mouth. The first thing to do is to understand as best one can, the next to let the spirit decide how much of the new message it can assimilate. This analytical process is usually slow and unconscious, but séra Matthías was under fierce attack, and the faith which filled the depths of his soul now burst forth like a river that has been dammed. The result was at once a victory of faith and a poetic inspiration; yet the river shows signs of having had its flow stemmed — the power and the speed of the waters are greater than usual, and fragments of the dam can be seen coming down with the torrent. If we look closely at Matthías's poem, certain reminiscences of the discussion that gave rise to it can be found in the poetic affirmation of his true faith: the wisdom bereft of hope which "denies the individuality of the soul, saying all will die" was the dam which shattered; deceit ("a weak understanding deceived by many a delusion") is Maya; and in particular the last and most beautiful lines of the poem:

eins og lítill lækur
ljúki sinu hjali
þar sem lygn í leyni
liggur marinn svali.

. . . as a little brook
ends its babbling
where, still and hidden,
lies the cool ocean.

— where the poet visualises life, like a brook, ending its existence in the depths of the sea — are more suggestive of Nirvana than any Christian concept.

Völuspá must have come into being in a very similar manner. There we also find traces of a new teaching which has come in two stages; first the poet becomes acquainted in a general way with the tenets of Christianity, then he encounters an actual Christian mission, conducted by a fervent evangelist. The new teaching is received without a struggle, and for a while it fills the author's mind. Then, however, his childhood faith comes flooding back, and the Christian impact becomes almost invisible under the flood. Only the last stanzas carry the unequivocal stamp of Christianity — after the dammed-up matter has gone rushing away down the river bed. In *Völuspá* we find — apart from the continuity of the poem — no more traces of Christianity than there are of Buddhism in *Guð, minn guð, ég hrópa*.

IV

I feel myself present at Hagi on Barðaströnd in the spring of 999. On the morning after Þangbrandr's arrival, Gestr and some of the most influential persons present have a long talk with him. The priest preaches to them not only the Christian faith, but also the weighty message that according to the unshakable prophecies of sacred books, the last and worst time will begin in the following year. After that Doomsday will approach, and men will be judged by their works; evil men will go to Hell, and good and moral men to Heaven, to live there in eternal bliss with Almighty God. This conversation makes a deep impression on Völu-Steinn. For a while he sees only the White Christ with his hosts in the clouds of Heaven, Michael leading the angelic cohorts, the Judgment, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and the Kingdom of Eternal Peace. He remains as if in a trance at the feast, where

Dangbrandr wins a victory over the berserk with the power of his faith, and he accepts the *prima signatio* together with Gestr without giving the matter much thought. Then towards midnight he walks away from the drinking and merrymaking, out into the bright spring night.

The dew on the grass glistens all around. Breiðafjörðr opens out before him and far away in the south he sees the blue ridge of the Snæfellsnes mountains, the white cap of the glacier shining at the western end. The stillness of the night captivates him, and once again he becomes the child of Iceland, of his mother, of his childhood faith. The Æsir form their battleline once more in his mind, he cannot cast them out, cannot cease to believe in them, even though they do not represent the only or the ultimate reality. Perhaps he had never loved these gods more deeply than now after the Christian missionary's uncomprehending attack on them, never felt so strongly how much poetry, Óðinn's gift of love, had meant to him in his hours of greatest adversity. The idea of Doomsday burst forth in images of the old Northern faith. The result was *Ragnarök*, not Christ in the clouds of Heaven, but the wolf raging in the mouth of the cave:

festr mun slitna,
en freki renna.

the chain will break,
and the wolf will run.

In the way that a drowning man sees his whole life in a single unified vision, so there is now revealed to the poet on the eve of *Ragnarök* a vision of the world's destiny from the very beginning, and simultaneously a solution to the mysteries of life. He lost control of the visions; a sibyl conjured them up before him, chanted them to him and to all living beings by command of Óðinn himself. She showed him the original void:

vara sandr né sær
né svalar unnir . . .
gap var Ginnunga,
en gras hvergi.

there was not sand or sea
or cool waves . . .
the great void was there
but grass nowhere.

There we have the view that spread out before him, the sands on the shore below Hagi and the wide waters of Breiðafjörðr. The sibyl traced the lives of the gods, from innocence and noble achievement to oath-breaking and corruption; and yet the earth was fair on that dewy spring night:

Ask veit ek standa,
heitir Yggdrasil,
hár baðmr ausinn
hvíta auri;
þaðan koma döggar,
þærs í dala falla,
stendr æ yfir grænn
Urðar brunni.

I know that an ash stands
named Yggdrasil,
a high tree, washed
with white soil.
Thence come the dews
that fall in the dales;
ever it stands, green
above the well of Urðr.

But though Fate is temporarily held back, no one can escape it. Óðinn's cunning cannot avert the slaying of Baldr. The poet thinks of Ögmundr, and so painful is the thought of him that he does not mention the actual slaying. He weeps with Frigg, but he pronounces sentence without mercy on Loki and on those who swear false oaths and commit murder. The history of the world continues; everything is portrayed with the help of incidents from Norse mythology and images from the Icelandic landscape. From time to time he hears the words the sibyl utters about herself:

Fjöld veit ek fræða,
fram sé ek lengra
of ragna rök
römm sigtíva.

I know much lore,
I see further ahead
into the grim fate of the gods,
the lords of battle.

The poet takes part in the last battle of the gods; recollections of the most terrible natural phenomena that he has witnessed become woven into it:

Sól tær sortna,
 sökkr fold í mar,
 hverfa af himni
 heiðar stjörnur,
 geisar eimi
 ok aldrnari,
 leikr hár hiti
 við himin sjálfan.

The sun darkens,
 the land sinks into the sea,
 from the heavens vanish
 the bright stars;
 steam roars
 and fire too,
 the tall flames
 touch heaven itself.

There are further depictions of the Icelandic landscape, drawn from the poet's surroundings:

Sér hon upp koma
 öðru sinni
 jörð ór ægi
 iðjagræna,
 falla forsar,
 flýgr örn yfir,
 hinn er á fjalli
 fiska veiðir.

She sees arise
 for a second time
 earth from the sea,
 green once more.
 Waterfalls rush,
 an eagle flies overhead,
 he that on the mountain
 catches fish.

The golden tablets are found again in *the grass* that grows in the meadow of the gods. With the return of Baldr and Höðr, however, the poet has really gone beyond the limits of the old faith. He had given it all that it could demand, and at the end of the poem the new message is allowed to appear as he had heard it

during the day. *Gimlé* was simply a Norse name by which he chose to denote the Heavenly City, just as Eilífr Goðrúnarson called the river Jordan *Urðar brunnr*.¹⁹ There good and faithful men were to enjoy eternal bliss, and there the Highest God was to come and rule over the men and gods selected for His Kingdom by a baptism of fire. Now the poet could see the end of the battle, now he felt that life was entirely at peace with him. The dark earth with its yawning grave fresh dug for his slain son (these had been his own words in *Ögmundardrápa*) no longer blocked the view. He saw Ögmundr in Gimlé, and had some hope of meeting him there again. He wanted to make peace himself, too. It was sufficient punishment for the oathbreakers to have to wade the heavy streams to Ragnarök. The poet did not demand eternal punishment; he had the Norse desire for vengeance, but was not given to oriental cruelty. He chose to look finally upon a world where evil was banished and all grief and injury healed.

Inside the farm the guests slept, weary of feasting and drinking. Þangbrandr slept a sound and dreamless sleep after his victory, certain of the rightness and ultimate victory of his cause. Gestr lay awake in his bed, thinking, comparing the old faith with the new, trying to judge both fairly. But out in the meadow Völu-Steinn walked alone, chanting. The whole of the great poem was in his mind, part of it complete, part still in fragments — *Völuspá*, which after 900 years still captivates the minds of men, but is yet as imperfect a picture of the spiritual upheaval which the poet underwent as the waves that crash on the shore are of the turbulence of the ocean. Doubtless he felt that he had solved the mystery of life for all generations, for “the greater and the lesser descendants of Heimdallr”. But he failed to realise that power over the masses lies with the person who can only see one side of an argument, who does not understand his opponents, who imagines that existence is a simpler affair than it actually is. But the Christian missionary also made a mistake. He would unhesitatingly have called *Völuspá* the devil’s work, in spite of the recognisable Christian elements in it. He would not have dreamed that long after the victory of Christianity in Iceland the judgment would be made that “the best men this land [Iceland] has known lived here in pagan times, and since then their equals have not appeared”.²⁰ He could not have anticipated that their Christian descendants would gather up every relic of heathen

¹⁹ See Finnur Jónsson, *Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning* (1912-15), A I 152; B I 144.

²⁰ Guðbrandur Vigfússon (1856), 242.

lore and preserve it jealously like a gem, while “sacred translations” and Christian romances were allowed to gather dust in a corner. The Icelanders have never experienced such another moment of transition. An ancient culture and outlook on life, in many ways well suited to the natural characteristics of the race and shaped by the experiences of innumerable generations, was taking its leave; and instead the nation was put into baptismal robes of mixed Judaic, Greek and Latin origins — by no means a perfect fit. Too late we have understood that though the Icelanders gained much when Christianity was introduced, yet they also lost something — lost more than they needed to lose — for the Christian missionaries were often far less mature and wise than those who adopted their faith. It is impossible to prefer the ruffian Þangbrandr or the daredevil Hjalti Skeggjason (who did not shrink from insulting the gods of his own youth at the very assembly that was hallowed in their name²¹) to such men as Ingimundr the Old, Þorkell *máni*, Njáll or Gestr Oddleifsson. The truth is rather that during the first Christian centuries, their best years, the Icelanders lived on the inherited resources of the pagan spirit, both in literature and daily life.²² Never have the two things that matter most to a nation been more in harmony than at the end of the 10th century: to stand deep-rooted in ancient tradition and yet be receptive to new ideas. We may say of the author of *Völuspá* with equal truth what the poet Einar Benediktsson said of another Icelandic author of stature:

Aldrei hóf sig hærra í landi
 hjartagreind á síðum tveim,
 seint mun faðma himinheim
 hugartökum stærri andi.²³

Never rose higher in the land
 a heart so understanding of two faiths;
 it will be long before a greater spirit
 will embrace the world of the
 heavens with the grasp of his mind.

²¹ *Kristni saga* (1905), 30: Vilki eige goð geyja: / grey þykke mér Freyja.

²² Sigurður Nordal, *Snorri Sturluson* (1920), 253-9.

²³ Einar Benediktsson, ‘Snorráminni’, in the collection of poems entitled *Vogar* (1921), 109-13.

NOTES

SAGA MANUSCRIPTS IN ICELAND IN THE LATER 18TH CENTURY

BY JOHN MCKINNEL

Sólrún Jensdóttir's article 'Books owned by ordinary people in Iceland 1750-1830' (*Saga-Book*, XIX parts 2-3 (1975-6), pp. 264-292) has done a useful service in demonstrating the large role played by printed religious material in the literary experience of Icelanders during this period. But in reacting against the old patriotic misconception of a nation in which every farmer's family was steeped in the sagas from childhood, it is possible to go too far. This note will suggest that the second type of source used in Sólrún's study, the inventories of the estates of deceased persons throughout Iceland for the period 1750-1800, cannot provide a reliable picture of the extent to which sagas were known in Iceland at that time.

It is true that such inventories were legally obligatory and that everything was specified in them, but in one respect they can be checked — by comparing the saga manuscripts listed in them with the number of surviving manuscripts known to have been in Iceland during the period. This can only be done where modern saga editions discuss the history of every known manuscript copy of their text, but with the help of some such editions I have made such a comparison for eight sagas — *Árna saga biskups*, *Dínus saga dramláta*, *Harðar saga*, *Hrólf's saga kraka*, *Svarfdæla saga*, *Valla-Ljót's saga*, *Víga-Glúms saga* and *Viktors saga ok Blávus*.¹ This list is neither as long nor as varied as one might have wished for, but it contains a fair spread of material and should provide a good enough sample for its evidence to be significant.

The surviving manuscripts of these sagas which were in Iceland during the period 1750-1800, listing under (a) those in Iceland throughout the period, under (b) those in Iceland for part of the period, are as follows:

1. *Árna saga biskups* (a) AM 385 fol., Lbs. 224 fol., Lbs. 235 fol., Lbs. 142 4to, BM Add. 11,127, the Leningrad manuscript and perhaps Oslo UB 506 4to and Huseby 35.

(b) Lbs. 836 4to, Lbs. 4398 4to, IB 181 4to, Oslo UB 2 fol., the Lund manuscript and probably Thott 984 fol.²

¹ The following information is compiled from *Árna saga biskups*, ed. Dorleifur Hauksson, 1972; *Dínus saga dramláta*, ed. Jónas Kristjánsson, 1960; Sture Hast, *Harðar saga II — Papperhandskrifternar*, 1960; D. Slay, *The manuscripts of Hrólf's saga kraka*, 1960, and idem, 'Hitherto unused manuscripts of Hrólf's saga kraka', *Opuscula IV (Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana XXX)*, 1970, pp. 260-8; *Svarfdælasaga*, ed. Jónas Kristjánsson, 1966; *Valla-Ljót's saga*, ed. Jónas Kristjánsson, 1952; *Viktors saga ok Blávus*, ed. Jónas Kristjánsson, 1964. The material on the paper manuscripts of *Víga-Glúms saga* is summarised from my own unpublished work.

² This enormous manuscript, which dates from about 1755, is thought by Dorleifur Hauksson and by Jónas Kristjánsson (*Svarfdælasaga*, xlviii) to have been written in Copenhagen, but in that case it is remarkable that none of its many known sources is a manuscript in the Arnamagnæan collection, that none of them can be proved to have been in Copenhagen by 1755 and that few of them have survived in major collections in Denmark. This suggests that it was probably copied in Iceland.

This is a total of 13-14 manuscripts (since the two copies recorded as doubtful in (a) were in Iceland for at least part of the period); the inventories record one.

2. *Dínus saga drambláta* (a) JS 27 fol., Lbs. 272 fol., Lbs. 644 4to, ÍB 201 8vo and ÍB 390 8vo.

(b) Lbs. 1637 4to, Lbs. 1680 4to, Lbs. 3217 4to, ÍB 116 4to, ÍB 138 4to, the abbreviated version in Lbs. 2319 8vo and JS 270 8vo, and possibly BM Add. 4860.

This is a total of 12-13 manuscripts; the inventories record none.

3. *Harðar saga* (a) Lbs. 840 4to, ÍB 45 fol., Kall 623 4to and possibly Lbs. 133 4to.

(b) Thott 976 fol., Rask 52, JS 160 fol., BM Add. 4868 and probably Thott 984 fol.

This totals 8-9 manuscripts; the inventories record none.

4. *Hrólfs saga kraka* (a) Lbs. 272 fol., Lbs. 633 fol., Lbs. 513 4to, Lbs. 715 4to, Lbs. 2319 4to, Lbs. 1583 8vo, JS 12 fol., JS 27 fol., Edinburgh Adv. 21.4.17 and perhaps Rask 31.

(b) NKS 1148 fol., NKS 339 8vo, Lbs. 170 fol., Lbs. 154 4to, Oslo UB 306 4to, BM Add. 11,162 and perhaps Lbs. 2796 4to.

This totals 16-17 manuscripts; the inventories record three.

5. *Svarfdæla saga* (a) ÍB 45 fol., ÍB 45 4to, ÍB 226 4to, JS 33 4to and possibly AM 402 fol. and BM Add. 11,141.

(b) AM 395 fol., NKS 1714 4to, Lbs. 445 fol., Lbs. 135 4to, Lbs. 716 4to, Lbs. 1845 4to, JS 638 4to, Oslo UB 250 fol., probably Thott 984 fol. and perhaps NKS 1710 4to.

This totals 14-16 manuscripts; the inventories record one.

6. *Valla-Ljóts saga* (a) ÍB 45 fol. and ÍB 45 4to.

(b) AM 395 fol., NKS 1714 4to, Lbs. 135 4to, Lbs. 716 4to, ÍB 184 4to, JS 160 fol. and probably Thott 984 fol.

This totals 8-9 manuscripts; the inventories record none.

7. *Víga-Glúms saga* (a) Lbs. 272 fol., Lbs. 633 fol., Lbs. 946 4to, ÍB 45 4to and probably BM Add. 11,112.

(b) NKS 1714 4to, Thott 976 fol., Oslo UB 313 fol., BM Add. 4868, probably Thott 984 fol. and possibly ÍB 65 4to (which is now a brief fragment).

This totals 9-11 manuscripts; the inventories record none.

8. *Viktors saga ok Blávus* (a) Rask 35, Lbs. 840 4to and JS 27 fol.

(b) ÍB 185 8vo, JS 36 4to and perhaps Lbs. 155 4to and BM Add. 4860. This totals 5-7 manuscripts; the inventories record none.

The overall total of surviving manuscript texts of these eight sagas which were in Iceland during the second half of the eighteenth century is thus 85-97, found in 80 different manuscripts; the total recorded in the inventories is only five. Admittedly, the inventories also mention nine codices containing unspecified sagas, but even if every one of these included one or more of the sagas I have been looking at, which is highly unlikely, the inventories would record only 14 out of 80 surviving codices, and that very incompletely. And to the manuscripts which survive must be added an uncertain number which can

be seen from textual stemmas to have existed but are now lost, and probably others which cannot now be traced at all.

It seems, therefore, that the proportion of those manuscripts which existed in Iceland that is preserved in the inventories is extremely small — certainly too small for them to provide any reliable indication of how well known any individual text was. Sólrún's summary from the inventories contains 60 saga manuscripts and 23 other manuscripts containing *rímur* which certainly or probably contained material derived from sagas. If the figures above were typical, this would represent at least a thousand saga manuscripts and several hundred manuscripts of *rímur* based on sagas in Iceland as a whole, though this can only be a guess.

In view of this, the evidence of the inventories on the distribution of printed saga texts must also be regarded sceptically. The inventories record 206 printed volumes of sagas and 23 of *rímur* based on sagas; if the proportion of printed texts recorded were as low as that of manuscripts, this would imply the existence of something like 3,500 printed volumes of saga material throughout Iceland. But such a large number seems unlikely — if, for example, the 77 recorded copies of the Hólar saga collections represented an actual total of over 1200, as such a proportion would imply, it is hard to see how that venture could have been the financial failure it apparently was.³ And printed texts were less likely to be exported from Iceland than manuscripts, and therefore probably stood a rather better chance of being recorded in the inventories.⁴

The low proportion of existing manuscripts noted is no doubt mainly due to the fact that so many inventories have themselves been lost. A secondary reason may be that some manuscripts were exported from Iceland during the lifetimes of their owners — though some of those I have traced were in fact exported as a result of the auctioning of deceased estates (e.g. Oslo UB 313 fol., BM Add. 4868 and NKS 1714 4to, probably all exported during the 1770's, and none of them recorded in a surviving inventory).⁵ A further reason may be that some manuscripts which never left Iceland were passed from one owner to the next while the donor was alive — as can be seen, for example, from a donor's note in Lbs. 946 4to (f. 190v), probably written c. 1800 — and if this happened to a manuscript a couple of times it might never appear in any inventory (though it is conversely possible that some books are recorded more than once).

Sólrún further distinguishes those copies which belonged to 'ordinary people', and seems to dismiss the rest, the property of 'clergymen, lawyers and other professional people', as untypical and not influential on the population as a whole. In most European countries, where the scholar's library and the

³ See Páll Eggert Ólason and Dorkell Jóhannesson, *Saga Íslendinga VI (1701-1770)*, 1943, pp. 373-380 for the vicissitudes of the Hólar press during this period. Sólrún's description of the Hólar editions (p. 278) transposes their contents — *Agiætar Fornmanna Sögur* in fact contains *Kjalnesinga saga*, *Krúka-Réfs saga*, *Harðar saga*, *Gísla saga* and *Víga-Glúms saga*; and *Nockrer Marg-Frooder Sögu-þættir* the remaining texts listed by Sólrún.

⁴ Of the 80 codices listed above, about a dozen were exported from Iceland between 1750 and 1800.

⁵ Oslo UB 313 fol. belonged to Jón *sýslumaður* Árnason (died 1777) and after his death was sold in Copenhagen, along with his other manuscripts, in January 1779; BM Add. 4868 belonged to Bjarni *sýslumaður* Halldórsson from 1727 until his death in 1773, when it was bought by Ólafur *stiftamtmaður* Stefánsson on behalf of his friend Sir Joseph Banks (see Jón Dorkelsson's account of this in *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* VIII (1892), pp. 201-4); NKS 1714 4to probably belonged to Jón *sýslumaður* Benediktsson á Rauðaskriðu (died 1776), at least until the 1760's and most likely until his death, being then acquired by the Danish collector P. F. Suhm.

fashionable lady's shelf of novels were likely to remain closed to all but the owner and his or her close associates and social equals, such a distinction would no doubt be fully justified. But in Iceland its validity is more doubtful, for a number of reasons.

1. Most Icelandic households were alike in their reliance on farming for a livelihood, regardless of social status, and priests in particular were bound to be farmers and were not necessarily financially privileged. Thus Ebenezer Henderson (*Iceland*, second edition, 1819, p. 101) discusses their reliance on farming and finds one distinguished priest and poet of over seventy working in his hayfield. William Jackson Hooker (*Journal of a tour in Iceland in the summer of 1809*, 1811, p. 106) is a less well-informed observer, but he makes similar comments, and his picture of the desperate poverty of the priest at Miðdalur, who was also a working blacksmith, is all too convincing.⁶ There were 191 parishes in Iceland, and something like 4000 farms,⁷ so that between 4 and 5 per cent of all Icelandic farms were run by priests. As parish priests were also involved in education (see for example Henderson p. 288), the influence of the books to be found in their households was probably considerable, and Henderson's several rather patronising accounts of people whom he describes as 'intelligent peasant' or 'rustic astronomer' probably provide examples of it. There is certainly no reason to discount the libraries of priests in surveying literary influences on the general population.

2. Many manuscripts were made for privileged people, but the scribes who actually wrote them were often of more humble origin, as in the example given by Henderson (p. 46), and they were sometimes fairly numerous. For example, Lbs. 633 fol. was written about 1700 for the Danish *sýslumaður* Lauritz Gottrup in about half a dozen hands, of which only one has been identified (rather tentatively) as Gottrup's own.⁸ Again, Lbs. 946 4to is one of a group of manuscripts copied for Bjarni *sýslumaður* Pétursson á Skarð during the first half of the eighteenth century,⁹ all with bombastic title pages featuring Bjarni's name prominently, but only one (Lbs. 1070 8vo) naming a scribe. The 11 manuscripts including *Víga-Glúms saga* noted above contain about 36 distinct hands, including those of one *sýslumaður*, two lawyers, two priests, one printer, one farmer and one servant; the other 28 are unidentified, and it seems likely that the majority of them belong to people of little social status.

3. Manuscripts made for *sýslumenn* and the like did not always stay in the possession of people of that class. Of the 11 manuscripts of *Víga-Glúms saga* listed above, for example, only three apparently belonged to well-to-do families until their export from Iceland (NKS 1714 4to, Oslo UB 313 fol. and BM Add. 4868). Three originally belonged to lawyers or their families but had passed by about 1800 to people who are almost unknown apart from their signatures (Lbs. 633 fol., Lbs. 946 4to and IB 65 4to). One, partly written by a

⁶ The incumbent at Miðdalur was Sira Vigfús Jónsson (1739-1818), a fairly typical priest who was himself the son of a priest and had been educated at Skálholt school — see Páll Eggert Ólason, *Íslenzkar æviskrár*, 5 vols., 1948-52, V 55-6; Sveinn Nielsson, *Prestatal og prófasta á Íslandi*, second ed., 1949-51, p. 89.

⁷ See Sólrún's article p. 267 and Hooker p. xxv, giving the number of farms in 1695 as 4059.

⁸ The first major hand in Lbs. 633 fol. appears to be the same as that of Gottrup's autograph ownership note, for which see Slay, 'Hitherto unused manuscripts of Hrólfs saga kraka' p. 261.

⁹ The others are Lbs. 423 fol., Lbs. 840 4to, Lbs. 2319 4to, Lbs. 1070 8vo and JS 8 fol.

priest, bears signs of probably having been used in the schoolroom during the later eighteenth century (BM Add. 11,112), while the ownership of the other four remains unknown.

4. There is evidence that manuscripts and printed books were extensively borrowed. This is a necessary hypothesis to explain the number of texts known to have been copied in Iceland during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but a specific example is the printing of *Agiætar Fornmanna Sögur* at Hólar in 1756. This edition is wholly based on BM Add. 4868, which was then owned by Bjarni *sýslumaður* Halldórsson and was apparently still his when he died in 1773; it follows that Björn Markússon, the editor of the Hólar editions, must have borrowed it from him. Borrowing may explain the signs of heavy use in many manuscripts which were in Iceland during this period — of the 11 copies of *Víga-Glúms saga* noted above, seven underwent major repairs in Iceland during the eighteenth century or the first half of the nineteenth, by rebinding, the recopying of lost or damaged leaves, or the strengthening of leaf edges.¹⁰ Henderson also mentions borrowing, both directly (p. 283) and in describing the foundation of three circulating libraries in different parts of Iceland between 1790 and his visit in 1814-5 (not counting a Danish one in Reykjavík, the contents of which, as of most things Danish in Iceland, he regarded as immoral — Henderson, pp. 182-3). And the broad degree of literacy necessary to widespread borrowing certainly seems to have existed; the very institution of a general survey of literacy such as that attempted in the *húsvitjunarbækur*¹¹ would not have been remotely practicable in most European countries at the time, and Henderson comments with admiration: 'It is exceedingly rare to meet with a boy or girl, who has attained the age of nine or ten years, that cannot read and write with ease' (p. 25).¹²

5. Most important, sagas were often read aloud to an entire household, so that the experience of them was not confined to the owner of the book which contained them; and even in households where the family was of high rank, a good proportion of this audience must always have been servants, labourers and other people of lower status. The account of such readings by Henderson which is partly quoted in Sólrún's article is the fullest of many; in another passage (p. 95), Henderson describes a *sýslumaður* reading aloud to his household — a man who has recently substituted the reading of scripture for that of the sagas — 'which was formerly in universal use, and is still kept up by most of the peasants . . . the sagas are certainly of great value, and in the hands of the learned, may be turned to a good account; but to encourage their perusal by the common people, would only be to nourish those seeds of superstition and credulity which they are but too prone to cultivate, and which, in their vegetation, cannot but have a baleful influence on their sentiments and conduct in life.' This shows the custom of reading sagas aloud as natural in the homes of both *sýslumaður* and peasant farmer, and also that Henderson, who is a vigorous defender of the Icelanders' merits, rather disapproved of the practice and was unlikely to exaggerate it. Yet he also says that some people learned sagas by heart, and that 'instances are not

¹⁰ They are NKS 1714 4to, Thott 976 fol., Lbs. 272 fol., Lbs. 633 fol., Lbs. 946 4to, ÍB 45 4to and BM Add. 11,112.

¹¹ On the *húsvitjunarbækur*, which are Sólrún's other major source, see her article pp. 266-8.

¹² See also Henderson, p. 286, Hooker, pp. 289-90.

uncommon of itinerating historians, who gain a livelihood during the winter, by staying at different farms till they have exhausted their stock of literary knowledge' (Henderson p. 284). This suggests another means whereby people without permanent access to saga texts might yet become familiar with them.

It seems, therefore, that the surviving inventories give an inadequate picture of the survival and ownership of saga manuscripts in the second half of the eighteenth century, at any rate when used by themselves, and that even if a complete picture of the ownership of texts could be built up, it would not tell us how widely the sagas were known, since those who listened to sagas probably greatly outnumbered those who owned copies of them. This does not disturb Sólrún's major conclusion, that a few religious texts were much more widely available than any of the sagas. There is no reason to suppose that the religious works recorded in the inventories form a larger proportion of the lost whole than the printed saga texts which appear in them, and on this assumption, copies of *Grallarinn*, *Vidalinspostilla* and Hallgrímur Pétursson's *Passíusálmur* must have run into thousands. But it is doubtful whether this reflects a major change away from sagas to religious reading in the eighteenth century, brought about by a sudden scarcity of saga texts. If we compare the numbers of surviving manuscripts which were in Iceland between 1750 and 1800, given above, with the comparable figures for a century earlier, the following comparison appears:

	1650-1700	1750-1800
<i>Arna saga biskups</i>	17-18	13-14
<i>Dínus saga drambláta</i>	7-8	12-13
<i>Harðar saga</i>	16	8-9
<i>Hrólfs saga kraka</i>	18-19	16-17
<i>Svarfdæla saga</i>	8-10	14-16
<i>Valla-Ljóts saga</i>	6-7	8-9
<i>Víga-Glúms saga</i>	17 (one fragmentary)	9-11
<i>Viktors saga ok Blávus</i>	9	5-7
	98-104	85-97
Total		

These figures do reflect a decline in the number of available manuscript copies of sagas in general — and there was a decline in the accuracy of texts as well — but the falling-off is less severe than might have been expected when one considers the large number of manuscripts exported to Denmark and Sweden during the period from about 1680 to Árni Magnússon's death in 1730. And against this decline in the number of manuscript copies one must set the increase in the number of relatively cheap printed copies brought about by the Hólar editions of 1756. This hardly seems enough to indicate any radical change in the eighteenth century, and this may lead us to wonder whether religious reading matter may not already have been numerically dominant in the seventeenth.

REVIEWS

NORGES LITTERATURHISTORIE. Edited by EDVARD BEYER. BIND I. FRA RUNENE TIL NORSKE SELSKAB. By LUDVIG HOLM-OLSEN and KJELL HEGGELUND. *J. W. Cappelens Forlag A.S.* Oslo, 1974. 624 pp.

Since this review is intended for the *Saga-Book*, I must confine myself to the first section (pp. 19-342) by Professor Ludvig Holm-Olsen, who deals with literature from the earliest period to the late Middle Ages. The book is a splendid presentation of received knowledge. It is designed, in the first place, for general readers but will also be useful to those who have a more specialised interest in Norwegian literature. In spite of the title, Professor Holm-Olsen does not confine himself to literature which may be strictly called Norwegian. Indeed, it would hardly be possible to do so. Early runic inscriptions found in Norway such as the Tune stone (fifth century?) are considered alongside some important Swedish and Danish ones. The older inscriptions are of interest linguistically, but of little interest as literature, except when they are rhythmical and alliterative. A particularly valuable example is the stone of Rök (Östergötland) which contains a full strophe of eight lines in the measure *fornyrðislag* perhaps referring to the Gothic emperor Theodoric the Great (died 526). Other metrical inscriptions have historical interest, alluding to Viking voyages to the east and west, and even to the Battle of Fýrisvellir (Sjörup and Hällestad). The Karlevi stone (Öland), dating from about A.D. 1000, is particularly important. It commemorates a Danish chief and contains a complete strophe in the measure *dróttkvætt*. This inscription may be the work of a Norwegian or Icelander, but it may also suggest that scaldic *dróttkvætt* was used in the East Norse area. As Professor Holm-Olsen points out in a later section (pp. 254 ff.), the finds recently made in Bergen show that *dróttkvætt* was known in Norway in the twelfth century and later, although it is difficult to know whether these inscriptions in verse are the work of Norwegians or Icelanders. Professor Holm-Olsen is dealing with an early period and it might have been worth while to give more examples of the older inscriptions. It appears that runes never really died out. I think of *stafkarlalettr* ('beggars' letters') mentioned in the *Íslendinga saga* under the year 1241. Some of the magic symbols used in Iceland in later times seem to be derived from runes.

When we come to the Eddaic poems, difficulties become greater. Although hardly any of them are preserved except in manuscripts of the thirteenth century or later, it is hard to decide how old they are and where they were composed. Most critics would agree that parts of the *Hávamál* were composed in Norway, perhaps before the settlement of Iceland. A few allusions to nature suggest this, but not all those which Professor Holm-Olsen quotes. The lonely withering pine (*þóll*) would not be seen in Iceland, but contrary to Professor Holm-Olsen's view, the heron (*hegri*; *Hávamál*, strophe 13) has frequently been seen there. He probably does not breed in Iceland, but is well enough known for there to be superstitions about him. The wolf, referred to in strophes 58 and 85, was not seen in Iceland, but figured commonly enough in dreams of Icelanders. Professor Holm-Olsen is in some

doubt whether *Völuspá* should be considered Icelandic or Norwegian. I would say it is Icelandic. It is true that the poet mentions mistletoe, which does not grow in Iceland, but was to be the death of Baldr. Beliefs in the properties of this parasitic plant are widespread and persist to this day, but no one who had seen mistletoe could say, as the author of *Völuspá* does, that it was very beautiful (strophe 34). Part of the symbolism used in the description of the end of the world, the gushing smoke and fire (strophe 57), seems to be the work of one who had seen a volcanic eruption.

As already stated, this is a history of Norwegian rather than Icelandic literature. At the same time, ample space is given to Icelandic works about Norway, e.g. *Sverris saga*. Snorri figures prominently because of his close association with Norway and its history, as does his nephew Sturla Þórðarson, who wrote sagas both of King Magnús (died 1280) and King Hákon Hákonarson (died 1263). Naturally much prominence is given to romances translated from English and continental sources. The most famous of them, *Tristrams saga*, made in 1226, was certainly translated in Norway, as were several others at the instigation of King Hákon. There is a later *Tristrams saga* which appears to be Icelandic and is, to my mind a much more pleasing work. Although the *riddarasögur* became popular in Iceland, it seems that Icelanders who read and sometimes wrote them were inspired by Norwegians.

Professor Holm-Olsen shows much interest in religious literature which has been rather neglected by students of Old Norwegian and Icelandic. From linguistic and stylistic points of view, the homilies are perhaps the most valuable literature of this kind and a number of them are found both in Norwegian and Icelandic manuscripts. A particularly striking homily is the one on the timber church and the symbolism of its various parts. Professor Holm-Olsen seems satisfied that it is a description of what we now call a stave or mast church. I can find little in the homily to support this, except that the church was made of wood, whether it was Norwegian or Icelandic. By far the oldest manuscript of this homily is Icelandic, dating from about A.D. 1150. I have discussed it elsewhere (see *Nine Norse studies*, 1972, pp. 79-101) and will not go further into it now.

As a general criticism, and this is no criticism of the authors but of editorial policy, I would say that the lack of bibliographical footnotes makes the book more difficult and not easier to read. I understand that a full bibliography is to be given in a later volume, but it would have been helpful to have such information at the foot of the page. The book is splendidly illustrated. I could only wish that the statue of Snorri by Gustav Vigeland had been omitted. I would advise all students of Old Norse to read this book.

†G. TURVILLE-PETRE

LÖNG ER FÖR. DRÍR ÆTTIR UM ÍRSKAR OG ÍSLENZKAR SÖGUR OG KVÆDI. By EINAR ÓL. SVEINSSON. *Studia islandica*, 34. *Bókautgáfa Menningar sjóðs*. Reykjavík, 1975. 217 pp.

I may begin my review of Professor Einar's three brilliant essays with the second (pp. 117-69), for this will interest many others than students of

Icelandic literature. The subject is *Sveins rímur Múkkssonar* ('Rímur of Sveinn, the monk's son') which consist of twenty-three *rímur*. They are the work of Kolbeinn Grímsson, who lived in the region of Snæfellsnes and who must have written them in the latter part of the seventeenth century. Kolbeinn is remembered also as the author of *Grettis rímur* and of *rímur* about Gunnarr of Hlíðarendi based on *Njáls saga*. Professor Einar shows that *Sveins rímur* were also based on a saga, albeit a late romantic one, but this saga is lost. Professor Einar had already discussed *Sveins rímur* in an earlier work (see *Sveins rímur Múkkssonar*, ed. Björn K. Dórolfsson et al., 1948, li-lxxxiv).

I cannot say that *Sveins rímur* are pleasing as literature, but they are interesting in several ways. They tell of Sveinn, son of a monk and a poor girl. Sveinn was put out to die (*borinn út*) but was suckled by a hind and an ass. He grew up to be immensely strong; he tore up and hurled trees, wrestled with giants or champions and overcame them. After many adventures, his travels brought him to Mikligarður (Constantinople). He was well received by King Sergius, who had a beautiful daughter, Sólentar. Black men and heathen Saracens (*Serkir*) came to demand Sólentar for their king, Lútus. Their demands were naturally rejected by the Greeks and, in the ensuing battle, Sveinn fought Lútus and killed him. The heathens fled and the Greeks settled in the city 'Athenis'. Further battles followed and the Greeks contended with Pingmei, black men with yellow eyes and magical powers. Sveinn again did most to secure victory for the Greeks.

The thirteenth *ríma* is the most interesting of all. Sveinn was sitting at dinner with the Greek court, when a huge troll-like man appeared, as if from nowhere. He said his name was *Karlínn grái* ('The Grey Carl'). He taunted the Greeks with cowardice; he challenged one after the other to cut off his head. None would accept the challenge except Sveinn. He chopped off the monster's head but the monster put it on again. When he came back next day, the King asked the monster how Sveinn could be saved. Karlínn grái demanded only that he should see and hear the king's daughter on an islet, but when she spoke to Karlínn grái, they both vanished. It was now Sveinn's task to find Sólentar and he set out alone. Many adventures followed.

Numerous parallels with this 'beheading game' can be found in English and French. It seems to be agreed that the motive derives ultimately from an Irish story, best represented in the *Fled Bricrend* ('Bricriu's feast'), composed not later than c. A.D. 1100. Indeed, the monstrous challenger at Bricriu's feast bears a closer resemblance to Karlínn grái than to the knightly intruder in the story of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

There are a number of small details in which the *rímur* resemble early Irish stories. Irish stories tell sometimes of cows, white with red (chestnut?) ears, and the Welsh *Mabinogion* of hounds, white with red ears. In *Sveins rímur* we hear of a horse, given to the hero, which appears to be white with chestnut ears and haunch (although the text is, at this point, difficult to follow). It is hardly likely, of course, that the author of the *rímur* drew direct on Irish sources, but the similarity of some of the matter to the Irish suggests that the author of the *rímur* or, more probably, the author of the saga on which the *rímur* are based drew on a source closer to the Irish and thus older than any which we now possess in English, French or Latin. King Arthur (Arthur) comes into *Sveins rímur*, but does not play a very active part. His place is taken mainly by King Sergius.

In this essay, Professor Einar leans rather heavily, some might say too heavily, on G. L. Kittredge's brilliant book *A study of Gawain and the Green Knight* (1916). In this connection, I may quote Professor Norman Davis (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon, 2nd edition, 1967, xv): 'the sources have been studied very fully (though highly speculatively) by G. L. Kittredge . . .'

The first essay in Professor Einar's book (pp. 11-116) is devoted to those two mysterious lays *Grógaldr* and *Fjolsvinns-mál*. These are in the Eddaic metre *ljóðaháttir*, but are preserved only in later manuscripts in which the texts are very corrupt; this makes interpretation difficult. It cannot be said whether both poems are the work of the same poet, but for present purposes I will assume that they are. It has long been recognized that these lays tell the beginning and end of one story, but that the middle part is lost. Attempts have been made to reconstruct it, partly with the help of Danish and Swedish ballads and of prose sources such as *Hjálmþérs saga* and later folktales.

The *Grógaldr* begins with the hero, Svipdagr, waking his mother from the grave. He had been cruelly treated by his father's new wife or wicked mistress (strophe 3):

'Ljótu leikborði
skaut fyr mik in lævisa kona,
sús faðmaði minn fõður . . .'

Earlier critics have interpreted these lines in a figurative sense, comparing them with a verse in *Grettis saga* (ch. 72) in which a similar expression is used figuratively, giving some such meaning as: 'The evil woman, who embraced my father, has played a cruel trick on me.' Professor Einar interprets the lines more literally. The woman had defeated the youth at chess or some such board game (*hnefataff?*) and thus had power to place him under a charm; he is spellbound to seek out the maid Menglõð. Svipdagr's mother Gróa, called from the grave, gave him good advice. She told him that his journey would be long and arduous and she chanted nine magic spells. The surviving poems do not tell of the adventures of the youth on his journey. When *Fjolsvinns-mál* opens, Svipdagr has reached the castle of Menglõð and talks with the surly porter, whose name is *Fjolsviðr* ('Immensely Wise'). Svipdagr names himself *Vindkaldr* ('Storm-cold'); his father was *Várkaldr* ('Spring-cold') and his grandfather was *Fjolkaldr* ('Immensely cold'). Svipdagr asked the porter question after question. Who owned the castle? She was called Menglõð and her grandfather was Svafþorinn. Svipdagr asked the name of the impassable gate, the fence and the dogs who guarded the castle (*Giffr* and *Geri*). What is the name of that tree whose limbs spread over the whole earth? *Mimameiðr*. What are the names of those girls who sit before the knees of Menglõð? They are *Hlíf* and *Hlífþursa* (or *Hlífþrasa*?) Can anyone sleep in the arms of Menglõð? None but Svipdagr. Then the hero discloses that he is Svipdagr.

The two poems seem to echo a number of mythological lays of the Edda, not only in content but also verbally. They are the work of a man (or men) who knew the poems and the myths they related, even if they did not understand them very well. The early poems most clearly reflected in the *Grógaldr* and the *Fjolsvinns-mál* are the *Baldrsdraumar* which, like the *Grógaldr*, has an interview with a woman called from the grave. The *Vafþrúðnismál*, like the *Fjolsvinns-mál*, consists chiefly of questions and answers on mythological subjects and the two lays contain close verbal

similarities. The *Völuspá* seems also to have influenced this poem, as well as a section of the *Hávamál*. The *Fjolsvinnsmál* (verse 20) says of the tree Mimameiðr: *fáir vitu / af hverjum rótum renn*, as the *Hávamál* (verse 138) says of the tree on which Óðinn hung: *manngi veit, hvers hann af rótum renn*. This implies that *Grógaldr* and *Fjolsvinnsmál* are later than the other poems just mentioned. Professor Einar would date them to the end of the twelfth century. I must admit that I do not understand the *Grógaldr* and *Fjolsvinnsmál* fully, but I do feel much nearer to understanding them than I did before I read Professor Einar's essay.

The third part of this book (pp. 173-212) is the most intricate and is difficult to describe in a review such as this one. It is concerned with the so-called *hnepttir hættir* (catalectic measures), which, for convenience, I refer to as truncated verse-forms. It is characteristic of these forms that their lines end with a single stressed syllable instead of the trochee found in *dróttkvætt* and *hrynhenda*. Snorri, in verse 77 of *Háttatal*, gives an example of a metre called *hálfhneppt* in which lines have six syllables, although five or seven are allowable, and the rhymes are much as in *dróttkvætt*, but the second of them is truncated:

Snyðja lætr í sólröð
snekkjur á Manar hlekk
(árla sé) ungr jarl
(allvaldr breka fall)

Snorri (verse 78) next talks of *alhneppt* in which lines have four syllables with full rhyme in each line, the second falling on a truncated syllable:

Hrönn skerr, hvatt ferr,
húfr kaldr, allvaldr,
lō brýtr, lōg skýtr,
limgarmr, rangbarmr

This distinction between *hálfhneppt* and *alhneppt* appears from Professor Einar's observations to be the work of metrists. He considers Óttarr svarti's lay in praise of Óláfr, king of the Swedes (c. 1018). The number of syllables in Óttarr's lines varies from four to six. The examples of truncated forms from the earlier period are regrettably few, but there are good reasons to believe that the device of truncation was as old as the settlement of Iceland. A part of a lay attributed (probably wrongly) to Harald hárfagri is preserved in *Flateyjarbók*. It is about Snæfriðr, the fabled Lappish wife of Haraldr, who is said to have recently died. Although the interpretation of the verse is exceedingly difficult, it is plain that their form is truncated:

Hneggi ber ek (berk?) æ ugg.
ötta hlýði mér drótt . . .

If there should be any doubt about the age and authenticity of these lines, there can hardly be about the following *helmingr* attributed to Þórir snepill, a settler of Iceland:

Hér liggir kjóla keyrir
Kaldakinn um aldr,
en vit förum heilir
hjalmun-Gautr í braut.

The second and fourth lines are here truncated, and the form thus resembles what Snorri (*Háttatal*, verse 50) calls *meiri stufr*. The truncated lines

generally contain four stresses, ending abruptly in the form $\bar{\cdot}$, giving a kind of bump. Björn Breiðvikingakappi (late tenth century) declaimed this verse:

Sýlda skar ek (skark) svana fold
 súðum, því at (þvít) gæibrúðr
 ástum leiddi oss fast,
 austan með hlaðit flaust,
 viðá gat ek vásbúð,
 viglundr nú um stund
 helli byggir hugfullr
 hingat fyr konu bing.

The second rhyme falls most often on the last syllable, which is commonly long, as here, but not always. The first rhyme or half-rhyme is generally on the first syllable of the line, but may be on the second. The truncated forms, to judge by the oldest examples, seem freer in the syllable-count than Snorri would allow. It has been said that the truncated form *hálfhneppt* derived from *hrynhenda* which also has four stresses and ends in a trochee. But the insistent trochaic rhythm of the *hrynhenda* is quite unlike that of *hálfhneppt*. Professor Einar considers the truncated line-ending foreign to Norse. He looks to early Irish poetry for models and finds such interesting examples as:

Canaid cui ceól mbláith
 dia mbi súan sám réid;
 lengait eóin ciúin crúaich
 ocus daim lúait léith.

In such Irish poems, the syllable count appears to be less strictly observed than had previously been supposed. But it would seem to be the line ending which chiefly distinguished the *hneptir hættir* from other scaldic forms. This is a feature it shares with the Irish metre in question and Professor Einar argues that it here seems 'possible to establish beyond doubt the prototype for the *hneptir hættir* of the North'. If we accept this conclusion, we might wonder how much the Irish forms influenced other scaldic ones.

In this excellent book, Professor Einar shows how wide and deep his interests are.

†G. TURVILLE-PETRE

THE SCANDINAVIAN LANGUAGES. AN INTRODUCTION TO THEIR HISTORY. By EINAR HAUGEN. *Faber and Faber Limited*. London, 1976. 507 pp.

An obvious deficiency in the apparatus available for the study of the Scandinavian languages has now been made good by Einar Haugen's new book. A broad-based introduction to the Scandinavian languages and their history has at last been published. Haugen's work may, of course, be said to have its forerunners. To judge from its title, Wessén's *De nordiska språken* might be regarded as Haugen's immediate model. In reality, one wonders if Wessén's book, in which the different languages are treated in separate chapters, can have been of any great help to Haugen. Haugen has attempted a more unified approach; he has set out to trace the gradual development within the single linguistic area from the remarkable homogeneity represented by the oldest (albeit obscure) runic inscriptions to the diversity of the modern standard written languages. The process is seen against the appropriate social, cultural and historical background. Haugen himself says in his Preface that

the setting of language has been of more concern to him than the details of linguistic change. What he seeks to offer is a sociolinguistic sketch of the historical development of the Nordic languages (p. 18).

In other respects also we are faced with a new approach. Even though in his Preface Haugen expressly takes up the stance of a linguistic traditionalist, he sees his task as something more than the mere retailing of second-hand wares. His intention was clearly to assess and order the material anew with the trained eye of an expert linguist. And with his combination of insight into and yet distance from his subject, he is obviously excellently qualified to furnish an account of the Scandinavian languages. If one sometimes gets the impression that his mastery of the whole field is not always as consistent as it might be, this must to a great extent be due to the nature of his undertaking.

For it is an unevenly worked field from which the author must reap his harvest of learned information. Many areas remain relatively unresearched. For example, Haugen devotes only twice as much space to the linguistic developments of the last four hundred years as he gives to the period 550 to 1050, despite the vast body of linguistic data which the modern period with its enormous social and cultural changes potentially has to offer. And he has also had to contend with the converse problem, an excess of information. Haugen could not, of course, expect to master all that is known about the Scandinavian languages. This limitation has left its mark on his book. Specialists within the different areas can and should single out the individual mistakes and half-truths that they will have no difficulty in detecting.

Another problem for Haugen seems to have been to decide what readership he should address his book to. In his Preface (p. 17), he says that he is aiming at 'the beginning graduate student and the intelligent general reader'. While we may respect this limitation, we must, at the same time, regret it. When working at his book, Haugen must often have had occasion to ponder moot points and problems within the field and his thoughts on such matters would have been of value to those of his readers with an expert knowledge of the subject.

But even the readership to which Haugen does limit himself appears to be too heterogeneous for his purposes. He has divided his book into two Sections. After the first of these, the general reader may, Haugen tells us, lay the book aside if he so wishes. The graduate student, Haugen suggests, can simply skip Section A and go straight to the historically presented exposition in Section B. This arrangement, I feel, has not necessarily succeeded. It inevitably leads to overlapping and various other undesirable compromises. And 'the general reader' is, in himself, a shadowy figure. Whatever his background, he will doubtless profit in good measure from large parts of Section A and that is excellent. But if Section A is to be regarded as any sort of unity, the needs of this general reader would seem somewhat disparate: for example, on page 42, he is told that 'Swedish today is a vehicle of the most complex writing in every genre, from atomic physics to modernist poetry.' But at the same time his training in linguistics is conceived as advanced enough to enable him to absorb the contrastive treatment of the Scandinavian languages given in chapter 6. In reality, the reader for whom Section A is suitable must normally be a person well versed in linguistics and the difference between him and the graduate student rests largely in the fact that he can read for pleasure what the other has to assimilate for academic purposes. Given this fact, it would have been better to invite the general reader to the whole feast and allow him to pick

out what he wanted. He might perhaps have needed a little more information on the social and historical background, but in this his interests would hardly have conflicted with those of the graduate student.

This discussion of the book's disposition would perhaps have been superfluous if it had obviously not sometimes influenced the quality of its content. As I suggest above, a clear case of this is in the chapter where Haugen compares and contrasts the six modern standard languages. Given his general approach, one would have expected some such chapter as this, even if it could not be more than precisely what he calls it, 'a contrastive sketch'. And serious students of the subject would have welcomed such a study if it had been carried out with due care and judgement. But one gets the impression that because Haugen has placed the relevant chapter in Section A, he regarded its purpose as so elementary that he practically lost interest in it. As it stands, it consists largely of a collection of unsystematic comparisons and collocations. The tabulated surveys are deficient in several respects. For example, the vowel system of one language is described synchronically, of another diachronically. 'New Norwegian' is given a vowel system that differs considerably from 'Dano-Norwegian'. It is impossible that Haugen is here revealing his ignorance. It seems rather that he has written this chapter *currente calamo* and without the discipline imposed by anticipation of a fully critical readership.

But it would be petty to allow this book's blemishes to obscure its greater importance and virtues. Indeed, we may rather be grateful to its author for not allowing over-caution to prevent him from producing a serviceable handbook. And it would be unrealistic to expect a pioneer work of this type to be flawless in its first edition. What one does hope is that when Haugen comes to work on the new edition which will probably soon be needed, he will take the opportunity to revise the text, and preferably to mould it more to his own personal view of the subject. In the book as it now is, he too often stays modestly in the background. Where his own ideas do come to the fore, it is mainly in his consistent attempt to see Scandinavia as part of Europe. For example, in his account of German linguistic influence in Scandinavia, one feels how successfully he calls his enormous erudition into play in presenting the reader with the facts.

In this context, it may be noted in passing that the question of the impact of Middle Low German on the Scandinavian languages is one which lends itself particularly well to the sort of unified approach in which Haugen is so adept. It seems to me that the new form of language which begins to supplant Old Scandinavian more or less simultaneously in the three mainland Scandinavian countries may be regarded as a sort of standard language common to Denmark, Sweden and Norway, albeit a standard language with regional variations. 'Non-proletarians of All Regions, Unite!' is the heading Fishman gives to one of the sections in his great introductory work *The sociology of language* (1972). This is an exhortation which was heeded in Scandinavia in the late Middle Ages. The new form of language may be seen as the expression of a process of social stratification. In such a situation and in the course of adaptation to the mainstream European culture, there was understandably little inclination to exploit native linguistic resources, even though, as Haugen points out, the example of Iceland shows that this would have been a perfectly feasible expedient.

To sum up: it is clear that all those with a scholarly interest in the Scandinavian languages must now make Haugen's book the subject of discussion and the object of scrutiny. This will, in turn, not only stimulate greater interest in the Scandinavian languages in general, but will also help the author towards a revised edition. To write a comprehensive account of the Scandinavian languages and their development is perhaps too great a task for any single scholar. But in this book, Haugen has laid the foundations for such a work. And this, in itself, is an achievement of considerable significance.

GUN WIDMARK

NIÁLS SAGA. A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION. BY LARS LÖNNROTH. *University of California Press*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1976. xi+275 pp.

In "Casting the runes", a ghost story by M. R. James, one of the characters says of a book written by another: "It was written in no style at all — split infinitives, and every sort of thing that makes an Oxford gorge rise". There is so much that is likely to provoke this kind of reaction in the book now under review that it is surprising that the author, who is, after all, a Swede, has chosen to write in English at all. Split infinitives are there in plenty: "to publicly proclaim" (p. 3), "to simply ignore" (p. 21), "to stoically (*sic*) prepare" (p. 60), "to silently accept" (p. 155), and "to both court the low-born farmer and stress his duties . . ." (p. 195). The English language is frequently used incorrectly, particularly where singulars and plurals are concerned, in such expressions as "various other material" (p. 11), "to break new grounds" (p. 13), "Heusler laid the grounds for a more precise analysis" (p. 14), "The major protagonists in this episode" (p. 30), "people visiting Things booths" (p. 59), "work against the interest of the Hero" (p. 62), "This first punitive act consist of a lawsuit" (p. 69), "operated by this fetches" (p. 128), and, last but not least, "a pack of wolfs" (p. 129). The language is used incorrectly in other respects, too, in such cases as "other little bits and ends" (p. 11), "the gift to understand literature" (p. 13), "less immune against such underhanded tactics" (p. 29), "her two earliest husbands" (p. 37), "we may indeed be rather certain" (p. 38), "as a means to obtain good crops" (p. 127), "it was still essential that such royal appointees belong to the old chieftain families" (pp. 180-181), and "Jónsson's somewhat irritated dictum" (p. 247). Colloquialisms and vulgarisms are similarly frequent, for instance "the good old days" (p. 5), "she was reputed to 'wear the pants'" (p. 37), "difficult to get along with" (p. 62; cf. "rather tough to get along with", p. 85), "pictured as a mere roughneck" (p. 64), "hit the nail on the head" (p. 87), "to make . . . the beggar women folksy and lovable" (p. 94), and "In order to figure out . . . that Eyjólfur was indeed a descendent (*sic*) of Ragnarr loðbrók" (p. 239). Sometimes language is used illogically, as in the expression "An argument along these lines" on p. 40; this expression cannot properly be said to have a logical referent, since it is immediately preceded by a paragraph consisting of three questions, the first of which is asked directly, and the other two indirectly. They cannot be said to constitute an argument, either collectively or in part. Sometimes language is used correctly from the point of view of grammar and syntax, but with almost incredible clumsiness from the point of view of style, as in the following sentence: "... some beggar women . . .

arrived at Gunnarr's home after having previously been at Njáll's" (p. 93). Sometimes, for no obvious reason, the elliptical style characteristic of entries in motif-indexes is used, as in "a monument which Alexander orders made to honor one of his dead enemies" (p. 140). It would be unfair to the printers of the *Saga-Book* to give examples of the misprints which are liberally distributed throughout Lönnroth's book; the interested reader will find a particularly rich and amusing cluster of them near the top of p. 150.

The author's careless use of language often results in vagueness and ambiguity. On p. 5, for instance, he seems to be using the word "pathetic" in some such sense as "passionate" — a meaning which the word *patetisk* frequently has in Swedish, but which is, of course, far from being the usual meaning of the English word. His use of the English word here will be either incomprehensible or misleading to readers who are unaware of the various meanings of the Swedish word. On p. 84, discussing the use of alliteration and assonance by the author of *Njáls saga* in certain descriptions of characters, Lönnroth says that the description of Skarpheðinn in chapter 25 of the saga (though he does not give this reference) "may be presented as poetry or prose"; he then proceeds to quote the passage in a series of what are mostly two-stress phrases arranged in a column in their prose word-order, with their alliterating and rhyming elements italicized. In using the word "poetry" he is wrongly giving the impression that the passage follows the rules of Old Icelandic poetry with regard to metre and alliteration; what he means is that the passage may be presented as rhythmical prose. It is true that "the advanced student of Old Norse" for whom this book, astonishingly, is mainly intended (see p. ix), will recognize at once from the quotation that the passage is not an example of Old Icelandic poetry, but if the book is really meant for such a student, why not write it in Swedish? The way Lönnroth explains his use of the term "narrator" earlier on the same page (84) is also awkward and unsatisfactory. "Narrator", he says, "refers not to an historical person (like the author of *Njála*) but to a fictitious 'will behind the stage'". The word "will" and the expression "behind the stage" occur again a few pages later, on p. 91, where the author speaks of "a superhuman will (not just an impersonal Fate) steering the course of events" in *Njáls saga*. "For example", he says, "when Skarpheðinn and Hǫgni go to take revenge on the slayers of Gunnarr (chapter 79), the narrator points out that two ravens followed them . . .". This, he claims, stresses the righteousness of the revenge, since ravens, the birds sacred to Óðinn, were a good omen in pagan times. "But", he goes on, "it is not always necessary to use miracles to suggest that some great power is working behind the stage, helping good people against bad people". Here the "superhuman will" seems to be the same thing as the "power behind the stage", but not quite the same thing as "the narrator", even though the words "will" and "behind the stage" had been used to define the term "narrator" a few pages earlier. The distinction Lönnroth ought to be making, and is perhaps implying, here is blurred by his use of the same wording in both cases.

Lönnroth's quotations from *Njáls saga* are mostly in English, and taken from Hermann Pálsson's and Magnus Magnusson's translation of the saga for Penguin Classics; occasionally, according to his Preface (p. xi), he has "departed from their translation in order to bring out some particular feature of the Icelandic text", and he claims "sole responsibility for any errors or awkward phrases" which may have resulted from this policy. His departures

from the translation have indeed involved him in a number of errors, and he also shows a poor grasp of Icelandic in his handling of proper names, as well as in translating passages from works other than *Njáls saga*. To be fair to him, it is not always clear whether it is his poor command of written English or his ignorance of Icelandic which is the cause of the trouble. *Landnámabók* is translated "Book of Settlement" on p. 33; here it is not certain whether it is the English or the Icelandic singular-plural distinction which is confusing him. On p. 79, the river name *Markarfljóti*, a neuter noun, is given a terminal *-r* which makes it look like a masculine noun; and on the same page the river name *Rangá*, a feminine noun, is also given a terminal *-r* which makes it look as though it is being used — inexplicably — in the nominative or accusative plural, or in the genitive singular. On p. 98, the phrase *mun hans vörn uppi* receives the surprising translation "his memory will last", whereas Magnusson and Pálsson, whose help Lönnroth has here rejected, get it basically right, though they embellish a little: "His last defence will be remembered". On p. 109, in translating a passage from *Alexanders saga*, Lönnroth renders the phrase *blóði hjartarins*, meaning "the blood of the hart, or stag" as "the blood from the heart of the prey". On p. 144, Lönnroth translates Njáll's famous statement in chapter 70 of *Njáls saga*, *með lögum skal land vårt byggja, en með ólögum eyða*, as "our land shall be built with law and not laid waste with lawlessness", whereas on p. 194 he translates the same statement as "our land must be built with law or laid waste with lawlessness", and, although this second version is an improvement, neither version is strictly correct. Magnusson and Pálsson are again right here: "With laws shall our land be built up but with lawlessness laid waste". In neither case does Lönnroth give a reference to the chapter in which the statement appears; it is as if he is trying to prevent the reader from checking up on his inconsistency and inaccuracy. On p. 158 he shows, in his translation of the sentence *Eigi mun oss enn duga kyrru fyrir at halda*, from chapter 149 of the saga, that he is reading too much into the Icelandic. The sentence means, "We can no longer afford to remain inactive", as Magnusson and Pálsson translate it, not "It is not yet proper for us to live in peace", as Lönnroth has it. On p. 192, and again on p. 193, he mistranslates the following sentence from chapter 97 of the saga: . . . *kemr þat til vár, er kunnum lögín ok þeim skulum stjórna* — "your problems should be solved by us who know the law and are set to govern". It is true that the verb *stjórna* means "to govern", but it does not have that meaning here in the absolute, intransitive sense which Lönnroth gives it; it means "to be in charge of the laws", as is shown by its object, the demonstrative pronoun *þeim*, which refers back to the noun *lögín*. Once again Magnusson and Pálsson get it right: "it imposes a responsibility on those of us who know the law and are the lawmakers". Finally, I am not convinced that Lönnroth's translation, on p. 222, of the phrase *er Kári vegr í Bretlandi* (from chapter 96 of the saga) as "whom Kári will kill in Wales" is correct. It is true that this phrase refers to an event which takes place later in the saga (in chapter 158) and that Magnusson and Pálsson translate it as "whom Kári was later to kill in Wales", but their translation, I would guess, is motivated by a wish to give the English-speaking reader as unified a picture as possible of the events and characters of the saga; I suspect they would agree that this phrase may also be taken as an example of the use of the present tense in Icelandic to refer to a more or less well-known past event.

Many of the references in the book are inaccurate: chapter 141 of *Njáls saga*, referred to on p. 113, should be chapter 142; the reference "(cf. p. 166)", following Lönnroth's mention of the Clontarf episode in *Njáls saga* on p. 134, is apparently meaningless, and so is the figure 251, immediately following the phrase *er Kári vegr í Bretlandi*, quoted on p. 222. The reference "(above, p. 000)" (*sic*) which appears at the top of p. 238, near the end of the book, of course gives a ludicrous impression.

The main purpose of the book, according to its Preface, is "to provide the advanced student of Old Norse with some general guidelines which may enable him to cope with classical saga texts as a critic and literary historian without getting bogged down in too much philological detail" (ix-x). "For this reason", says the author, "I have emphasized general principles of saga tradition and saga art rather than the particular *Njála* problems . . ." (p. x). It will be discouraging for a conscientious reader who may hope to acquire "some general guidelines" of the kind mentioned here to find that, by p. 65, the author appears to have abandoned the approach announced in the Preface; on that page he writes: "Our model for analyzing roles and stock characters is naturally very schematic and it may not be suitable for *all* family *siðas*. Our main points, however, are that it should be suitable for analyzing *Njála* and that it can be derived from various earlier sagas as part of a traditional heritage". By using the words "can be" here Lönnroth skilfully avoids the task of giving copious and detailed references to other sagas which might help to provide the general guidelines he has promised earlier. This later passage appears in chapter III, "The language of tradition", where Lönnroth refers to sagas other than *Njáls saga* far less often than he should if he really wishes to fulfil the purpose stated in the Preface, and in the chapter's Introduction, p. 42, where he writes "In this chapter we shall primarily consider ingredients taken over from native sagas". Many of his statements in this chapter require modification in the light of Icelandic sagas and other works of Germanic literature which he does not mention; and many of his general statements about the "native" literary background to *Njáls saga* require the support of specific references to texts. Recollection of the Glámr episode in *Grettis saga*, for example, might cause him to modify his statement, on p. 58, that "supernatural and demonic forces . . . are conveyed as if perceived from a distance". On p. 61 he writes of saga characters being characterized as "wise", "lucky", "honorable", "impetuous", "proud", etc., without giving the Icelandic equivalents of these words, and with only the sketchiest indication, given a few pages earlier in a footnote (on p. 57), as to how or where the occurrences of these concepts in the sagas may be investigated systematically. On p. 63 he says of women of the type of Brynhildr in *Völsunga saga* and Guðrún in *Laxdæla saga*: "Their literary history may be traced back to the earliest Germanic poems and legends", but he gives no specific references to either primary or secondary sources in support of this statement. On p. 84, in his discussion of the use of alliteration and assonance in character-portrayal, referred to above, he says that "This method of eulogizing characters . . . is used more often and with greater elaboration in *Njála* than in most other sagas", but he does not tell us how he knows that this is so. On p. 97, where he quotes in English from two sagas other than *Njáls saga*, namely *Reykðæla saga* and *Víga-Glúms saga*, he mentions neither of these sagas by name, and refers in a footnote not to the sagas themselves, but to Theodore M.

Andersson's book *The Icelandic Family saga* (1967) which, on the pages referred to by Lönnroth, does not make it immediately clear that *Víga-Glúms saga*, as well as *Reykðæla saga*, is here in question. Lönnroth's reader initially has the impression at this point that the quotations are from *Njáls saga* itself, and the reference he gives does little to clarify matters.

Since Lönnroth treats his primary sources so cavalierly and appears to have understood them so imperfectly, there is little point in examining in detail the speculations he has attempted to base on them. His first chapter, "*Njála* and its critics", is a *Forschungsbericht*; the second chapter, "The plot and its sources" outlines and divides into episodes the plot of *Njáls saga*, and suggests that the structural division of the saga into two main parts, which so many of its students have found useful, should be made at the beginning of the account of the Conversion of Iceland in chapter 100, rather than at the end of chapter 81, shortly after the death of Gunnarr. He relegates to the Appendix discussion of whether those parts of the saga which have been regarded as based on written sources now lost — such as the accounts of the Conversion of Iceland and the Battle of Clontarf — in fact need to be so regarded, and concludes there that they do not. In chapter III, "The language of tradition", he studies those elements of *Njáls saga* which he regards as having developed for the most part in Iceland "or at any rate within the North Germanic language area"; by these he means "the saga world, the action patterns, the basic building blocks of composition, and most of the rhetorical devices" (p. 101). Summing up chapter IV, "The clerical mind", he couples *Njáls saga* with *Laxdæla saga* to illustrate the view that "the best structured among the longer sagas are those which are dominated by the idea of Divine Providence but which use the native saga techniques and native metaphysical concepts such as *auðna*, Fate, and *gæfa*, Fortune, to convey their message" (p. 163). In the fifth and final chapter, "The social context", he presents a considerably modified version of Barði Guðmundsson's theory that *Njáls saga* was written by Þorvarðr Þórarinnsson.

This is a thoroughly sloppy and pretentious piece of work. Its sloppiness has already been adequately illustrated, and its pretentiousness has been more than hinted at in the way it has been shown above how the author frequently departs in his own translations from the English translation of *Njáls saga* he has chosen to follow, evidently thinking he knows better than the two native Icelanders who made that translation. Two further examples of the book's pretentiousness may finally be given. One occurs in the opening paragraph of the Preface, where the author describes changes of his own mind as a "Hegelian dialectical process" (p. ix), thus trying to ward off criticism by invoking Hegel's theories about the nature of human thinking as an excuse for his own muddle-headedness; and the other will be found in the first chapter, where the word "brilliant" is used on p. 13 in connection with Andreas Heusler, whom Lönnroth describes there as "a brilliant stylist". At first the reader has the impression that Lönnroth is going to use this provocative word without saying what he means by it, which is how he uses the equally provocative word "excellent" on p. 2 (in connection with Jón Johnsonius's Latin translation of *Njáls saga*). But no, the sense in which he means to use the word is made clear enough on p. 20, where, after venturing to criticize Richard F. Allen's book on *Njáls saga*, he writes: "Such criticism, however, should not prevent us from appreciating his many brilliant suggestions or

the theoretical models for structural analysis he has introduced in the discussion. On several points he has anticipated my own conclusions concerning the literary art of *Njála*".

I owe a special debt of gratitude to Christine Fell, who kindly allowed me to see a copy of her review of this book for *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 10 (1977) before it appeared in print; her views on it differ greatly from mine. At the time of completing this review (February, 1978) I have not seen Professor P. G. Foote's review of it, forthcoming in *Scandinavica*, though I was present at the discussion of it led by him at the Colloquy for Teachers of Old Icelandic on April 22 (1977) at University College, London. The only other review of it that I have seen at the time of writing is that of Edward R. Haymes in *Scandinavian studies* 49 (1977), 108-9.

R. W. McTurk

UPPRUNI OG ðEMA HRAFNKELS SÖGU. By ÓSKAR HALLDÓRSSON. *Rannsóknastofnun í Bókmenntafræði við Háskóla Íslands. Fræðirit 3. Hið Íslenska Bókmenntafélag*. Reykjavík, 1976. 84 pp.

The Institute of Literary Research of the University of Iceland publishes two series. The first contains works of literary research and criticism, the other selections of poems and prose by modern Icelandic authors. Two contributions to the first series have been published so far: Óskar Halldórsson, *Bragur og ljóðstill* (1972) and Njörður P. Njarðvík, *Eðlisþættir skáldsögunnar* (1975). These works are mainly intended as handbooks for Icelandic university students, although foreign scholars will also find them useful, not least because they contain a good deal of current Icelandic literary terminology, some of which is not found in modern Icelandic dictionaries. The book under review by Óskar Halldórsson is the third in the critical series and the first to contain the results of independent research.

In his first chapter, Óskar Halldórsson reviews previous scholarship on *Hrafnkels saga*. He mentions the work of Otto Opet, the first scholar to cast doubt on the historicity of the saga (particularly its legal aspects) and gives an account of the views of Björn M. Ólsen as put forward in a series of lectures given at the University of Iceland in the second decade of this century. Strangely enough Björn's work on *Hrafnkels saga* is not found in the collection of his essays published posthumously in 1937-9 (*Safn til sögu Íslands*, VI: 3). But the conclusions of Björn M. Ólsen and E. V. Gordon ('On Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða' in *Medium ævum*, 1939) on the origin of the saga were in many ways similar; both had reservations about the historical validity of the saga. Sigurður Nordal bases his arguments on the same findings as Gordon and Björn M. Ólsen, but his conclusions were much bolder. In chapters 2-7, Óskar Halldórsson deals with both the saga's setting and its topography and describes modern, mainly Norwegian, methods of research into oral tradition. These methods he applies to *Hrafnkels saga*. In chapters 8-10, he refers to and criticises the opinions of other scholars on the matter of the saga author's ethics and 'world vision'. At the end, we find an English abstract, notes and an index.

In his preface, Óskar Halldórsson sets out the aim of his book. He says that his intention is to introduce a new approach into research into *Hrafnkels saga*, mainly by showing that many of Sigurður Nordal's arguments (as expressed in *Hrafnkatla*, 1940) are not valid. The kernel of the story, Óskar argues, Hrafnkell's settlement of Hrafnkeisdalur, his fall and regained power, must have existed in some oral form. Both the story of Hrafnkell Hrafnsson in *Landnámabók* and Hrafnkell Hallfreðarson in *Hrafnkels saga* come from independent oral traditions and the Saga of Hrafnkell Freysgoði cannot thus be largely fiction as Sigurður Nordal argues. Óskar mentions in his preface that Dietrich Hofmann came to a very similar conclusion in an article in *Skandinavistik* (Vol. 6:1. 1976, pp. 19-36: 'Hrafnkels und Hallfreðs Traum: Zur Verwendung mündlicher Tradition in der Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða') without knowledge of his own work. Óskar Halldórsson also points out that Sigurður Nordal's arguments about the settlement and topography of Hrafnkeisdalur should be taken with a pinch of salt. Sigurður never visited the valley and had to base his arguments on information supplied by others. Óskar is himself an Austfirðingur and knows the area relatively well. And he stresses how sceptical certain other critics from Austurland were about Sigurður's ideas on the topography and settlement of Hrafnkeisdalur. In this connection, Óskar refers to O. D. Macrae-Gibson's article published in the last number of the *Saga-Book* which also tends to bear out his arguments on this point.

Óskar's approach is aimed at showing how realistic a setting the saga-author wished to provide for his saga. This view is further supported by his understanding of the saga's moral and social outlook: 'Thus', he writes, 'the author's view of life appears to be based, not on the ancient heathen belief in fates or on hero-worship, but on the experience which contemporary events have brought him. By his treatment the ancient Frey-worshipper is transformed into a thirteenth-century chieftain who realises that what really matters in the last resort is the aid of other men' (p. 74).

One could criticise Óskar Halldórsson for his over-trusting belief in some of the results of comparative folklore methodology, although it must be admitted that he handles this subject very carefully. On the other hand, I should like to have seen a treatment of the medieval concept of history in the discussion of the saga's historicity. On the whole, Óskar's book gives a good summary of recent criticism of *Hrafnkels saga*. We may not be able to accept all his conclusions on the origin of the saga, but his exposition is clear, he treats the subject-matter skilfully and makes sensible use of modern techniques of literary criticism (a merit too rare in works about medieval Icelandic literature). The book is well produced. I could detect only one printing error and this was in the English 'Abstract'. It is, however, strange to see an Icelandic author calling the medieval scholar Hugh of Saint Victor, 'Hugo av Saint Victor' (pp. 46, 48, 83): one would expect the prepositions *úr* or *frá*. The references to recent work by Norwegian folklorists do not mention an important thesis by Bjarne Hodne, *Personalhistoriske sagn* (Oslo, 1973), which Óskar Halldórsson should have known.

LES VIKINGS ET LEUR CIVILISATION. PROBLÈMES ACTUELS. Rapports scientifiques publiés sous la direction de RÉGIS BOYER. *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales. Bibliothèque arctique et antarctique*, 5. Mouton. Paris and La Haye, 1976. 242 pp.

Professor Boyer's book, like the duckbilled platypus, is an incongruous object. No doubt Professor Boyer, like the designer of the duckbilled platypus, knew what he was up to, but the rest of us must remain in some doubt. What audience, I wonder, was this book intended for? Boyer's introduction has its own curiosities. He tells us that the book presents the researches of a dozen experts in different fields, dealing with *des points particulièrement délicats ou obscurs*, the intent being to *éclairer... certains "points chauds" de la controverse actuelle*. How far this promise is fulfilled I discuss below. Boyer's own views are certainly idiosyncratic. For example, he believes that we owe to archaeology and related disciplines everything *de neuf et de décisif* that Viking studies have achieved in the last fifty years. Place- and personal-name scholars, if nobody else, will take issue with him. Again, he speaks of the richness of Viking civilisation *jugée à ses produits abstraits*, first among which he puts literature. How much literature, I wonder, does he ascribe to Viking Age Scandinavia? And how does he compare it with, for instance, the wealth and variety of Old English? Summing up the Viking can he really think him *peut-être un peu en avance sur son temps*? Consider how, during the Viking Age, the Scandinavian peoples were desperately trying to catch up with the rest of Europe in so many ways. How long did it take their kings to achieve the administrative control that West European royalty asserted? How long to issue coinage? How long was it before Scandinavians learned to read and write, or to make the contact (which was to create the later Middle Ages) with the civilisations and religion of the Romance countries? Sir Frank Stenton once described Cnut the Great as 'the first viking leader to be admitted into the civilized fraternity of Christian kings', which hardly puts the Vikings in the forefront of progress.

Turning to his contributors we find other disappointments. Many of these essays are works not of research but of explication, putting forward material that is well-known or commonly accepted. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson's contribution, a translation of his opening chapter in *Íslenzkar bókmenntir í fornöld* (1962), is a competent general introduction to *L'Age Viking*, but it hardly clarifies any hot-spots. P. Renauld-Krantz presents a summary of general opinion on Odin. It is a quite adequate one, though for my taste it relies too much on second-hand shamans and too little on *Quellenkritik*. But again it is synthesis not research. Peter Foote's article on skaldic poetry will certainly do no harm to the student who has not yet got beyond his first couple of lectures on the skalds, but it will not do much good to anyone else. Nor is there anything novel in Thorkild Ramskou's short note on the primitive navigation of the Vikings, which tells of the general use of astro-navigation, of instruments like the Canterbury sundial (the account here gives us little faith in Ramskou's command of the Latin tongue), and devices for telling the position of the sun when it was obscured by clouds. We seem to have heard most of this before. Boyer's own 'balance-sheet' at the end of the book discusses once more whether the Vikings were primarily raiders or traders. He concludes by stressing their commerce. We are not very surprised; though perhaps we should be surprised that he bothers to raise this ancient subject

again, and that he ignores almost completely the third aspect of Viking activity, as farmers and colonisers.

The balance of the volume is odd too. Historical investigation (from a country that has in Lucien Musset the most distinguished Viking historian of our day) is represented only by a short article by Peter Sawyer, wherein he argues that Harald Fairhair probably never visited Britain. It might have been more cogent, given his subject, to show what Harald probably did do about Britain. For he seems to have established diplomatic contacts with the court of Athelstan, and this has important implications for English attitudes to the Vikings and for the conflict between Vikings in the West and the rulers of Norway. Again, one wonders why Hermann Pálsson's article, 'Form and meaning in early Icelandic fiction', is included. It deals largely with *Gunnlaugs saga*, *Gísla saga* and *Þorsteins þátr stangarhöggs* which even Boyer admits to be *textes des XIII^e et XIV^e siècles*. Boyer regards this article as revolutionary because it applies to these texts *des techniques d'approche qui datent d'hier à peine*, apparently in the belief that if you express a series of platitudes in tabular form, they cease to be platitudes.

Luckily the book is not all as inadequate as this. Some contributions are important. Alan Small expounds the distribution of cultivatable land, of brochs and duns, and of Old Norse place-names on the Isle of Skye, and considers what this tells of the order and extent of Norse settlement there. He concludes that there was a limited area of settlement, in the north and west, and that the rest of the island continued in native occupation, perhaps under general Scandinavian political control. This is an elegant demonstration of method, the deductions confined by the evidence cited, and the conclusions linked to the broader question of Norse settlement in Western Scotland. Paul Adam writes a witty and cogent article on problems of navigation, stressing how hard it is to establish realistic speeds for Viking ships over long distances, and so to estimate return times for voyages to Vinland. He shows some of the problems the navigator faced in travelling via Greenland to North America, and points out that it would take some time for practical lore about the Western Atlantic to develop and to pass from one skipper to another. He doubts if the Viking Age had that amount of time, and so suggests that the Vinland explorations were inefficient. Patrick Plumet writes on the Vikings in America. Though he is fighting a battle for the most part won already, his examination of the Helge Ingstad and Thomas Lee excavations brings into the open some of the hesitations many of us feel about this evidence and the way it was brought to light.

Briefly, this book looks a mixmax, its contents dictated not by what the editor wanted but by what his contributors offered. Perhaps it is intended for the typical French audience Professor Boyer describes, those who think of the Vikings as men in horned helmets drinking blood from the skulls of their enemies. But what would such readers want with Jean Malaurie's article on climatic changes in North-west Greenland, or with the extensive bibliography attached to Peter Buchholz's article on the *foraldarsaga* and oral tradition? Yet a much more scholarly audience will find little new in many articles in this book to justify Professor Boyer's enthusiastic commendations.

The slovenly appearance of the volume reflects little credit on the French printing industry. Its type and layout are poor. The typographer had no access to Old Norse founts and had to do the best he could, so we find such bizarre

forms as *Kaenugardhr* and *vidhfadhmi*. A pity too that he did not know more of the German language. On the other hand there can be few Old Norse scholars who will not welcome the chance of an acquaintance with such heroes as Haraldr à la belle chevelure, Geirmundr Peau-d'Enfer and Jórunn verge au bouclier.

R. I. PAGE

SAGA OG SAMFUND. EN INDFØRING I OLDISLANDSK LITTERATUR. By PREBEN MEULENGRACHT SØRENSEN. *Berlingsk Forlag*. København, 1977. 191 pp.

This book will be welcome to students of Old Icelandic culture faced with the problem of orientation in the field without falling under the persuasion of the partisan or the simplifications of the dilettante. The title is slightly misleading, perhaps, since the saga is not singled out for consideration as a genre. Nor is this an introduction in the conventional sense. The author feels that in the present state of research too much is known to endorse previous literary histories, while too little is known to replace them satisfactorily yet. What he offers, then, is an *arbejdsbog* as a contribution to the discussion, and not a definitive text-book. The author's approach is twofold. Faced on the one hand with the literature and on the other with the social conditions in which it was produced, and about which it is our only source, he is aware of the dangers of an uncritical acceptance of the texts, and takes care not to lay more interpretation on them than rigorous criteria will permit. *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók*, no less than the sagas themselves, are accordingly examined with an eye to their ideological tendencies, and the reader is made aware of the diversity of available theories on many disputed matters (the conversion; the freeprose/bookprose controversy; criteria for textual dating) without being obliged to accept them as part of a design. The first half of the book deals with Old Icelandic society. Using literary evidence only after scrupulous evaluation, the author constructs and analyses a picture of Iceland from the settlement to the end of the republic, examining class- and family-structures and the growth and development of the state in the light of the changing social order. The author treats literature as a social phenomenon, devoting the fourth chapter to oral tradition as the vehicle of law, genealogies, poetry and narrative, and eschewing separate generic categorisation. Another chapter gives an account of mediaeval authorship and literary transmission, describing the principal manuscripts and some of their interrelationships. The closing chapter consists of sample analyses of two passages, from *Ynglinga saga* and *Sturlunga saga*, in which the author puts into practice some of the methods proposed in the course of the book. Finally, there is a glossary of about a score of literary terms, and a concise bibliography and index. This is a well-researched and coherent book, written with enthusiasm and clear-sightedness. The only error I noticed was "Frank's Casket" (sic) which appears in both text and index.

JEFFREY COSSER

GRÖNLANDS HISTORISKE MINDESMÆRKER. *Rosenkilde og Bagger*. København, 1976. Vol. I xvi+797 pp.; vol. II [8]+791 pp.; vol. III [12]+950 pp. [Reprint of ed. published by *Det Kongelige Nordiske Oldskrift-Selskab*, Kjøbenhavn, 1838-45.]

The medieval colonies in Greenland and the Norse discovery of America continue to provide a source of interest to students of the Scandinavian Middle Ages. The daring voyages which led to Norse landings in America and the eerie problem of the extinction of the Greenland colonies are fascinating topics. The Ingstads' finds in Newfoundland and continuing work in Greenland have given exciting results on the archaeological side. And within the philological sphere, there is clearly still work to be done. Because, then, of the general interest in these topics, it is a pleasure to find various nineteenth century corpora of relevant sources reappearing. Reeves's *The finding of Wineland the Good* (1895) and *Antiquitates Americanæ* (1837) have both been reprinted fairly recently (1965 and 1968 respectively). Now Rosenkilde and Bagger have published a re-issue of the three tome *Grønlands historiske Mindesmærker* (1838-45). This voluminous work (of more than 2,500 pages), mainly from the pens of Finnur Magnússon and C. C. Rafn, must contain practically all the written sources relating to medieval Greenland. The first two volumes have such items as complete texts of *Grœnlendinga saga*, *Grœnlendinga þáttur* and *Eiríks saga rauða*, and also, for instance, relevant excerpts from *Eyrbyggja saga* (I, 494-786), *Flóamanna saga* (II, 1-221) and *Fóstbraeðra saga* (II, 250-419). There is an edition of *Skáld-Helga rímur*. The Icelandic sources are accompanied by parallel Danish translations. The texts in these volumes have, of course, been replaced by superior editions. On the other hand, the introductions and more particularly the detailed commentaries which accompany them often contain much that is of interest and value. For example, one may profit considerably from the apparatus to *Flóamanna saga* in vol. II; the edition there of the larger part of the saga draws on a greater selection than any subsequent one and later editors would have done well to pay more attention to a number of points made in the introduction and notes. Probably the most useful volume is III. Here, for example, are conveniently collected the references to Greenland in the Annals (1-65), in *Konungsráttur* (264-392) and in *Grágás* (429-35). There is a text of Ívar Bárðarson's description of Greenland (superseded, it is true, by Finnur Jónsson's edition of 1930, although this latter is difficult to come by). We also find the sections of Adam of Bremen's *Gesta* concerning Greenland (394-425) and a number of documents of relevance to Greenland (66-208). And of particular interest are various 'geographiske Optegnelser om Grønland og dets Omgivelser': the surviving parts of the geographical treatise *Gripla* (222-6); the interesting account of fishing and hunting up in the wastes of Norðrseta (238 ff.); the story of Björn Einarsson's sojourn in Greenland (how he rescues two Eskimo sibs from drowning; how they become his loyal servants; how the girl, 'skessan', in imitation of her mistress, makes herself a *faldr*, but out of whales' guts; and how they kill themselves when Björn leaves for Iceland). Much (but not all) of this material will be included in a new edition of texts concerning Greenland soon to be published by Ólafur Halldórsson. Ólafur's collection will contain, for example, a complete edition of Björn á Skarðsá's *Grœnlands annáll* (with the last three of the items mentioned above). It will be extremely welcome when it appears. But it will not

entirely replace *Grønlands historiske Mindesmærker* which will continue to be of value as a source-book. As one can imagine, the price of this reprint is not low — 975 Danish kroner (although this includes some Danish sales tax). But its appearance means that any university or like institution in the Anglo-Saxon world with Norse interests will now be able to have this important corpus of texts on the shelves of its library.

RICHARD PERKINS

MIDALDARÆVINTÝRI ÞÝDD ÚR ENSKU. Edited by EINAR G. PÉTURSSON. *Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, rit 11. Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi. Reykjavík, 1976. cxx+110 pp.*

Einar G. Pétursson adduces evidence to show that there existed through the late Middle Ages a relationship between England and Iceland, a deeper study of which would, he believes, add significant details to our picture of Icelandic literary and cultural history. In the lengthy introduction to his edition of thirty-four moral tales translated, he suggests, in the second half of the fifteenth century from Middle English into Icelandic, he discusses the opinions of scholars hitherto as to the literary links between the two cultures, and proceeds to examine them more closely in the light of his text, which represents an indubitable point of contact, and would make a strong basis for the assessment, for example, of the competence of the translator(s) in Middle English. As he points out, Peter A. Jorgensen (who is responsible for the translation of the five-page summary of Einar's introduction into English), in a Harvard doctoral thesis presented in 1971, *The extant Icelandic translations from Middle English*, had independently arrived at some of the conclusions respecting the English origin of some late medieval moral tales which he himself presents in his book; Einar, however, does not give the same weight as Jorgensen to certain evidence as to the date and authorship of the translations themselves. Jorgensen's attribution of the translations, on the basis of a suggestion by Björn Þorsteinsson, to Jón Egilsson — secretary from 1429-34 to Bishop Jón Vilhjálmsson Craxton, who may have been of Norwegian extraction, but who came from England to Iceland where he remained from 1426-37 — rests upon peculiarities of language, largely of diplomatic style, and the use of two particular words, *blífa* and *mattæ*, which are so far attested in the fifteenth century first in documents written by Jón Egilsson and in the moral tales. Whilst admitting the singularity of these two words, Einar points out that the other linguistic examples at the basis of Jorgensen's argument all occur in diplomatic writings of earlier and later date than Jón Egilsson's, or that they represent simple adjustments of sense rather than idiosyncratic usage (*þar til for til þess að*, when *til þess að* would have a clearly temporal meaning); he adds that the word *selskapur*, occurring in the translation, is not elsewhere earlier attested in Icelandic than 1467, although it occurs in Norwegian before that date. Einar also indicates that of the two major Middle English works upon which the Icelandic tales depend, one was unlikely to have been available before 1430-40: namely the *Gesta Romanorum*, composed in Latin in about 1300 and widely popular in Europe where tales from it appear in various versions and in various vernaculars; Middle English

translations, of which the oldest manuscript is from 1440, appeared during the reign of Henry VI (1422-61). The other main source-work is *Handlyng synne*, a free translation into Middle English verse made in 1303 by Robert Mannyng from the French verse *Manuel des péchés*. There exists an independent Middle English prose version of the *Manuel* entitled *Of shrifte and penance*, but Einar considers the Icelandic to be farther from this prose than Mannyng's verse translation. The relationships between the Middle English version of *Gesta Romanorum*, *Handlyng synne*, the Icelandic translations, and the French and Latin originals are discussed by Einar; other sources and analogues are also treated. Five of the Icelandic tales (nos. 9, 22, 23, 26, 31) have no known Middle English sources; all the others are printed with their original beneath them on divided pages, the Middle English versions reproducing carefully chosen and designated printed editions. Comparison of the texts is thus made physically very easy, and does indeed reveal a close correspondence between the Icelandic and Middle English. Einar's claim that the area of overlap between English and Icelandic culture in the Middle Ages would repay closer study is substantiated by the references in Chapter III of his introduction to the evidence of intercourse between the two nations from the eleventh century onwards, ranging from the presence of English missionary-bishops in Iceland, through the use of the English name *þorn* for the written runic letter *þurs*; the English-derived term *stafróf*; the education of at least two Icelandic bishops, Þorlákr Þórhallsson and Páll Jónsson, in England; the existence of vellum fragments of English psalters in Iceland and references to English books in fourteenth-century Icelandic inventories, to the known twelfth- and thirteenth-century trade connections between the two countries; the export of Icelandic falcons to England; mention of voyages made thither by Icelanders in the Sagas of Icelanders; the use of English dates and dating-systems in early Icelandic historical works; the reverence of Icelanders for Sts Thomas Becket, Edward, King and Martyr, and Dunstan; the existence of *Ólafs þáttur ok Landres*, which appears to preserve a version of a lost Middle English text, and two translations of English versions of homilies by Ælfric in the *Heimslýsing og helgifræði* section of *Hauksbók*; and resting finally at the known presence of some fifty Icelanders in fifteenth-century Bristol and records of family ties in the merchant classes between the two nations in the sixteenth century. (I am not sure that the English summary does full justice to the subject when it has (pp. cvii-cviii): 'In this period [i.e. 15th century] people were sold in slavery to England and at the beginning of the sixteenth century Martin Einarsson, who later became a bishop, studied there. Naturally, the people returning from England later brought cultural influences with them.')

Einar's arguments for further investigation of this area of cultural interchange are cogent, and well supported by his scholarly and elegant edition of the tales. These he calls *ævintýri* according to the usage of their translator(s). Indeed, it would be interesting to examine the very development and usage of this title, presumably derived, through Middle English, from Old French *aventure*, closely related to English *hap*; only one of the tales translated here (no. 27) actually refers to itself in Middle English as an *aventure* (p. 61) and it is not translated from either of the main sources, but from an independent poem; the others are generally designated by the word *tales* in Middle English, though that term is translated by *ævintýr* in, for example, no. 18 (p. 29), where the word seems to mean a 'happening', rather

than a 'telling', like *aventure* in Old French and Middle English; and also in no. 20 (p. 42), where the word clearly means '*exemplum*': the history of this apparently well-established medieval Icelandic generic term might help illuminate the history of other Icelandic-English cultural developments. In short, Einar's edition, with its detailed and orderly examination and description of manuscripts, its clearly set out variant readings, its wide bibliography, its proper-name index for both Icelandic and Middle English, its full introduction to the subject and its convenient presentation of the texts, in addition to making readily available the Icelandic tales together with their sources, must fulfil the editor's avowed purpose of promoting fruitful detailed comparison of the two cultures and further research into their interrelationship.

MAUREEN THOMAS

ORAL TRADITION LITERARY TRADITION. A SYMPOSIUM. Edited by HANS BEKKER-NIELSEN, PETER FOOTE, ANDREAS HAARDER, HANS FREDERIK NIELSEN. *Odense University Press*. Odense, 1977. 121 pp.

This volume contains the 'Proceedings of the First International Symposium organised by the Centre for the Study of Vernacular Literature in the Middle Ages. Held at Odense University on 22-23 November, 1976'. There are eight contributions (of which at least one was revised before publication), which are by Dietrich Hofmann, T. A. Shippey, Peter Foote, David Buchan, Iørn Piø, Carlo Alberto Mastrelli, Eyvind Fjeld Halvorsen and Kurt Schier. Appended is the briefest of reports of the discussions aroused by two of them (which add very little to what was in the papers themselves), and a note by Bengt Holbek in which he points out with some surprise that a successful literary re-presentation of oral tradition is inclined not to reproduce that tradition accurately. In the papers themselves there is a particular bias towards concentrating on Scandinavian literature, though Mastrelli's contribution, which is highly theoretical and includes many rather strange diagrams representing models of the relationships between various aspects of oral and literary tradition, is concerned with the problem generally throughout both Germanic and Romance Europe; Shippey's is about Old English narrative; Buchan's about Scottish ballads; and Halvorsen's about the *chansons de geste*.

In some ways both the symposium and the published proceedings seem somewhat of an anachronism at the end of the 1970's, even for Scandinavia. In two recent books, admittedly mainly about early English literature, oral tradition has been dismissed rather summarily as a fruitful subject of study for literary historians of the middle ages. Thus N. Blake in *The English language in medieval literature* (1977, p. 12) writes: '... it has been claimed that the particular stylistic traits of medieval literature are the result of the oral background of that literature. However, I will suggest that most of these features can be adequately explained by the linguistic and literary constraints operative at the time without recourse to this assumed oral background... For literary purposes the existence of an earlier oral literature can be ignored as we have no way of knowing what it was like. There is no evidence to prove

that the characteristics of oral literature today would also be found in the oral literature of the past when conditions and expectations were so different.' This book may perhaps correctly be dismissed as an insensitive and indeed muddled account of medieval literature; while over-sensitiveness and possibly selective blindness may be the faults of D. Pearsall in *Old English and Middle English poetry* (1977), who, while discussing the origin of Middle English alliterative narrative, refers to 'quicksands of oral tradition (the objection to which, it must be understood, is not merely that it declares the subject inaccessible to rational argument but also that it does not fit the facts, for oral tradition in a literate society is inevitably 'low' and inevitably makes wretched what it touches)' (p. 155). In Scandinavian studies the problems of oral tradition have occupied scholars a great deal over the last half-century, to the unfortunate exclusion of some other interesting topics, and the subject seemed to have worn itself out, most scholars, apparently despairing of finding a solution, having turned their minds to other things.

Indeed one of the most persistent themes running through the symposium was the difficulty of studying the oral traditions of past ages, and most of the papers avowedly pose more questions than they attempt to answer, so that after reading the proceedings one might well wonder whether it was really worth while. Buchan's and Mastrelli's papers seem the most optimistic, but only because in the one case the author's attention is confined to a very small area of tradition (Scottish Ballads) and in the other the discussion is so general that it does not approach very close to the actual problems of individual texts. Piø is concerned to emphasize the value of the modern oral traditions that have their roots in the middle ages, thereby perhaps inadvertently appearing to support Blake's attitude to medieval oral tradition. Hofmann, Halvorsen, and Schier really confine themselves to accounts of different approaches and a statement of the problems, and all come up against the insoluble problem of the impossibility of knowing how closely oral tradition is reproduced in the medieval texts that we have.

An escape from this continual hammering on the same locked door seems to have been found by two of the contributors, whose solution is to look closely at some particular aspects of medieval texts, without prejudice as to their oral origin or otherwise, in order to try to understand the nature of the thought in them. Foote's discussion of early law texts, though it does not provide any answers, does at least focus on the linguistic and ideological characteristics which may enable us to distinguish the primitive from the sophisticated. Shippey's discussion of maxims in Old English, which I found the most interesting contribution in the whole book, makes some very useful comments on the nature of oral culture and the relationship between habits of thought in pre-literary times and the narrative that resulted. His approach has the enormous advantage over all attempts to categorize and analyse medieval texts, including the mis-placed ingenuity of the proponents of the oral-formulaic theory, that he attempts (and often, I think, successfully) to understand not only the meaning of medieval texts, but why those who compiled them chose to express themselves in what often seems to us undeniably rather an odd way. This seems to me to be the area of study most likely to throw new light on the study of oral literature in the middle ages, rather than further attempts to define the techniques and conditions of literary production of a period when there are so many unknown factors. It is true that

the first full-scale attempt to examine the particular attitudes and habits of mind of the Icelandic saga-writers (M. I. Steblin-Kamenskij, *The saga mind*, Odense, 1973) has been rather a disaster, mainly because of a too naive approach by the author; but an attempt to understand the differences of attitude between medieval and modern authors is an obvious pre-requisite to the study of any medieval literature, and disappointingly little attention seems to have been paid to this problem by most of the contributors to this book.

ANTHONY FAULKES

UNTERSUCHUNGEN ZUR ZEITGESTALTUNG UND KOMPOSITION DER ÍSLENDINGASÖGUR. ANALYSEN AUSGEWÄHLTER TEXTE. By HARTMUT RÖHN. *Beiträge zur nordischen Philologie*, 5. Herausgegeben von der Schweizerischen Gesellschaft für Skandinavische Studien. Helbing & Lichtenhahn Verlag AG. Basel and Stuttgart, 1976. 160 pp.

This book is based on the idea that statements about time in the sagas should be used as the guide to their structure, and that concentration on particular sections of a time sequence shows what the author regarded as most important in his story. The five sagas analysed, chosen to represent the four major types of family saga as classified by Heusler, are *Hrafnkels saga* as a novella, *Gísla saga* and *Gunnlaugs saga* as personal biographies, *Laxdæla saga* as a family chronicle and *Eyrbyggja saga* as a 'district saga'. They also represent a wide range of relationships between the demands of inherited tradition and original fiction, so the selection is a good one. The term 'Zeitgestaltung' is used for the overall patterning of time in any saga, and stress is laid on the constantly changing relationship between the speed of 'erzählte Zeit', the time covered by the action, and that of 'Erzählzeit', the space devoted to it by the author in his text.

The first chapter surveys earlier views on the origins of sagas, their historicity or otherwise, the confrontation between free prose and book prose theorists, and the question of indebtedness to foreign models for techniques of narrative and characterisation. The views expressed are clear and sensible, but show an occasional tendency to give awkward arguments less space than they deserve, as where doubts about the validity of using *Sturlubók* as a measure of a saga's historical reliability are somewhat uneasily avoided (pp. 20-21), and where the discussion of saga-authors' indebtedness to 12th century history and hagiography makes no mention of Jónas Kristjánsson's re-dating of *Fóstbræðra saga*, which has removed one of the major transitional bricks supporting that connection. More generally, such introductory chapters are prone to generalisations and a sense of *déjà vu*. For students they are admittedly useful, but parts of the rest of this book are ill-suited to that audience, for Röhn makes frequent reference on important topics to works in all the Scandinavian languages except Faroese — and Scandinavians apart, it will be a rare student who is able to follow up most of these references. If the book was intended for scholars, most of this chapter could have been dispensed with, and this sense of wasted space is aggravated by many repetitions throughout the book, and by a tendency to state the obvious, as in the statement that extended sequences of narrative covering a single phase of

Eyrbyggja saga have, among other things, a continuous time sequence (p. 111) — which must be the case, since the boundaries between phases have been defined by breaks in time sequence (p. 42). On p. 133, the characteristic features of introductory sections are said to include frequent introduction of new characters (without which no story could begin!) and little expansion by the use of dialogue or scene development (which, since introductions are generally briefer than what they introduce, is hardly surprising), as well as loose time-structure, which is more interesting — and a similar mixture of obvious and interesting features is repeated in the summary of results on p. 150. These repetitions have led to the exclusion or abbreviation of a number of important topics for lack of space (see e.g. pp. 52, 82-3 and 117).

The second and longest chapter begins with a sensible section on the relationship between saga, in which time flows at a flexible rate, emphasising high points by intensified concentration on them, and chronicle, where time flows more or less evenly with no planned shape. There follows a general investigation of the relationship between 'Erzählzeit' and 'erzählte Zeit' in each of the five sagas to be discussed, which establishes that all of them employ *ordo naturalis* — the narrative of events in order of occurrence — almost exclusively, and include an introduction, usually with a rather vague time scale, a main section where time is more or less accurately defined for each major stage of the action, and a brief concluding section, where time is again often imprecisely stated. These features are seen as typical of the genre. It is then argued that the phases in the structure of a saga can *only* be determined by the statements of time omitted or summarised between them (p. 42) — perhaps rather an overstatement — and there follows a discussion of the structure of each saga, preceded (except for the fictional *Hrafnkels saga*) by a brief estimate of the extent to which the author was constrained by inherited tradition.

The investigation of *Hrafnkels saga* is cogent and interesting, but some of its best points — the demonstration of how phases balance one another, the use of dialogue to foreshadow action and the frequent limitation of direct speech to the socially dominant partner in a conversation — have little to do with time. And the observation that high points in this saga are often narrated comparatively briefly (p. 52) should warn us against taking the argument 'space equals significance' too mechanically.

The discussion of *Gísla saga* is also stimulating, though both here and with *Hrafnkels saga* some mention might have been made of the theory that the sagas may reflect the events of the authors' own times. Röhn's assertion of the primacy of the shorter text of *Gísla saga* is too simple (he does not seem to know Jón Helgason's introduction to *Håndskriflet AM 445 c, I, 4to*, 1956), but he does note the divergences in the longer version, and might have developed this to show that its introductory section, though quite different from that of the shorter version, also employs motifs familiar in other sagas. Occasionally, Röhn's analysis seems too mechanical, as where Seewald's sensible division of the main action into two phases, showing Gísli respectively as landowner and as outlaw, is rejected on the grounds that the time omitted at the point of division is less than in some other places in the action (p. 67). He is insensitive in one instance to the use of suspense at a chapter ending (p. 79), and he fails to account convincingly for the fact that Gísli ceases at last to try to escape his pursuers (p. 80) — this last mainly because of his belief in the

primacy of Fate in the saga. But Gísli is not killed by Fate — he brings about the fulfillment of his dreams himself, by believing in them. A similar problem arises later, in Röhn's discussion of the significance of the sword given to Kjartan by King Óláfr Tryggvason in ch. 43 of *Laxdæla saga*. He explains this as a parallel 'foreshadowing' device to Bolli's ownership of Fótbitr (p. 142), but does not discuss its use in promoting suspense or as a symbol of Kjartan's self-respect. Its theft, recovery minus its sheath, and Kjartan's subsequent undervaluing of it, parallel what we must infer about his feelings after his loss of Guðrún in order to understand why he brings about his own destruction — which he clearly does. In both these instances, attributing the hero's fall to an implacable Fate makes his motives inexplicable, is logically unsound, and assumes authorial attitudes which are historically unlikely in a 13th century Christian author.

The analysis of *Gunnlaugs saga* becomes rather thin towards the end, but demonstrates effectively the unusually close links between the introduction and the main story, and how the saga exemplifies the explicit marking of exits of characters introduced for a single purpose (e.g. Bergfinnr) and the introduction of new characters only where there is a natural break in the story. I disagree with Röhn's rejection of inherited material as the explanation of the scene of mock betrothal between Gunnlaugr and Helga, since it is narrated so fully as to suggest important consequences, perhaps that Gunnlaugr will later try to regard it as a real betrothal — and yet nothing of the kind happens in the saga in its present form. It also seems to me that the episode where Þorsteinn offers Gunnlaugr some horses is intended, as are some scenes in *Gísla saga*, to alienate some sympathy from the hero by showing him as unreasonable — and therefore as a believable human being with limitations. But these are matters of opinion.

Eyrbyggja saga, with its wide range of known source material, presents Röhn's structural analysis with particular problems. He is able to argue against Einar Ólafur Sveinsson's contention that the sources here are merely more apparent than in most sagas by suggesting that *Hrafnkels saga* and *Gunnlaugs saga*, with their large fictional elements, are more typical (pp. 101-2); this may be right, but it is worth noticing that those sagas are unusual in that both finish without any legal equilibrium being established. The structural discussion of *Eyrbyggja saga* is inevitably, considering the saga's complexity, a bit too sparse, but the demonstration of how the phases of the saga are related to each other is generally effective, despite a couple of weak links. Note should have been taken of Vésteinn Ólason's article in *Skírnir*, 1971.

The section on *Laxdæla saga* argues interestingly that the author was capable of artful fictional adaptation of his historical sources, but does not illustrate this as fully as one might have wished. The structural analysis here is, again perhaps inevitably, a pretty bald sketch, time-structure being concentrated on and some parts of the saga hardly dealt with at all. The alternation of interleaved strands of narrative up to ch. 19 and the unusual device of deliberate concealment of a long lapse of time between the death of Bolli and the vengeance on Helgi are effectively analysed.

Chapter 3 is divided into two parts. The first describes the same material as chapter 2, but taking each stage of all five sagas in parallel. As such, it acts chiefly as summary, repeats much already stated, is inclined to be over obvious and reduces the impact of the final, summarising chapter, with which

it should — more briefly — have been combined. The second half deals with foreshadowings and flashbacks, and is sensitive and well argued throughout, especially on *Laxdæla saga*. My only quarrels with this section are over the meaning of Kjartan's sword (see above), and to wish it had been a little more exhaustive.

The book ends with a brief summary of results and a bibliography which should have been fuller — the footnotes to Heinrich Beck's article on *Laxdæla saga* in *Saga-Book*, XIX part 4, supply several omissions from it. Minor blemishes include a mysterious ancient writer called Darius (p. 133), who seems to be Dares Phrygius in disguise; the apparent dating of *Trójumanna saga* to the 12th century (p. 133 note 5), made without reference to Jonna Louis-Jensen's article on that saga in *Kulturhistorisk leksikon*; and a rather ungenerous tone in assessing the contributions of earlier scholars.

Saga critics should beware of mechanical solutions, and although Röhn's analysis of time-structure is a useful method, it must not be regarded as a sole criterion of structure to the exclusion of common sense. In the event, all the sagas discussed here either partially defeat the attempt at total description of their structure or force *ad hoc* modifications of Röhn's method — and that is a heartening thing for anyone who enjoys literature more than dissection.

JOHN MCKINNELL

NOTES ON A FIRST EDITION OF "CLEASBY-VIGFÚSSON"

BY ELIZABETH KNOWLES

A SERIES of pencilled comments and corrections, with one insertion in ink, made upon a first edition of *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*¹ now in the archives of the Dictionary Department of the Oxford University Press, may well be the major surviving primary source for the history of a hard-fought and once bitterly-remembered academic conflict.

The Dictionary, published in 1874, was, according to its title page, "based on the MS. collections of the late Richard Cleasby" and "enlarged and completed by Gudbrand Vigfusson", two assertions supported and illustrated by Dean Liddell's accompanying "Preface", and by the "Introduction" and "Life of Richard Cleasby" by George Webbe Dasent.

The Dictionary, in the words of Dasent "projected by the late Richard Cleasby, and completed, remodelled and extended by Gudbrand Vigfusson" was according to the official account begun when Cleasby settled in Copenhagen in 1840. During the next few years, Cleasby collected material for the work, concentrating on prose sources, since "Dr. Egilsson was engaged on the poetical vocabulary". Cleasby was apparently assisted in his labours by a number of Icelandic students, of whom Dean Liddell singles out Konrad Gislason.

Work on the poetical sources appears to have gone more quickly, perhaps because of the smaller volume of material, or possibly for other reasons. In 1846, we are told, Sveinbjörn Egilsson's MS. was ready for publication, but it was not until the following year that Cleasby had five words set up in type as specimens of the projected volume, and sent to friends, among whom was Jacob Grimm, who is said to have responded approvingly. Unfortunately, in the autumn of 1847, Cleasby contracted typhus fever, and in the words of Liddell "died insensible, without being able to make any arrangements respecting his papers and collections".

He was, it seems, fortunate in his heirs, who were so anxious that his work should not be wasted that they were prepared to pay "a considerable sum of money to certain persons in Copenhagen,

for the purpose of completing the book". This was, however, to be but the first of a series of incidents in the history of the Dictionary when hopes for a speedy completion were not fulfilled. When in 1854 a request for a further subsidy was accompanied by a recognition that it seemed "doubtful whether the work was likely to be finished in any reasonable time", Cleasby's heirs not unreasonably felt unable to comply. It was accordingly decided that the entire manuscript should be sent to England, and the material so acquired was "placed at the disposal of the well-known Icelandic scholar, Mr. G. Webbe Dasent". In 1855 he proposed to the Delegates of the Clarendon Press that they should undertake the publication of the Dictionary, being, according to Liddell, under the (erroneous) impression "that the collections left by Mr. Cleasby would not require much revision to fit them for publication".

The matter seems then to have lain in abeyance for some nine years, during which time Dasent presumably arrived at a juster estimate of the material, since in 1864, when he again laid the proposal before the Delegates, he "stated to the Delegates that the papers were left in an imperfect state, and asked them to grant a sum of money, for the purpose of securing the services of an Icelandic scholar in completing the work", with the understanding that Dasent himself should, as agreed before, be responsible for revising the proof-sheets, correcting the English explanations and translations, and adding parallel words and usages from Old English and from Scottish dialects. Thus it came about in the same year that the services of Guðbrandur Vigfússon were retained by Dasent, and the groundwork for a fruitful if ultimately unhappy relationship was laid.

In his "Preface", dated 1869, Liddell tells us that Guðbrandur's report on the papers handed over by the Cleasby heirs indicated that, while there was a wealth of material for a Dictionary, much work was required to put it into "a form fit for publication". (It may be noted at this point that the material apparently consisted wholly of transcripts made by the Copenhagen workers, rather than Cleasby's own slips.)

Guðbrandur set to work, although, as it turned out, the envisaged supervision by Dasent did not materialise, owing to the latter's "incessant and various occupations". However, although he apparently oversaw no more than two sheets, Dasent made a substantial (and substantially resented) contribution to the work in his fifteen-page "Introduction", and forty-four-page "Life" of

Cleasby, and it is mainly on these fifty-nine pages that the notes which concern us are to be found.

Before turning to them, however, it is appropriate to record Dasent's own account of his association with Guðbrandur and the Dictionary, as given in his "Introduction". Perhaps the most interesting section is that which deals with the acquisition of Cleasby's actual materials, which were returned from Copenhagen and handed over to Dasent. Their subsequent history is remarkable, not least for the light it sheds upon Dasent's view of the way in which he might best assist his colleague's work.

Guðbrandur was put in possession of the batch of papers from the Copenhagen workers which, as was generally agreed, needed at the least to be worked over thoroughly, and at the most, in Dasent's words, to be "entirely rewritten and remodelled". The first results were seen in 1869-70, when the first fascicle was published. The second fascicle followed in 1871-2, and the third and final fascicle was published in 1873-4.

It was during the period of publication that further materials, according to Dasent, were received from Copenhagen. In his own words:

Many years after the transmission of the MS., and when the first part of the Dictionary had been published and the second and third were far advanced towards completion, Mr. Cleasby's own materials were returned from Copenhagen and handed over to the writer. Acting on his own discretion, he determined that it would be most unfair to Mr. Vigfússon to interrupt him by new matter, which might have been of great assistance at an earlier period, but which could only have been an encumbrance to him when his labours were drawing to an end (p. lii).

Dasent accordingly preserved unopened the two boxes of Cleasby's literary remains until the last sheet of the Dictionary had gone to press. He then revealed their existence to Guðbrandur who, as we shall see, was to remain unappreciative of the results of Dasent's discretion. They both examined the boxes, which were found to contain three folio volumes of material, together with what appeared to be a number of Cleasby's original dictionary slips. Dasent at least was greatly impressed with the quality of the work, which he felt showed that Cleasby stood out "as a clear-sighted ready worker" (p. liv).

In the remainder of the "Introduction", Dasent briefly describes the range of the source material upon which the Dictionary draws, and pays tribute both to the original work done by Cleasby, and to the organisation of the material carried out by

Guðbrandur. Finally he records his personal pleasure in seeing the Dictionary in print at last:

The writer, who has watched over it, so to speak, from its birth, and who has been, as it were, a second father to it ever since the untimely death of its natural parent, cannot but feel a glow of exultation as he beholds it issuing from the press in all the maturity and fulness which it at one time seemed hopeless that it could ever assume (p. lvii).

This passage, then, describes Dasent's feelings at the publication of the Dictionary. The rather different emotions experienced by Guðbrandur are recorded in the pencilled notes found in the copy under consideration. The first indication of dissent is to be found upon the title page. Here the Dictionary is described as

An Icelandic-English Dictionary based on the MS. collections of the late Richard Cleasby enlarged and completed by Gudbrand Vigfusson, M.A. with an introduction and life of Richard Cleasby by George Webbe Dasent, D.C.L.

The only words not to have been crossed out by Guðbrandur are "An Icelandic-English Dictionary" and the Publisher's imprint. In the top right-hand corner of the page, written in ink, appear the words: "A false Title-Page, printed without my cognisance or consent. G.V.", while against the lines concerning Cleasby the same hand has put: "all this is untrue".

These last four words may be taken as Guðbrandur's verdict on Dasent's contribution to the history of the Dictionary, but the pencilled comments against sections of the "Preface", "Introduction" and "Life" provide more detailed criticisms. The first of these is to be found in the "Preface" (p. v), against what Dean Liddell described as "A few words . . . added to explain the origin and history of the work".

Liddell states that in 1840 Cleasby left England to settle in Copenhagen, the "chief seat and centre of Scandinavian learning", and we infer from the account that this move was made in order to facilitate his projected *General Dictionary of the Old Scandinavian Language*. Liddell describes Cleasby's intention to concentrate upon the prose sources, while Sveinbjörn Egilsson worked upon the poetical vocabulary "towards the expenses of which Mr. Cleasby promised to contribute, so that he may be said to have been the chief promoter of that work also".

Guðbrandur has crossed out "England" and substituted "Germany". His two other comments on this page, however, are more elaborate. The word "General" has been underlined, and in the margin on the right-hand side of the page is written: "No! He

projected a prose glossary to the Sagas, omitting poetry and all that”. A little further down, “chief promoter” has also been underlined, and against this Guðbrandur has written: “Overstated. 15 pounds he gave, I have seen the account”.

On p. vii Liddell tells us that:

Mr. Vigfusson’s report of the papers handed over by Mr. Cleasby’s heirs shews that they contained copious materials for a Dictionary, but required much labour and research to work them into a form fit for publication.

Against this passage, Guðbrandur has pencilled: “No formal report ever sent in nor asked for from me”.

There is a cross pencilled against the passage stating that omissions show that Cleasby kept much material in his head, and intended to make a careful revision of the whole, and the following passage also evokes comment:

The Delegates however have reason to hope that a fuller account of Mr. Cleasby’s life and labours, as well as a general introduction to the whole work, will be written by Mr. Dasent and prefixed to the Dictionary when it is completed.

Guðbrandur has written: “This was entered without my knowledge, I was at that time much distressed”.

The tone of these manuscript entries, and perhaps also the very fact of their existence, since Guðbrandur must have felt very strongly actually to annotate a publication in this way, might be considered sufficiently surprising. They are, however, mild in comparison with the notes appended to the “Introduction” and “Life”, and it is indeed indicated in other sources that, while Guðbrandur may not entirely have liked Liddell’s “Preface”, the Dean’s work did not inspire him with the sense of personal antagonism indicated in his comments on Dasent’s work.

The first sentence of the “Introduction” provokes two comments. Dasent begins: “The Dictionary projected by the late Richard Cleasby, and completed, remodelled and extended by Gudbrand Vigfusson, is now . . . published”. At the top of the page (xlv) Guðbrandur has commented:

Mr. Jon Sigurdsson said to me (Copenhagen 1874 summer), he knew Mr. Cleasby well — ‘Eg gat aldrei séð hann vas [*sic*] annað enn hreinn diletantí’ I could never see he was anything but a sheer diletantí [*sic*]. He also told me how he entirely depended from [*sic*] his Icelandic clerks, otherwise he spoke favourably him [*sic*]. No swindler, honest (though dull) enough. G. V.

Guðbrandur has underlined the phrase “completed, remodelled and extended”, and the second annotation appears to refer specifically to this description of his work:

I never had in my hands a single line of Mr Cl.'s handwriting, nor anything that possibly could have been written or composed by any Englishman. There was nothing to remodel or to compleat. The MSS. handed over to me was all in the handwriting of Icelanders, written after Mr. Cl.'s death for small money no doubt, composed by them not by him.

A pencilled ?? against "remodelled" emphasises Guðbrandur's absolute disagreement with this view of his case.

On page l, against Dasent's account of English words showing Scandinavian influence, Guðbrandur has written: "I had to supply these words to Mr. D. except that about the egg". On page lii, however, the annotations refer more nearly to the professional relationship existing between Guðbrandur and Dasent.

The statement that Cleasby's work had to be "entirely rewritten and remodelled" is repeated, and once more Guðbrandur has underlined "remodelled", and placed ?? in the left-hand margin. The following paragraph gives Dasent's account of his own behaviour over the late arrival of those manuscripts which were actually in Cleasby's own hand. Guðbrandur has pencilled a mark against the three lines describing Dasent's belief that to have interrupted Guðbrandur at such a time with new material would have been "unfair", and has written in the left-hand margin:

This is a post-eventum² reason. The fact is that Mr. Dasent during all the time held no communication with me and accordingly never gave me any notice of these papers having arrived. I was not aware of the fact till July 1873 when I called on Mr. Dasent. I was in fact glad I never saw these papers for really they would not have helped me much.

If we take these statements at their face value we are left with the impression that Guðbrandur thought little of Cleasby's scholarship, and more than resented the "consideration" shown him by Dasent. Such impressions are reinforced on the following pages.

On p. liv Dasent praises the care taken by Cleasby in quotation and reference, and laments that Guðbrandur was not able to benefit from the earlier scholar's work, although he has in some ways accidentally returned to Cleasby's original methods. Above and beside this section Guðbrandur has written:

I examined these Papers during 3 or 4 days in Aug. 73 the only time that they have been in my hands. I gave as favourable and generous report as I could — yet what Mr. D. says is exaggerated. He never examined them himself. I am the only man that has looked them through. There was very little of literary value. The entry under eyrendi was almost all that I lighted on by a swift perusal. I believe poor Mr. Cl. kept it in his head, as is said in the Dean's Preface.

In the following paragraph, Dasent remarks upon the satisfaction derived from the fact that

... in one or two cases of doubtful etymology his [sc. Cleasby's] views as now revealed are identical with those of the philologist [sc. Guðbrandur] to whom the laborious task of restoring order to his collections has devolved.

Sadly, we find that the philologist so described has underlined the words “laborious task of restoring order to his collections”, and has written in the margin: “Not so! These collections were never put into my hands, but remained first at Copenhagen and since in Mr. Dasent’s hands”.

The final annotation to the “Introduction” occurs on p. lv. Having praised the determination shown by Guðbrandur when, “neither turning to the right nor to the left”, he fulfilled his task, Dasent expatiates upon what he believes to be the quality of the Iclander’s work. While it would not perhaps be justifiable to doubt his sincerity, it may readily be understood that Guðbrandur himself resented both content and tone. Dasent comments:

Those only who, like the writer, were acquainted with the Cleasby transcripts as they came from Copenhagen, can tell how far more meritorious and scientific the printed Dictionary is than those undigested collections. Mr. Vigfusson might have been contented with restoring order and in imparting life and spirit into the rude mass which had been handed over to him; but in reality he did much more.

Guðbrandur has underlined the words “might have been contented with restoring”, and has written in the margin:

No I could not, It would have been disgrace to the university to publish such a thing, and dishonour to myself. The Papers were bad beyond conception.

At this point it is clear that Guðbrandur resented the suggestion that Cleasby’s work was in itself of great value. However, it appears that he resented even more Dasent’s assumption of the right to apportion praise or blame, since he clearly believed that such an assumption rested on a very shaky foundation. This is demonstrated by his note on p. lvii. Dasent, in describing his emotions at seeing the publication of the Dictionary, speaks of himself as “The writer, who has watched over it . . . from its birth”. Guðbrandur has underlined the words “who has watched over it”, and pencilled ?? at the end of the line. Underneath he has written:

No! Mr. Dasent held no communication with me for full 4 years, 1869-73 during the time nearly the three fourths were written by me of the Dict. Mr. D. never evinced any interest in the progress of the work since it came to my hand.

This concludes the annotations to the "Introduction". We may now turn to those notes which are to be found on the text of the "Life". This begins on p. lxi, and above the heading "Richard Cleasby" Guðbrandur has written:

This life of R. Cl. was in Oct. 73 written by Mr. Dasent, in spite of my remonstrances; I had to submit. I wish it had never been written.

Guðbrandur evidently felt that this comment might have served for a general condemnation of the text of the "Life", for only two more pages are annotated. On pp. ciii-iv Dasent describes the death of Cleasby in Copenhagen, and the subsequent discussion as to what should be done about the Dictionary on which he had been working. In Dasent's words:

After mature deliberation it was resolved that the MS. should be completed at Copenhagen, under the care of a committee of three — two of whom were M. Krieger, the well-known statesman and antagonist of Prince Bismark; and M. Konrad Gislason, Cleasby's chief amanuensis, on whom devolved the literary direction of the work.

Guðbrandur's accompanying marginal note reads:

There was no committee at all said M. Krieger to me when I called on him (in Oct. 74) I was only a cashier, he said. He also complained of stinginess on the part of Cleasby's heirs. The money paid, he said was a pittance, how could people in England then expect much work done.

On p. civ, the last page of the "Life", Dasent describes how the MS. of the Dictionary was finally sent from Copenhagen to England, and came into his hands. He tells us that he found it necessary to call in other assistance "after struggling with it for some years". These words have been underlined, and in the margin we find Guðbrandur's final and perhaps most forceful note: "This is an euphemism indeed. Dasent never done [*sic*] a sixpenny worth of work wasted the money but left the work to me".

No other relevant manuscript emendations to the text are to be found in this copy of the Dictionary. Some further material, however, may be found in a series of letters to Guðbrandur Vigfússon, preserved in the Bodleian Library,³ covering a period of time between 1864 and 1882. Within these letters may be found the views of some of Guðbrandur's friends and acquaintances upon the matter, as well as, in one case, the comments of Guðbrandur himself.

Several letters from Dasent are to be found in the collection, but only one of these relates to the joint work on the Dictionary.

In this letter, dated 4.x.64, Dasent welcomes Guðbrandur to England, and promises to find lodgings for him between his own home and the British Museum. He concludes by saying: “As this is a dear country I enclose you a cheque for £15 which I hope you will have *no* difficulty in turning into money”. At the foot of the letter Guðbrandur himself has written:

The cheque I returned to Mr. Dasent when I came to London, I knew nothing about cheques at that time. The money was indeed the delegates’ money and I never received gifts of money at Dasent’s hands. G.V.

The next letter in the file to refer to the Dictionary is dated 26.xii.66, and was written by John Aitken Carlyle, brother of Thomas Carlyle, and one of Guðbrandur’s most assiduous correspondents. It is clear from the opening line of the letter that John Carlyle had been fully admitted into Guðbrandur’s confidence on the matter of his less than satisfactory colleague. Carlyle writes:

I am not surprised at what you tell me about those entanglements you have to struggle with, for in the sheets there are unmistakable signs of the complicated cookery you speak of. Such a state of things at the outset is perhaps unavoidable, but I quite agree with you in what you say respecting your own position, &, if you maintain presence of mind & steadfast coolness & resolution, your friend Dasent will get tired of interference, or find it to be unnecessary, before you read that “10th sheet”, & have the matter entirely in your hands.

While it is clear from John Carlyle’s letters that he felt considerable affection for Guðbrandur, and that he supported him warmly in his complaints about Dasent, it should not be thought that friendship blinded him to Guðbrandur’s own faults. With admirable directness, he continued the letter quoted above: “It would be wrong in me, if I did not tell you that I still find your English most alarmingly defective, though it gets better from day to day”. In the matter of the “correctness and precision” required in lexicography John Carlyle concludes: “Dasent is said to be a good-natured & rather fat man, but I can understand his vehemence in regard to those phrases of the Bible which you speak of”.

This letter was written at the end of 1866. In the following year, three separate correspondents wrote to Guðbrandur on the twin subjects of the Dictionary and Dasent. Perhaps the most important of the three is Dean Liddell, who was later to write the “Preface” to the whole Dictionary, and who clearly had a good deal to endure in the book’s service. On the eighth of January

1867, he wrote at length to Guðbrandur, stating that: "It is of great importance that we shall come to a definite understanding about the Dictionary". He proceeded to lay down what he felt to be the essential ground-rules for the work. There were several stipulations. All matters of disputed English were to be referred to Liddell (this was apparently Guðbrandur's suggestion). Guðbrandur was to be responsible for verifying the references, his manuscript should be written on one side of the paper only, with "sufficient space left between the lines to admit of corrections and additions", and the "corresponding portion of the old Cleasby M.S." was to be sent to Dasent with each package of new manuscript. Finally, "the translation into English should be, so far as possible, literal and vernacular English, not paraphrases". Liddell, after emphasising his strong agreement with this last provision, concluded with the assurance that he had "only one object in view, viz. to see the Book made worthy of its Editors and of the Oxford Press", and added his conviction that with "a hearty and good humoured concurrence on the part of all concerned, this result will be obtained". Since he also requested Guðbrandur to "give the propositions . . . a calm and clear consideration", it seems likely that he was well aware of the strained relations between the two collaborators.

The two other correspondents, G. W. Kitchin and John Carlyle, were certainly aware of the difficulties (in Carlyle's case this is already clear from his letter of 26 Dec. 1866, quoted above). Kitchin, writing on the thirteenth of March 1867, told Guðbrandur:

The M.S. has reached me quite safely; and, before you get this, will be on its way to Mr Dasent. I hope this gentleman will condescend to write rather more clearly in future. His writing tries the printers very much.

John Carlyle's letter, dated 18.iv.67, records a similar attitude to Dasent, but also suggests that matters were improving for Guðbrandur.

Many thanks for the photograph of yourself which I received . . . I am very glad to hear that you have got quit of Dasent & his endless demonstrations & unpunctualities; & I trust your work with the Dictionary will now go on more smoothly & satisfactorily in every respect.

Liddell continued to correspond with Guðbrandur regarding various entries in the Dictionary, but it was not until February 1869 that he again mentioned Dasent. This letter was presumably concerned with the publication of the first fascicle of the Dictionary, since it deals with the question of a suitable title page.

Liddell's opening paragraph indicates both Guðbrandur's objections to the original proposal, and Liddell's agreement with him.

This Title-page, of which you send me a copy, must have been drawn up before Mr Dasent relinquished his connexion with the Dictionary. I should certainly never have proposed, in the present state of things, to place his name on the Title-page. The only reason for which I proposed to send him the prefatory notice was that I thought it would be courteous to do so, considering that he was the person by whose means the collections of Mr Cleasby came into our hands. It might also be expedient: for he will doubtless review the Book in the Times, and it is as well not to irritate him by any seeming neglect.

A further paragraph makes it clear that Guðbrandur had written in fairly strong terms to Liddell about his former collaborator, although it seems likely that the tone of the letter was slightly more temperate than that used in MS. notes on the Dictionary itself. Liddell continues:

I entertain not the slightest doubt of the absolute truth of all your statements. Indeed the extremely candid and modest tone of your Letter would carry conviction to any unprejudiced mind, — without going into the Evidence.

Liddell concludes his letter by sketching a possible title page which would describe the Dictionary as being "founded on the collections of Richard Cleasby", and "by Gudbrand Vigfússon". The suggestion seems to have found favour with Guðbrandur, since his disappointment at the failure of the Dean's idea is demonstrated by manuscript notes in English and Icelandic at the foot of the letter. In these, he states that the Dean's proposals were not attended to, and adds that he had not shown Liddell's letter to anyone, but had left the matter to the Delegates, since "it would not have been safe to do otherwise".

It is to be regretted that strong feeling apparently so affected his handwriting as to render these notes at least partly illegible, but he seems to have believed that "any remonstrance, however just" might have put the whole work, or at least acknowledgement of his part in it, in jeopardy.

The next letter in the file to refer either to Dasent or the Dictionary is one dated 5.viii.73 from John Carlyle. Carlyle had clearly been sent proofs as they became available, since he writes:

Your last proofsheets of the Dictionary was waiting . . . along with proof of the new title, which seems to me better than the old one, because it shows more distinctly & more prominently the part you have had in the great work . . . I hope Mr. Dasent will soon be able to finish what he has to say in regard

to the Dictionary, & so let it be published without any further unnecessary delay.

The dilatoriness of Dasent was clearly a continuing vexation, and was to cause fresh difficulties in a second collaboration between Dasent and Guðbrandur over the *Rolls Series* edition and translation of *Orkneyinga saga*. On Christmas Day 1874, John Carlyle wrote:

I am glad to hear that you have undertaken to give us a more perfect edition [*sc.* of *Orkneyinga saga*], & that Dasent's has been cancelled after waiting so long. Dasent is not capable of giving a good edition or translation of anything, though he means well & does his best. I dislike his vulgar translation of the Njal's Saga, which in the original is so noble and clear, & detest the slang which Dasent introduces in his rendering of it.

This criticism of Dasent's English usage may well have been welcome to Guðbrandur, who eight years before had been under attack from Carlyle for his own "alarmingly defective English".

While it is clear from the number and nature of his letters that John Carlyle may well have been Guðbrandur's chief confidant in the matter of the Dictionary, it should not be thought that the Icelander's dissatisfaction was generally unknown. On the fifteenth of January 1875, Willard Fiske writes:

I think I understand & appreciate your relations to Cleasby in the preparation of the admirable work, as I also comprehend the position of some of the men at Copenhagen in regard to it.

That Guðbrandur was disinclined to let the matter rest is indicated in a letter from Macmillan & Co., dated 27.iv.1876:

We have your two letters of April 23, and quite see that you have cause to complain at your name not appearing in the Catalogue so prominently as your authorship of the Dictn would warrant. We will talk the matter over with Professor Price and have some alterations made in the next Catalogue we print.

John Carlyle's final word on Dasent is to be found in a letter dated 27.i.77. In a trenchant passage evoked by Dasent's behaviour over the *Orkneyinga saga* project, he concludes: "Indeed Dasent is one of the most disorderly of men; and I for one think that all his translations are bad and vulgar".

It is greatly to be regretted that none of Guðbrandur's own letters are preserved among his papers, although his notes on the Dictionary, and on the letter from Liddell, give a clear picture of his feelings about the work. By good fortune, however, in 1882, his friend F. W. L. Thomas wrote two letters in which he raised

the matter of the Dictionary, and actually quoted directly from a letter that Guðbrandur had sent him. In his letter dated 19.ii.82, Thomas writes:

In a letter to me dated 25th May, 1879, you state “I will not trouble you with long-winded statements or complaints, but in short the book is mine. I never received a penny of Cleasby’s money, nor a line of his writings. Indeed, I do not know what opinions he held on any subject whatever, philological or archæological. The introduction, title-page, &c., were written by Sir G. Dasent, if what is said is false, as I fear it is, he has to answer for it; it has never been approved of by me, and, in as much as it detracts from my right it is null and void.” I have lately written a paper on “Islay Place-Names” and if you please I will insert the above paragraph as a note. Or, you may think it too strongly expressed, if so, you can modify it. It is only fair that the truth should be known concerning the Dictionary. I bear no love for Sir G.D. for his having kept the Orkn. Saga so long back;— & was well pleased to see him “pulled up” in the Athenæum about Andersen’s Fairy Tales.

Evidently, despite his strong feelings, Guðbrandur did feel that the paragraph should not be published. Perhaps, like Thomas, he had come to believe that time would allow his work to provide its own justification. That this was Thomas’s own view is demonstrated by the following passage from a letter dated 20.iv.82:

After reading your Skaldic Poetry I am quite convinced that the present is not the time to make a row about the Lexicon. These volumes will place your name among the “distingué”, and then that queer thing called the world will give you your own as a matter of course.

This was a state of affairs at least partially foreseen sixteen years before by Sir Edmund Head, when on the twenty-second of October 1866, he wrote consolingly to Guðbrandur: “It will evidently be in the main *your* Dictionary”.

This concludes the evidence found in the first edition of *Cleasby-Vigfússon*, and in the Vigfússon Papers deposited in the Bodleian. There are evident gaps in the story, which further work on the subject might help to fill, and it would certainly be of great assistance to have at least some of the letters that Guðbrandur himself wrote during the period. It seems likely that there were faults on both sides, for if Dasent — as seems to be agreed — was an exasperating collaborator, Guðbrandur was certainly not the man to pass over in silence what he considered to be wrongs. Yet it must be counted to his credit that, while feeling as strongly as he did about Dasent’s behaviour over the Dictionary, he was still prepared to answer carefully the long letters, with their lists of questions, which Dasent wrote to him during their *Orkneyinga*

saga collaboration — a collaboration which, as the Vigfússon Papers indicate, was at times as troubled as the earlier connection.

¹ R. Cleasby & Gudbrand Vigfússon, *An Icelandic-English Dictionary* (1874). (In the second edition of 1957, the "Introduction" and the "Life" were omitted, and the "Preface" was partly reprinted and partly rewritten by the editor, Sir William Craigie.)

² *eventum* is written above *factum*, which has been crossed out.

³ Vigfússon Papers, M.S. Engl. misc. d. 131.

SOME THOUGHTS ON MANX RUNES*

By R. I. PAGE

THE Isle of Man is a place to attract Vikings of all sorts. To the zoological Viking, for instance, it is of interest because of its distinctive fauna; for it is the home of the tail-less cat, the three-legged coat of arms, the kippered herring and the Director of the British Museum. The constitutional Viking will visit the island this year to celebrate the millennium of Tynwald, of what the commemorative emblem calls "A thousand years of unbroken parliamentary government", for which it surely deserves our admiration, not to say sympathy. But to the literate Viking it is important because it has over thirty rune-stones, and it is this aspect that I would like to discuss before an assembly of literate Vikings. Magnus Olsen gave a detailed account of the Manx runes in 1954, though he based it on a journey made as far back as 1911 and so did not deal at first hand with inscriptions found later.¹ More recently Ingrid Sanness Johnsen included most of the Manx runes in her book *Stuttruner i vikingtidens innskrifter* (1968). Before Olsen a long series of distinguished Norse scholars had worked on the inscriptions: Munch in the 1840s and 1850s, Guðbrandur Vigfússon in 1887, Sophus Bugge in 1899, Brate in 1907, while Marstrander used runic material in his studies of the Scandinavians on Man.² Anyone who makes pretensions to taking yet another look at these texts will have to put forward some justification, and the present paper is something of a progress report and apologia, presenting part of my preliminary thinking on the subject.

The present corpus consists of thirty-one rune-stones, of which two are tiny fragments that contribute only points on a distribution map, and another is so worn that it is little more. Two of the Manx stones, those which Olsen numbers Maughold I and II, he places in the later twelfth century, but the rest of his twenty-nine examples he regards as Viking though there are not always adequate dating criteria. Two more stones have appeared since Olsen's 1954 study. A total of nearly thirty Viking Age rune-stones is impressive compared with Viking rune-stones elsewhere.³ In Denmark itself there are probably fewer than 200 rune-stones from the Viking Age, and remarkably few in the

* Presidential Address, delivered to the Society in Cambridge, 19 May 1979.

Danish colonies overseas: none in Normandy and only two or three in the Danelaw. In Norway there are some 40 Viking rune-stones, and again the numbers in the colonies are few: three or so in Ireland, a couple in the Faroes, a handful in north-west England and none in Iceland. The numbers in the British Isles are hard to assess. Olsen's 1954 list shows four fragments of rune-stones from the Shetlands, five from the Orkneys, six from mainland Scotland and the Hebrides; and though there are now some additions, the order of numbers remains unchanged.⁴ Thirty or so from an island as tiny as Man looks significant, and should make us wonder what there is so special about Man that it should produce so many.

There is perhaps another thing to wonder at. In Man the only runic finds hitherto have been on stone. This is unusual. The Irish finds, for example, include the rune-inscribed sword-fitting from Greenmount as well as the newly discovered runic bone and wooden pieces from Dublin; the Scots ones include the Hunterston brooch, a Celtic jewel with a Norse text; the Orkneys and Shetlands can show runes on a steatite whorl and disc; the Danelaw those on the Lincoln comb-case. The question obviously arises whether the known Manx runes are on stones only because archaeological work on Man up to now has not been intensive or skilled enough to produce finds of other rune-inscribed objects. I do not think this is the answer, but in this matter, to quote some of my friends, only archaeologists can reveal the truth.⁵ There may too be the question of suitability of materials. Are there Manx runic crosses because there was, on Man, a ready supply of easily worked stone? Certainly the island has plentiful blue slate that forms natural slabs and cuts fairly readily with a heavy knife, but again I do not think this is the reason, or at any rate the only reason, for the plenty of Manx rune-stones. After all, the Anglo-Saxons found in England stone suitable for their inscriptions, but for all that the Vikings do not seem to have emulated them there. There must, I think, be some other reason.

Anyone who has prepared a distribution map of archaeological finds will be uncomfortably aware that what he is plotting may be not the distribution of deposits of a particular kind of object, but the distribution of activity of people looking for it. This could be the case with the Manx rune-stones; perhaps we know so many on the Isle of Man because there has been so energetic a search for them. Because of this possibility it is worth taking a short look at the history of runic studies in Man.

The earliest pictures of Manx rune-stones that I know appear in Edmund Gibson's adaptation of Camden's *Britannia*, the second edition published in 1722. They show — and I use here and hereafter Magnus Olsen's numbering of the stones⁶ — Andreas II, Braddan IV and Kirk Michael III and V. They derive, as does the account of the island in that volume, from Thomas Wilson, Bishop of Sodor and Man from 1697 to 1755 and an energetic recorder of Man's peculiarities.⁷ Gibson's four stones were the only ones known to Richard Gough when he published his revised Camden in 1789.⁸ He printed what he thought of as "correct copies of the four Runic inscriptions communicated to bishop Gibson", though far from being correct they are in some ways less accurate than the earlier versions. These four seem to be the only Manx runic crosses published by the beginning of the nineteenth century, though others may be recorded in unpublished texts. For instance, probably ultimately from Wilson is a group of drawings preserved among Humfrey Wanley's papers. These are British Library Loan 29/259 no. 17, which gives rough representations of the runes of Andreas II and Kirk Michael V, together with another Andreas example which is either a now lost cross or is Andreas IV in a much more complete state than the present fragment.

In a group of related discourses published by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in 1823,⁹ H. R. Oswald, surgeon to the household of the Duke of Atholl, recorded again Braddan IV and Kirk Michael V, but of Wilson's other two stones he said in 1817: "I know not whether these stones are still preserved, not having seen or heard of them while I was in the island." In a later communication in the same group of notes, Oswald recorded also Andreas II, with detailed and important drawings of his three runic monuments: the originals of the pictures, by G. W. Carrington, are in the library of the Manx Museum. The rapid development of Manx runic studies in the nineteenth century can be demonstrated roughly by charting the work of William Kinnebrook, J. G. Cumming and P. M. C. Kermodé, though these are only three of a strong field of scholars working on the subject. Kinnebrook's *Etchings of the Runic Monuments in The Isle of Man* (1841) recorded nine inscriptions, those of Andreas I and II, Braddan II and IV, Kirk Michael II, III, V and VI, and Onchan. All these were fairly well known about this time, for, at a date variously given as 1839 and 1841, a craftsman called W. Bally of Manchester made casts of them all, which came into the

possession of Sir Henry Dryden of Canons Ashby, Northants.¹⁰ Kinnebrook also noted a text, almost defaced, on Kirk Michael IV, as well as showing views of the crosses of Ballaugh and Kirk Michael I without mentioning their runes, and one of Braddan III when it was still embedded in the wall of the church tower, its inscription invisible. Cumming's account of 1854 included ten stones acknowledged as runic.¹¹ Surprisingly he omitted Andreas I and Braddan II but gave the rest of Kinnebrook's corpus together with the runes of Kirk Michael I and IV, and added a completely new stone, German (St John's) I. His later list in the book *The Runic and Other Monumental Remains of The Isle of Man* (1857) added further the runes of Ballaugh and Braddan III, and included two new stones, German (Peel) II and Jurby, making sixteen altogether. A second group of casts was made in 1854 or 1855 covering the Cumming material, and some of these subsequently came to the Manx Museum. In 1866 he recorded Braddan I.¹² Kermodé's first *Catalogue of the Manks Crosses with the Runic Inscriptions* . . . appeared in 1887, and supplied to the corpus Andreas III, IV and V, and Bride, together with Marown (Rhyne) which he listed under Braddan. The second edition of 1892 added Maughold II. Kermodé's great work of 1907, *Manx Crosses*, included two more inscribed stones, Maughold I and Kirk Michael VII. Thus, within seventy years of Kinnebrook's pioneer work the number of known Manx rune-stones had nearly trebled. Thereafter, Kirk Michael VIII was found in 1911, Maughold IV in 1913, and Braddan V and Maughold V both in 1965. This completes the corpus known so far, save for two fragments, Balleigh and Maughold III, on which there are tiny fragments of staves that were probably (and in the case of Balleigh certainly) runes, but which are inadequate for interpretation. This survey shows that the second half of the nineteenth century was indeed a key period for the discovery, recording and preservation of the Manx rune-stones, and does something to support the view that Man has so many rune-stones known because the search for them was so intensive. But it is not the only answer.

The order in which the Manx runic crosses were recorded is in general unsurprising. In commenting on Man Wilson remarked:

Here are more *Runic Inscriptions* to be met with in this Island, than perhaps in any other Nation; most of them upon Funeral Monuments. They are, generally, on a long, flat, ragg Stone, with Crosses on one or both sides, and little embellishments of Men on horseback, or in Arms, Stags, Dogs,

Birds, or other Devices; probably the Achievements of some notable person. The Inscriptions are generally on one edge, to be read from the Bottom upwards. Most of them, after so many ages, are very entire, and writ in the old Norwegian Language . . . One of the largest of these stands in the High-way, near the Church of St. *Michael*, erected in memory of *Thurulf*, or *Thrulf*, as the name is now pronounc'd in *Norway*.¹³

Unless this is the language of hyperbole, Wilson knew more rune-stones than the four he supplied to Gibson's Camden, even if we add to that the second Andreas stone of BL Loan 29/259. Nor would this be surprising. Wilson's home was at Bishopscourt, a few miles from Kirk Michael (where incidentally he is buried), so naturally he knew the impressive standing cross Kirk Michael V, as well as Kirk Michael III which was re-used as a lintel over a church window. It is, I suppose, possible that he knew some of the other rune-stones now at this church, though they may have only come to light on the demolition of the old church in the 1830s. I would expect him to know the Ballaugh cross which Kinnebrook recorded in the yard of the Old Church, though he may not have noted its runes any more than Kinnebrook did. At any rate Wilson rebuilt this church, and it probably stands on the site of an old burial ground so the Ballaugh cross may occupy its original place (though that is not at all certain as I shall show later). Since he knew Andreas II (in the churchyard) he would presumably also have seen Andreas I which, in 1841, was standing on the green nearby (though there is a difficulty about this too).

On the other hand, it is curious that though there are many journals of travels in the Isle of Man and accounts of that island dating from the later eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, none of them, so far as I know, illustrate rune-stones other than those recorded by Gibson; and very few of them mention other rune-stones. For example, Richard Townley's journal published in 1791 reports two rune-stones at Kirk Michael, one certainly Michael V and the other presumably Michael III though Townley refers to it only as "some Danish characters upon one grave-stone".¹⁴ He spent some time in the churchyard at Kirk Braddan deciphering inscriptions on grave-stones, but made no mention of any runic crosses.¹⁵ John Feltham, who toured the island in 1797 and 1798, noted Andreas II, Braddan IV and Kirk Michael III and V (that is to say Gibson's four stones), with a drawing of the latter that looks directly and faithfully derived from Gibson; but he reported no other rune-stones.¹⁶ Thorkelin visited Man in 1790, claiming to

come to examine the runes “by the express order of his Danish Majesty”, but departed after two days apparently little wiser than when he arrived.¹⁷ I know of no notes he made on Manx runes. On the other hand, Townley, who seems to have been more enterprising than other visitors to the island, did make some discoveries to suggest that there were rune-stones to be spotted easily by anyone who would take the trouble. At Kirk Michael, for instance, he searched “some rubbish places on the outside” of the churchyard, and there found a carved stone that he thought was Viking though he does not speak of an inscription. He took it with him to Douglas, and its subsequent history is unknown.¹⁸ Recording a visit to Onchan he says: “In going into Kirk Onchan church-yard, this morning, I noticed a rude carving upon the highest step; the figure of a Danish warrior, in complete armour, with a number of Runic characters on one side of the stone.”¹⁹ This is not the Onchan stone now known, nor indeed any known rune-stone, but of course Townley’s identification of the marks on the (?) edge as runes may be wrong.

On the whole, however, working through the guidebooks, histories and journals of visits to Man from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is a depressing experience. They promise so much information but deliver so little, at any rate on the rune-stones. This is partly because there is such a lot of plagiarism and copying in them, so that we cannot take as directly known any statement that we find. A writer may record a stone at a particular site not because he saw it there, but because an earlier writer said it was there. He may have failed to record a prominent stone because nobody had yet reported it. Moreover these writers used the word “runic” imprecisely, without reference to script. It may mean “Dark Age” or “Viking”, or even just “so badly preserved as to be unreadable”. This is sadly misleading when you are seeking references to rune-stones, and is particularly irritating when used of sites from which we now know rune-stones to exist. When, for instance, William Kneale, one of the more responsible guidebook writers, says of Onchan: “Scattered about the churchyard are several Runic crosses”, how exactly is he using the word?²⁰ Kneale could recognise runes. There is one rune-inscribed cross now known at Onchan, and if Townley was right a second recorded in the eighteenth century and now lost. How many Onchan crosses with runes on them did Kneale know in 1860? In these guidebooks too there is often grotesque confusion because their writers either could not read their notes or could not

plagiarise others' work accurately. For instance, in G. Woods's *An Account of the Past and Present State of The Isle of Man* (1811) is a description of a stone which must be Andreas II, but Woods claims it was in Bride churchyard.²¹ The two distinct and complementary texts on Kirk Michael III are sometimes ascribed to two separate stones. Indeed, the second was often reported lost by writers who transcribed the first, while Thwaites and Kneale, writing in the 1860s, referred it to Onchan.²² This sort of confusion may lead us to undervalue what may be genuine information. As an example, J. Welch's *A Six Days' Tour through The Isle of Man* (1836) mentions a rune-stone which must be Braddan IV since that is the only one consistently described as being in that churchyard from early times. At the same time he speaks of "the remnant of another forming the stile".²³ This we might ignore were it not confirmed by another guidebook of the same date, which writes with such precision and freshness as to constitute a corroborative statement. *The Illustrated Guide and Visitor's Companion through The Isle of Man* by "a Resident" (1836) speaks of "leaving the church-yard, in the opposite direction to which we entered, over a stone slab which appears to have been formerly a memorial to departed greatness, as one side of it contains many runic characters."²⁴ There are now five rune-stones known from Braddan. The stile stone cannot be Braddan IV for Carrington's drawings confirm that that was standing upright in the churchyard, nor can it be Braddan III which was still serving as a lintel in the church tower. Braddan II and V are too fragmentary to act as a stile, so it cannot be them unless they were severely damaged before being refound. It looks then as though this must be Braddan I, but that is otherwise always recorded as forming "a door-step in the church".²⁵ Must we question that account of Braddan I, or is the stile stone one that has since been lost? The answer is probably supplied by Kinnebrook. He shows a stone which "forms the stile at the upper end of the Church-yard" at Braddan.²⁶ This, however, is a known cross which is non-runic, and which Kermode hesitatingly put in the pre-Viking period.²⁷ If, as seems likely, this is the stile stone referred to in the two 1836 accounts, they were independently in error in calling it runic.

What I have said raises the question of whether many Manx runic crosses were lost in comparatively recent times, before their runes were recorded. In the first half and indeed into the later nineteenth century there was little general care for the Manx rune-

stones. As early as 1731 G. Waldron had pointed to one general source of damage. "Having mentioned that there is no church-yard without a cross, I cannot forbear taking notice, that there is none which serves not also for a common to the parson's cattle; all his horses, his cows, and sheep, grazing there perpetually."²⁸ When Kinnebrook came to look for the monuments for his 1841 volume, he claimed that the task of recording them became "a tedious undertaking, from the absence of any complete guide to their situations, and the difficulty of obtaining information from the peasantry about things, in several instances, in their immediate neighbourhoods",²⁹ and this complaint confirms Oswald's remark that he had not seen or heard of two of Wilson's stones. Worse than this neglect was wanton destruction. "Within the last few months", laments Kinnebrook, "two very richly carved crosses, one if not both, with Runic inscriptions upon them, were broken in pieces to form a part of Kirk Michael Church wall, upon the top of which, the fragments may be seen imbedded in mortar."³⁰ In 1845 Train reported another way in which these crosses were lost to the island. At the orders of the Duke of Atholl, "many runic stones were shipped for Scotland, which may, perhaps, account for many of the crosses mentioned by Waldron, being now nowhere to be found."³¹ Perhaps it would be worth while searching the precincts of Blair Atholl. We know that one cross, Braddan II, was certainly shipped away, for it spent part of the nineteenth century in a private museum at Distington, Cumberland.³² As late as the end of that century, some of these crosses were subjected to unfortunate familiarities — Andreas I was used to post bills on, while photographs of Kirk Michael V show its base used as a place of rest for the aged and of play for the young. From another point of view, as early as 1887 Sir Henry Dryden pointed out that the island had an invasion of 150,000 tourists a year, and there was fear that unprotected stones would suffer from them.³³

For a new examination of the Manx rune-stones, then, it will be important to scrutinise the corpus. We shall want to know what evidence there is of stones being lost or inscriptions broken away in modern times. Parallel to this we shall want to search for early drawings or casts of stones to see if they can supply lost material.

From what I have said so far it is clear that a vigorous interest in these Manx antiquities began in the 1830s when Bally made his casts. Thereafter people like Kinnebrook and Cumming assiduously recorded well-known and new pieces, and towards

the end of the century the immensely active Kermode brought all the finds together into a coherent corpus and supplemented them by new discoveries, often of fragments that had been re-used as building material. Though I have mentioned chiefly these three important investigators, there were other scholars and amateurs who hold an honourable place in this study. For instance, the English writer George Borrow, a man with a magpie knowledge of languages, visited Man in 1855. When he was at Braddan he managed to persuade the church authorities to let him remove Braddan III from the wall of the church tower. So he revealed the inscription, and made not a bad attempt at transliterating and interpreting it.³⁴ To this extent the plenty of Manx rune-stones represents the vigour of those who looked for them. There is a related consideration, the effect on the statistics of the fact that a high proportion of Manx parish churches were rebuilt in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: Braddan in 1773, Andreas in 1821, Jurby in 1829, Onchan in 1833, Michael in 1835, St John's chapel in 1849 and Bride in 1870, while there was an extensive remodelling of Maughold at the end of the century. Several of the rune-stones, we know, came to light during these works.

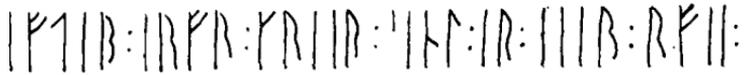
Before the 1830s there was a more desultory interest in these runes, but even from the earlier dates there may survive occasional useful drawings. For example, the Gibson and Gough depictions of Braddan IV apparently show the stone before it was shattered across the shaft, damage that occurred before Carrington's drawing. From them can be supplied a couple of characters damaged with the break, and they settle an interesting if minor problem of punctuation. However, the only early drawing of real importance that I have found so far is that of the mysterious Andreas runes of BL Loan 29/259. The description that precedes these runes says simply: "On the Edge of another stone in the same Churchyard [i.e. Andreas], toward the South, is the following Inscription, somewhat defaced at the Top; as are also the Animals Engraven on the other parts of the same." I do not know whether the runic transcript that follows represents the complete inscription or only its first part. Whoever copied the runes was only middling successful. Fortunately, the same hand recorded two inscriptions that still survive, so we can judge his accuracy and find out what sort of mistakes he made. He produced a quite careful drawing of Kirk Michael V, and a rather less successful one of Andreas II. From them it is clear that he had difficulty with the minor staves of letters, missing out a number of

those that convert a plain vertical stave into something else. Thus he draws | when he may mean ʀ, ʁ or ʁ; similarly he puts || for ʀ, and ʀ for ʁ. Again, the two runes u and r are not properly differentiated in some parts of these sketches. Taking these features into consideration it is possible to suggest a fairly complete reading for the (?) new Andreas text. I redraw it in the accompanying figure. My reconstructed text shows a number of



 . . b a n : s u n : m . . . n s : . a . s s : ʁ . . . a :

 . . b a n : s u n : m . . . n s : r a i s t i : k r u s : ʁ a i n a :



 . f t . r : . u f u : k u . . u : s . n . . : r : : u f . . :

 i f t i r : t u f u : k u i n u : s i n a : : u f a k :

letters that are not clearly recorded, but which can be guessed at from the context. After *krus* is a form of the article, and since it has four verticals after ʁ it is presumably *paina* as on Andreas IV. Thereafter follows some spelling of the word *aftir*, though the vowels must remain uncertain. The appearance of the transcribed runes just about suggests the verb *raisti* and this fits the context perfectly, but this word was not one of the draughtsman's better efforts and there should remain some doubt. The commemorated woman has a name ending in *ufu*, and it is convenient to suggest *Tofa* (cf. the oblique form *tufu* on the Gunderup, Jylland, stone I).³⁵ The sense of the text, as far as *kuinu sina*, fits in well with other Manx inscriptions, and validates the accuracy of the drawing. Andreas IV, now just a fragment, reads . . . r]ais(t)i (k)rus ʁaina aftir . . . in Olsen's transcript, which coincides nearly with the Wanley drawing, and despite some difficulty I am inclined to think that BL Loan 29/259 records an earlier and more complete form of that inscription. Strongly in favour is the deictic form *paina* which is otherwise unparalleled in Man, other spellings of the word having only two or three vertical staves after ʁ. Against is the final letter of *aftir*, which the manuscript shows clearly as r, while the stone has |, which seems to be the complete letter, not a fragment of it. The section after *sina* is hard to reconstruct, partly because we do not know if it is complete.

Parallel examples in Man and elsewhere in Scandinavian territory suggest that any addition to the simple memorial formula is either (a) a phrase or clause describing the deceased, or (b) a completely new sentence, perhaps defining the dead, perhaps speaking of the maker or carver of the monument.

A new examination of the Manx runic material should also lead us to question the traditional accounts of the find-spots of these monuments. Several of the stones were still standing when they were first recorded, though it would be incautious to assume that they had always occupied the sites they were found on. This group consists of Andreas I, II and V, Ballaugh, Braddan IV and Kirk Michael V. Kirk Michael VII was certainly standing, but it had been re-used as a headstone and dated 1699, and its runes were noticed only late. Another group of stones had been used as building material, and were dug out of walls or found when churches were demolished or repaired. This includes Braddan III, Bride, German (St John's) I, Maughold I and Kirk Michael III, all found in their respective churches, as well as Braddan I which, if not part of a stile, was a threshold slab at Braddan Old Church. There is a piquancy in some of these finds. The old chapel at St John's from whose walls the rune-stone came was rebuilt under Bishop Wilson's patronage in 1699-1704,³⁶ so even while he was recording the significance of the crosses, Wilson was allowing them to be walled up in new structures; 1699, the date of the re-use of Kirk Michael VII was during Wilson's episcopate and so when he was living in nearby Bishopscourt. It looks from this that Wilson was a less fervent preserver of Manx antiquities than has sometimes been said. Andreas III came from a churchyard wall, as did Braddan V, discovered in an accidental fall of stones. German (Peel) II was used as infilling in an arch in the ruined cathedral of Peel, which suggests that it was turned into building stone no earlier than the eighteenth century when that church fell into disrepair. Unfortunately, the early reports do not agree about where this stone was, for several mid-nineteenth-century writers record it in the south wall of the nave of the cathedral, while Kermodé had it removed from the east wall of the north transept.³⁷ Maybe this stone was used several times for patching up the fabric before Kermodé rescued it, and it may have suffered a good deal of damage in the process. Andreas IV was pulled out of the wall of the rectory stable at Andreas, built after the destructive storm of 1839³⁸ (though if this is the same as the stone drawn in BL Loan 29/259 it stood before that in the churchyard),

and Maughold V until recently formed a flooring slab in a cottage in that village. Four Michael stones, I, II, IV and VI were built into the churchyard wall apparently in the first half of the nineteenth century; in 1845 Braddan II is said to have been lying at the base of Braddan IV; but where all these were before we do not know. Three stones were retrieved from gardens: Jurby at or near the vicarage, Kirk Michael VIII next door to the church, and Onchan in a village cottage garden. These could have been brought in from anywhere, though Onchan is said to have come from the belfry of the old church of the place.³⁹ The Marown (Rhyne) stone was picked up from a stackyard of a farm, and its finder suggested that it came from a nearby chapel that had been levelled. Balleigh came from an ancient burial ground. Finally there are three Maughold stones. Maughold IV certainly came from that churchyard, from a controlled excavation near the north keel. Maughold II was a casual find in the Corna valley, and the finder, S. N. Harrison thought it came from the ruined chapel of Keel Woirrey, which is some distance from Maughold church. Maughold III is from Ballagilly, over a mile from Maughold, where there is also a ruined chapel.

From this it is clear that the present method of naming stones by the parish they come from is misleading, since it lumps together stones from quite different sites. To prevent confusion or difficulty in reference I propose we keep the traditional names, but add in brackets the precise site of the find if it is known. Thus we have the following corpus of Manx Norse runes:

1 Andreas I	standing, outside churchyard
2 Andreas II	standing, churchyard
3 Andreas III	building stone, ? churchyard wall
4 Andreas IV	? standing/building stone in rectory
5 Andreas V	standing, churchyard
6 Ballaugh	standing, churchyard
7 Balleigh	burial ground, ? foundations of chapel
8 Braddan I	church doorstep
9 Braddan II	? churchyard
10 Braddan III	building stone, church tower
11 Braddan IV	standing, churchyard
12 Braddan V	building stone, churchyard wall
13 Bride	building stone, church
14 German (St John's) I	building stone, church
15 German (Peel) II	building stone, cathedral
16 Jurby	vicarage garden
17 Kirk Michael I	? building stone, church/churchyard wall
18 Kirk Michael II	building stone, church

19 Kirk Michael III	building stone, church
20 Kirk Michael IV	churchyard wall
21 Kirk Michael V	standing, outside churchyard
22 Kirk Michael VI	churchyard wall
23 Kirk Michael VII	re-used as headstone of grave
24 Kirk Michael VIII	garden next door to church
25 Marown (Rhyne)	farmyard, ? from nearby chapel
26 Maughold I	building stone, church
27 Maughold (Corna valley) II	casual find, ? from chapel
28 Maughold (Ballagilley) III	keel and burial ground
29 Maughold IV	churchyard, ? standing on secondary site
30 Maughold V	building stone, cottage
31 Onchan	cottage garden, ? building stone, church belfry

From this list it is clear that there is a close connection between the rune-stones and churchyards; and this is reasonable enough if you assume that the stones are (in almost every case) grave-stones. Many have assumed that, but is it necessary to? In Scandinavia there are certainly many rune-stones that cannot be grave-stones since they record the death (and sometimes even the burial) of a man far from home. These are memorial stones but not grave-stones. Other Scandinavian examples are put up by a man in his own honour, erected while he was still alive (and there is some parallel to these in Kirk Michael II, set up to secure the man's own soul). Further, there are numbers of Viking Age stones in Scandinavia that do not stand on burials, but are placed at other strategic sites, by a road-side, at a bridge-point, or at a legal meeting-place. The stone stands somewhere that people pass regularly, so the dead man's memory is kept green. Kermode records similar finds of incised (non-runic) stones in Man. It would therefore be as well to examine the runic list to see what justification there is for placing so many of the Manx stones in or near burial sites. As far as I know there is no established case of a Manx rune-stone being found in clear connection with its burial. Maughold IV was discovered at a grave and during proper excavation, but from Kermode's slightly confused account it looks as though this was a secondary use of the stone.⁴⁰ Of the six stones first recorded as standing, four were in churchyards: Andreas II, Andreas V, Ballaugh and Braddan IV (as well as the stone of BL Loan 29/259). Two were not in churchyards: Andreas I on the village green and Kirk Michael V on the road-side in the middle of the village. So far our first accounts go, though here it is important to stress the danger of trusting early accounts if they are not adequately supported. Of Kirk Michael V, H. I. Jenkinson's *Practical Guide to The Isle of Man* (1874)

says that it was “found many years ago about a foot below the surface of the ground, in what is called the Chapel Field, or the Vicar’s Glebe”, and several other guides of the same period tell the same tale, putting the find-date “about a century ago”.⁴¹ Yet an entry in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* for 1798 says that it had “been removed from a field, where it formerly stood, near the Bishop’s court”.⁴² These stories of the moving of Kirk Michael V would be more convincing had we not got a series of records of this stone, beginning with Wanley and Bishop Wilson and continuing until the end of the nineteenth century showing that it stood by the roadside. On the opposite side we must note that in 1841 Kinnebrook saw the Andreas I stone on a prominent site “on the green, near the entrance to the Church-yard”.⁴³ It is surely curious that Oswald, c. 1820, recording Andreas II, failed to notice Andreas I if it then occupied so distinctive a position. Nor, as far as I have found, did any earlier writer see the stone on the green. We must reckon with the possibility that Andreas I was put there at a comparatively late date. There is a similar uncertainty in the case of the Ballaugh stone. Kinnebrook found it “in Ballaugh old Church-yard, on the south side of the Church”,⁴⁴ but an unattributed newspaper cutting among Kermode’s papers speaks of an ancient cross that “used to stand on a mound outside the old Churchyard”, but which had been moved inside it, while Feltham also spoke of an early cross outside the churchyard, though he saw it on a mount, not a mound.⁴⁵ There is no certainty that this was the rune-stone, but it may have been. Clearly, early find-reports need scrutiny. However, as far as we can tell, of the six or seven standing stones, two were not obviously over burials. Of the rest of the crosses, we can have no clear information of Jurby or Kirk Michael VIII, found in gardens; Onchan, also found in a garden, is reported to come from a church belfry but on no great authority. Maughold V can have come from anywhere in a job lot of paving stone. Balleigh was discovered “loose in the foundations of what may have been a chapel” connected with an early Christian burial place. I wonder if the foundations were identified as a chapel because a rune-stone (assumed to be a grave-stone) was found in them. The other stones from this early Christian burial place are much earlier — by several centuries — than the Balleigh rune-stone, so there may be no continuity of use of the site.⁴⁶ There is at least the possibility that the foundations were of a later secular building, and that the runic fragment was brought as building stone from somewhere quite different. The

Marown (Rhyne) stone was discovered in a farm stackyard, and it is guesswork only that links it to the nearby chapel and graveyard "which had been completely razed".⁴⁷ Maughold (Corna valley) II is a casual find by the river. Its text links it to the valley, but its discoverer recorded the tradition "that it had been carried down from an old burial ground some distance away . . . called Cabbal Keel Woirey".⁴⁸ This, however, is a stone that is not a grave-stone (nor, as for that, Viking Age), and the name of the rune-master (as far as it can be read) connects it to the Maughold I stone from the fabric of the church at Maughold. Finally, the connection between Maughold III and the ruined chapel at Ballagilley needs examination to see if this stone was not, in fact, simply a roadside cross, for Ballagilley stands on one of the roads from Ramsey to Laxey.

My purpose in looking critically at the early reports of these stones is only to draw attention to the fact that any distribution diagram of them can only be an approximate one, and that it will not be possible to draw too precise conclusions from it. There are a number of nineteenth-century reports — which perhaps we should not take too seriously — of sculptured stones being moved from one site in Man to another, and the earliest recorded whereabouts of the rune-stones may be misleading.

At this stage it is worth looking outside Man to the country, Norway, whose rune-stones are nearest in type to the Manx ones. A look at the Norwegian material produces interesting parallel information that ought to be taken note of.

(i) Though these stones, as in Man, are commemorative stones, they are not necessarily grave-stones, and so do not have to be linked to a church or a burial ground. An instructive example is the monument from Dynna, Hadeland. Like many of the Manx crosses this is a slim slab with the inscription cut up one edge. Like many of them it has a Christian reference on the face — on Dynna it is an Epiphany scene — but there is no Christianity in the text. Though it is a commemorative stone, it was not found in a churchyard: it is first recorded on a mound of unknown date close to the farm buildings at Nordre Dynna.⁴⁹ Presumably since it is a Christian monument, the remains of the girl it commemorates can hardly have been in the mound. Of the four runic crosses recorded from Viking Age Norway, two were found near churches — Njærheim I and Svanøy. Two seem to come from secular sites — Stavanger III on a hill near the highroad, and Tangerhaug from the farm at Sele. Such find-spots, a major

farm or a position by the highroad, are not uncommon in Norway, and of course *Hávamál* v. 72 records the second:

sialdan bautarsteinar standa brauto nær,
nema reisi niðr at nið.

(ii) Runic studies flourished earlier in Norway than in Man. In consequence there are detailed accounts of the Norwegian rune-stones from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These reveal how many important stones vanished in comparatively recent years. Of the four runic crosses I have just mentioned, two are now lost. Bishop Wegner recorded Njærheim I in 1639. It was in pieces by 1712 and had gone altogether by 1745. Wegner also recorded the Tangerhaug stone, but by 1745 only a couple of bits of it survived, and these have since disappeared. Stones seem regularly to have been lost in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries despite both a general and an official interest in them. One at Gran church in Oppland (Gran II) was preserved by being built into the church wall where it was seen as early as 1627. It was still there in the 1820s but is now lost; it is intriguing to speculate how you can lose a stone out of a church wall. The Sørbo I stone, Rogaland, was reported by Wegner but lost by 1745. Galteland also appears in Wegner's records, and was still standing in 1821. Shortly after that it fell down (when an antiquary was examining it, having dug out the base to see it more clearly) and it broke, though without destroying the runes nor the antiquary neither. Later the bits were used as building material, and now the stone exists in seven fragments, with some of the inscription gone. The volumes of *Norges innskrifter med de yngre runer* give many a sad tale of vandalism, for the Norwegian workman was quite happy to break up rune-stones so that they could be used in foundations of buildings or of roads. There is no reason to think the Manx workman of recent centuries was more considerate, but we lack early reports and cannot trace losses. The case of Andreas IV (if that is what BL Loan 29/259 represents) looks a parallel example. According to Kinnebrook some of the Kirk Michael stones are others. As well as destruction there is the neglect that many Norwegian stones suffered over the years. For example, the Alstad stone. For centuries it stood amidst the farm at Alstad. At one time it was used for target practice, as shown by numerous pittings of the surface made by iron-headed bolts. At others the stone served as a whetstone for knives, axes and scythes. During building work nearby a beam lowered from the roof struck the stone and knocked it in two. The

find-histories of the Norwegian stones are very like those of the Manx ones. Besides standing stones, rune-stones come from a variety of sources, re-used as building material in church and secular buildings, as steps or threshold stones to churches, dug up in churchyards and elsewhere, used in walls. It seems likely, then, that we can use the better recorded Norwegian experience to cast light on the Manx.

(iii) The Norwegian accounts show several authenticated cases of rune-stones travelling about in modern times, apart that is from their removal to museums. Few people, I would have thought, would want to lug a heavy stone about, but some obviously did. The Stangeland stone, for instance, stood for a long time by the highway on Stangeland farm. Then it served for many years as a bridge-stone over the river, and thereafter was set by the fence near the road-side, its rune side down. Subsequently the stone was raised up again, on the same spot as it had originally occupied. Helland II once stood on a mound near the farm. By 1745 it had been put in the middle of the farm yard. By 1902 it was back on its former site. Obviously we must be cautious in assuming that the first recorded place of a stone represents its original position. On the other hand, *Norges innskrifter med de yngre runer* cites several cases of folk traditions about the transport of rune-stones from one place to another which turn out to be completely false. Apparently in this matter the Norwegian evidence advises us to suspend both belief and disbelief.

Applying Norwegian experience to Man, I conclude that:

(a) Wilson's comment that there "are more *Runick Inscriptions* to be met with in this Island, than perhaps in any other Nation" needs following up. We have probably lost a good number of inscriptions in the last three centuries, and some of them may turn up when buildings are demolished. Of the forty or so rune-stones from Viking Norway, some ten are lost. The Isle of Man may have lost at least as many in recent centuries.

(b) damage to the extant rune-stones may be comparatively recent, and early drawings may help to reconstruct their texts. One important aspect of any new study will involve a search for early references and sketches, and a critical assessment of their worth. Even the casts may yield information despite the savage criticisms that Guðbrandur Vigfússon brought against them.⁵⁰ Some of Cumming's rubbings and sketches survive, and they deserve attention.⁵¹

This discussion has gone far from the original question: why

were there so many Manx rune-stones? I would like now to return to that by a circuitous route. Several scholars have looked at the Manx inscriptions to see what influence Celtic may have had upon their language. To take two examples. In his 1954 corpus Magnus Olsen noted certain traits of word order that he thought the effect of Celtic patterns of speech, and observed the number of Celtic personal names in the texts, and the inflexional confusion that he felt likely to arise in a bilingual society.⁵² In 1937 Marstrander had denied there was much Celtic influence in the inscriptions, though he detected one case, as he thought, of the effect of Celtic ecclesiastical phraseology, and remarked in Maughold II (a twelfth-century stone) Celtic modification of the Norse phonetic system.⁵³

The new Andreas text (from BL Loan 29/259) may add a little here. We have already become accustomed to families celebrated in Manx inscriptions, some of whose members had Celtic names and some Norse. Braddan IV records one Fiak whose father was called Þorleifr and uncle Hafr. Kirk Michael III mentions a family with Celtic names whose daughter married one Aðisl. Braddan I has a man called Krinán whose son was Ófeigr. The new Andreas example supplies one more case to this list, but with a difference. For the wife commemorated on the stone it is easy to fit a Norse name, as *Tofa*, while no Celtic name suits the context. The men's names are not so accommodating. The only Scandinavian name that fits the genitive *m . . . ns* (with the third rune either *u* or *r*) seems to be some spelling of *Marteinn*, and that is post-Viking Age in both Norway and Iceland. On the other hand, Old Irish could supply such names as *Marcán*, *Martan*, *Mercán*, *Mercón*. The first masculine name of the inscription, . . *ban*, could also be Irish, for *-án* is a common diminutive ending, as in *Dubán*. A Welsh name may also be possible in the Manx context, perhaps some spelling of Old Welsh *Mermin*, a name recorded early on Man. The son's name could then be Old Welsh *Urban*.⁵⁴ Name does not clearly indicate race, but there is here the possibility, perhaps likelihood, of a Norse woman marrying a Celtic man, where hitherto we have had Norse-named men marrying Celtic-named women. This implication of a very close contact between the two races needs more examination, for it may be the key to the problem of the large number of Manx rune-stones.

In general the Manx runic crosses stick closely to the common Norse memorial formula, but there is one important difference. Whereas the Scandinavian examples speak of raising a stone, the

Manx ones raise a cross, **krus**. Even where the Scandinavian stones are in fact cross-shaped or strongly decorated with a cross motif, the word used on them is nevertheless *steinn*. Of the four Norwegian runic crosses, the three that can be clearly read have *steinn*, even Stavanger III which was erected by a priest. Only on Svanoøy has Aslak Liestøl proposed that the formula included the word *kross*, though the state of the inscription suggests that this is guesswork rather than certainty. Otherwise, if the index of *Norges innskrifter med de yngre runer* is any guide, *kross* is late and rare in Norwegian epigraphy. Denmark also avoids the word. The Manx usage is then local and virtually unique (there are examples on the Inchmarnock, Buteshire, and the Killaloe, Co. Clare, crosses, as well as **kurs** on the Kilbar, Barra, cross), and probably represents the influence of Latin or Celtic usage. A tentative theory is that the Manx rune-stones indicate the conflation of two cultures, the indigenous Celtic and the incoming Norse. The Manx people had a long tradition of erecting stones of various designs, but often with a cross prominent in their decoration. They are usually without inscription. The Norse had a tradition, not rich but adequate, of putting up memorial stones with inscriptions. When the two nations came together, the Norse tradition was enriched by the Celtic, or the Celtic modified by the Norse, and hence the Manx runic memorial cross with its typical memorial formula.⁵⁵

¹ Magnus Olsen, 'Runic Inscriptions in Great Britain, Ireland and The Isle of Man', *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* (ed. H. Shetelig, 1940-54), VI 151-233, especially 182-232. Note that in his introduction (p. 153) Olsen wrongly lists the late stones Maughold I and II as Marown I and II.

² There is a detailed bibliography in H. Marquardt, *Bibliographie der Runeninschriften nach Fundorten I Die Runeninschriften der Britischen Inseln* (1961), 55-82.

³ The number of Manx Viking stones must remain approximate here because of the uncertainty of some of the dating. There are, moreover, special cases such as that of the Onchan stone which is pre-Viking but with runes added in more than one hand, as well as a number of stones that have runic graffiti added.

⁴ A. M. Cubbon gives more up-to-date details of numbers in 'Viking Runes: Outstanding New Discovery at Maughold', *The Journal of The Manx Museum* VII, no. 82 (1966), 23-6, though his figures include post-Viking monuments.

⁵ The acid soils of the Isle of Man do not preserve wood and bone, and there are few finds of precious metals on which runes might remain. Non-precious metals discovered are usually in so poor a state that any runes they may have held are now illegible.

⁶ Unfortunately there are several different methods of numbering the Manx carved stones. Two principal ones derive from (i) P. M. C. Kermode's corpus *Manx Crosses* (1907), and (ii) the Manx Museum catalogue. In addition Olsen uses Brate's numbering. Olsen's own order is alphabetical according to parish name (save for Balleigh which is listed under its find-spot), and he numbers the various rune-stones from the same parish in a haphazard order that pays no attention to the date either of the carving or of the discovery. There are too many numbering systems already to make it desirable to add another, so I follow Olsen, though I differ slightly in some name forms. For instance, I follow the Ordnance Survey map in distinguishing Kirk Michael from Michael, and in calling Conchan Onchan.

⁷ *Camden's Britannia* (ed. E. Gibson, 1722), 1458-9.

⁸ *Camden's Britannia* (ed. R. Gough, 1789), III 704.

⁹ 'Account of a Stone with a Runic Inscription . . . and of Some Other Inscriptions of the Same Kind in The Isle of Man'. *Archaeologia Scotica or Transactions of The Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* II, ii (1823), 491-4.

¹⁰ There are varying accounts of these casts and of the later ones that Cumming had made. Sir Henry Dryden's version, which ought to have some authority, is given in a letter to *The Academy* XXXI (Jan.-June 1887), 202-3.

¹¹ J. G. Cumming, 'On the Inscribed Stones of The Isle of Man'. *Proceedings of The Royal Irish Academy* VI (1853-7, delivered 1854), 73-7.

¹² J. G. Cumming, 'On Some More Recently Discovered Scandinavian Crosses in The Isle of Man'. *Archaeologia Cambrensis* XII, Third Series (1866), 460-2.

¹³ *Camden's Britannia* (1722), 1455.

¹⁴ R. Townley, *A Journal Kept in The Isle of Man . . .* (1791), I 82. There is a detailed bibliography of the early guidebooks and journals in W. Cubbon, *A Bibliographical Account of Works Relating to The Isle of Man* (1933).

¹⁵ Townley (1791), I 47-9.

¹⁶ J. Feltham, *A Tour through The Island of Mann, in 1797 and 1798* (1798), especially 202.

¹⁷ Townley (1791), I 156-8.

¹⁸ Townley (1791), I 173, 175-6.

¹⁹ Townley (1791), II 166.

²⁰ W. Kneale, *Guide to The Isle of Man* (n.d., c. 1860), 108.

²¹ Woods (1811), 168.

²² W. Thwaites, *Isle of Man* [1863], 396; Kneale (1860?), 108.

²³ Welch (1836), 56.

²⁴ *Illustrated Guide* (1836), 72.

²⁵ Cumming (1866), 460.

²⁶ W. Kinnebrook, *Etchings of The Runic Monuments in The Isle of Man* (1841), 14 and no. 24.

²⁷ Kermode (1907), 130-1. To add to the confusion, J. Train describes Braddan IV as "forming a stile" at the churchyard entrance, while at the same time recording it in the centre of the churchyard (*An Historical and Statistical Account of The Isle of Man*, 1845, II 32).

²⁸ G. Waldron, *A Description of The Isle of Man* (ed. W. Harrison, 1865), 61.

²⁹ Kinnebrook (1841), preface.

³⁰ Kinnebrook (1841), 9.

³¹ Train (1845), II 31.

³² J. G. Cumming, *The Runic and Other Monumental Remains of The Isle of Man* (1857), 24.

³³ *The Academy* XXXI (Jan.-June 1887), 203.

³⁴ Braddan III's runes are first illustrated in 'Ancient Runic Stone, Recently Found in The Isle of Man'. *Illustrated London News*, 8 December 1855, 685, which presumably derives from Borrow. There may be further details in Borrow's Isle of Man journal whose manuscript survives in the Library of the Hispanic Society of America, where, however, it is not generally available. There are quotations from it in W. I. Knapp, *Life, Writings, and Correspondence of George Borrow* (1899), II 144. See also Borrow's 'An Expedition to The Isle of Man', published in C. K. Shorter's edition of the complete works (1923-4), *Miscellanies II* (vol. 16, 454-500), and Shorter's book *George Borrow and his Circle* (1913), 296-303.

³⁵ L. Jacobsen and E. Moltke, *Danmarks runeindskrifter* (1941-2), Text 180. *Tofa* is comparatively rare and late in West Norse, and it might be desirable to seek another, and more likely, name to fit the Andreas context.

³⁶ W. Harrison, *Records of the Tynwald and Saint John's Chapels in The Isle of Man* (1871), 50.

³⁷ J. L. Petit, 'Ecclesiastical Antiquities of The Isle of Man. Cathedral of St. German, in Peel Castle', *The Archaeological Journal* III (1846), 58; Kneale (1860?), 171; Kermode (1907), 209.

³⁸ J. B. Loughton, *A New Historical, Topographical, and Parochial Guide to The Isle of Mann* (1842), 91.

³⁹ Thwaites [1863], 396-7.

⁴⁰ P. M. C. Kermode, 'Further Discoveries of Cross-Slabs in The Isle of Man', *Proceedings of The Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* L (1915-16), 55-6.

⁴¹ Jenkinson (1874), 109; Thwaites [1863], 375.

⁴² *Gentleman's Magazine* LXVIII (1798), 749.

⁴³ Kinnebrook (1841), 11.

⁴⁴ Kinnebrook (1841), 11.

⁴⁵ Feltham (1798), 188.

⁴⁶ P. M. C. Kermode, 'More Cross-Slabs from The Isle of Man', *Proceedings of The Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* LXIII (1928-9), 357-60.

⁴⁷ Jenkinson (1874), 37.

⁴⁸ S. N. Harrison in *Yn Lioar Manninagh* I, ii (1888-9), 140.

⁴⁹ Details of the Norwegian rune-stones are taken from their entries in M. Olsen, *Norges innskrifter med de yngre runer* (1941-60).

⁵⁰ *The Academy* XXXI (Jan.-June 1887), 168.

³¹ The Cumming material is MS Top. Man a1, a manuscript not easily traceable in the Bodleian Library.

³² Olsen in Shetelig (1940-54), VI 224-7.

³³ C. J. S. Marstrander, 'Om sproget i de manske runeinnskrifter', *Norsk Tidsskrift for Sprogvidenskap* VIII (1937), 247, 254-5.

³⁴ I am grateful to Patrick Sims-Williams for help in identifying possible Celtic names for the Andreas inscription.

³⁵ I would like to thank Mr A. M. Cubbon, Director of the Manx Museum, and Miss A. Harrison, Librarian of that institution, for their splendid guidance on some of the problems discussed here. Also I thank the British Academy for the generous grant that enabled me to carry out this work.

BRUNANBURH REVISITED

By MICHAEL WOOD

DESPITE the great fame of the battle fought there in AD 937, the site of *Brunanburh* remains unidentified. Indeed there has not even been agreement among historians over the general theatre of war. The question has more than antiquarian significance. Battle sites in the early medieval period often tell us important facts about wars: what they were fought for; which peoples participated; whether, for instance, an overlord had the support of his subject peoples or was opposed by them. In the case of *Brunanburh*, we have not only a decisive event in early British history, but one which raises specific problems in the history of northern England in the Viking age. Over fifty years ago in a famous article Sir Allen Mawer speculated that the identification of the battlefield would advance our understanding of the antagonisms between the Danes of the Five Boroughs and the new Norse settlers of Yorkshire in the period before 942.¹ This was no more than a conjecture, of course, but with hindsight a notable one, in tone with that author's subtle interpretation of the OE poem in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for 942. At present we are no nearer finding the battle site than Sir Allen was, and it is still true to say (as Alistair Campbell did in 1938)² that the evidence does not exist to establish it beyond all doubt. However, this is not to say that "all hope of localising Brunanburh is lost" as Campbell's study of the OE poem on the battle concluded.³ Our knowledge of Viking Northumbria has improved immeasurably since Campbell wrote, and we are now in a far better position to define the context of the war than he was. This note is intended to clarify the course of the campaign in the light of recent archaeological, textual and place-name research. It will propose a precise new localisation for *Brunanburh*, following Sir Allen Mawer's line of approach, namely that close attention to the politics of the North in the second quarter of the tenth century is a better guide than the guesswork employed by most historians of the battle in the last 150 years.

Over thirty sites have been put forward for *Brunanburh*, ranging from Scotland to the south of England,⁴ but we can be

sure first of all that the object of the 937 invasion was Northumbria. This is made clear in a passage quoted verbatim by William of Malmesbury from a Latin panegyric on Athelstan in a traditional usage which can be paralleled in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* and other eighth century sources: *Scottorum rege volente, Commodat assensum borealis terra serenum . . . Cedunt indigenae, cedit plaga tota superbis.*⁵ The use of *borealis* or *aquilonis* (*plaga, regnum, terra*) for Northumbria is commonplace in early sources on the North, but the correct translation of this passage has not appeared in any modern work on the war. The panegyric also says here that the Northumbrians submitted to the invaders (the author twice uses the verb *cedere*) and the pointed expression *assensum serenum* shows that they did so willingly, even gladly, and not with "a quiet assent", as the *English Historical Documents* version has it. These references indicate that the Northumbrians sided with the invaders, and although Stenton thought there was no evidence for this,⁶ it is not merely the Latin poem which says so. The *Annals of Clonmacnoise* state definitely that the allies gave battle with the support of Danes within England who can hardly be other than Northumbrian.⁷

This gives us a start. If the Northumbrians submitted to Anlaf Guthfrith's son, as they did immediately following Athelstan's death in 939, then York was undoubtedly at the centre of these events, as it was in all the wars between the Norse of York and their allies on the one hand and the southern English on the other in the period 927-54. In other words, we can be sure that the focus is not Bernicia or the lands west of the Pennines, but *Eboracum et ejus fines*,⁸ where throughout this period Archbishop Wulfstan and the *Norðhymbra witan*, the *proceres Northanhymbrorum*,⁹ were tempted to renounce their allegiance to the West-Saxon overlords in favour of Norse kings and *condottieri*. This region was the patrimony of the "grandsons of Ívarr" and Anlaf Guthfrith's son had undertaken the expedition to regain it. This is the true background to *Brunanburh*.

The war then has a clear course. It resembles that of 939 when Anlaf Guthfrith's son took a fleet to York right at the end of the year, received the Northumbrian submission and waited until the next campaigning season before striking into Mercia.¹⁰ In 937, whether the allies came separately over the Irish Sea from Dublin and overland by the well-used early medieval routes through Cumbria and Bernicia, or whether they landed their combined

fleet in the Humber, as an annal probably deriving from York around the year 1000 says,¹¹ they united in southern Northumbria and received the allegiance of the Anglo-Scandinavian aristocracy of that region in York or nearby. As in 939 the submission would have been previously negotiated by diplomacy, and the Welsh poem *Armes Prydein*, as elucidated by Sir Ifor Williams, shows that precisely such moves were being fomented at this time in the Celtic fringe of Britain.¹² The tradition of Celtic alliance with the Danes of Northumbria against the southern English goes back at least as far as the time of Rhodri Mawr, and we also know now that there were early antecedents for the cooperation between the Scottish king and the Dublin Danes.¹³ In this respect the "Florence" annal seems to contain a valuable survival in its assertion that Constantine had married a daughter to Anlaf son of Sihtric and was the instigator of the 937 coalition.¹⁴

We also know that the invasion came into Northumbria late in the year. The battle itself was fought after September 24th, for it was originally dated under 938 in the Parker MS of the *Chronicle*.¹⁵ Other evidence backs this up. Anlaf Guthfrith's son was still recruiting deep inside Ireland at the start of August when he press-ganged "the Foreigners of Loch Ribh . . . breaking their ships".¹⁶ Athelstan himself may have been on the south coast of England on August 21st, making contact with Louis d'Outremer.¹⁷ Anlaf Guthfrith's son's arrival in Dublin "with a few" after the battle is recorded in the New Year of 938 by annals dating on the calendar year.¹⁸ Taken together, these facts indicate that the campaign was to come in the autumn, and from this we can learn several important facts about the course of the war.

With reference to Anlaf's invasion of 939, Murray Beavan noted that the common practice was to start major campaigns in the late summer or early autumn (not least because the harvest facilitated supply) and he was able to show that the armament for Northumbria left Dublin before the end of 939, in fact in the last two months of the year.¹⁹ Beavan also suggested that the campaign in Danish Mercia in 940 commenced in the late summer. In this context we may take the late date of the *Brunanburh* invasion as good evidence that the allies did not intend to march into southern England in 937, but to winter in Northumbria and strike south in the 938 campaigning season.

Bearing that in mind we can make a further deduction, though more tenuous. In 937 and in 939 the Northumbrians welcomed

Anlaf son of Guthfrith and gave him support against the *Suðangli*. But when Anlaf devastated the Five Boroughs in 940 and won them by treaty from king Edmund, it seems that the second and third generation Danish settlers there were far from happy with their new Norse lords.²⁰ This could well have a bearing on the events of 937, as Sir Allen Mawer suggested. Our next information about the *Brunanburh* campaign, from the Latin panegyric, is that after the allies had received the submission of the Northumbrians, they proceeded to ravage in an area which the panegyricist considered friendly to Athelstan.²¹ The *agricolae* and *miseri* driven off the land are clearly depicted as considering Athelstan their protector, just as in the OE poem for 942 Edmund is viewed as the liberator of the Danes of the Five Boroughs from Norse oppression. The likeliest interpretation of this admittedly vague evidence is that part of the Five Boroughs is referred to here. A southern writer would hardly speak of the Northumbrians in this fashion (nor does the context of the poem suggest that), and the allies would surely not destroy their own area of support, even though armies in this period were notoriously difficult to control. We may therefore conjecture that the damage inflicted on Athelstan's subjects took place in the northern reaches of Danish Mercia, an area known to be to some degree favourable to the West-Saxon king, hostile to the Norse-Irish following of the Clan Ívarr, and antipathetic to their paganism. The OE poem in the *Chronicle* for 942 claims that after fourteen years of Athelstan's rule, the population of the Five Boroughs had come to regard his successor as their natural lord, and if Anlaf Guthfrith's son did not know this, then his Scandinavian supporters within England, men like *comes Urm*,²² could have told him.

In September or October then, the Northumbrians had thrown in their lot with the invaders, and the mounted columns mentioned in the panegyric struck south and ravaged in the time-honoured manner of Viking and British armies in England, their aim presumably to disaffect the population and to take plunder, perhaps also to draw Athelstan to them. What would Athelstan, "the thunderbolt", do, the man who in his youth had done enough to subdue his enemies "by terror of his name alone"?²³ Not much, according to the panegyricist. Most strangely in such a work, the king is accused of virtual dereliction of duty, of lassitude and complacency.²⁴ The author of the poem strongly rebukes the king for failing to make an immediate attack while a savage and boastful enemy with a "countless host of mounted troops" made

havoc within his *regnum*. A considerable delay seems to have ensued, and it may have been, as Christopher Blunt has suggested,²⁵ that the strange double obverses produced at this time in York and Nottingham are products of this hiatus, the work of moneyers who were unwilling to put the king's name on their coins while the issue was undecided. Eventually, our author says, "complaining rumour" roused the king, and when his attack came, it was rapid, *non mora*.²⁶ The clerical bias of this account cannot tell the whole story. We may presume that the writer was doing no more than voice the common view that "a wise king sits elevated on a high watchtower, provident and militant" as a tenth-century poem from Winchester puts it,²⁷ keeping the view in readiness for war. In fact, we have evidence both from Anglo-Saxon England and from the continent which shows how difficult it was for large armies to be raised quickly unless the king himself was present. The *Chronicle's* comments in 1016 are a well-known example, but an analogy nearer in time is the tiny army gathered by Otto of Germany at the Lech, hastily summoned within a month of the battle, and considered by contemporaries as small for the job in hand.²⁸ In the case of *Brunanburh* our sources are in such agreement about the scale of the warfare²⁹ that we may assume the English army to have been far larger than was customary on royal expeditionary campaigns of the period. This, rather than sloth, would be the true explanation of Athelstan's delay which was so conspicuous to his biographer.

So Athelstan took his time and gathered his West-Saxon and Mercian *fyrð*. Meanwhile, as in any war, atrocity stories were carried south by the refugees who fled away from the columns of smoke.³⁰ Here we must remember that we are dealing not only with the Norse-Irish and their ambivalent attitude to the Danish settlers, but also with the Picts, Scots, Strathclyde Welsh and Cumbrians and their ancient racial antagonisms to the Anglo-Saxons. For them this was merely the biggest and deepest of numerous destructive forays which Scottish kings led far into Northumbria in the tenth century in search of cattle, slaves and booty.³¹ The aggressive expansion of Constantine's dynasty in this period in the Northumbrian borderlands is an ignored aspect of tenth-century history.³² This expansion, together with their previous diplomatic alliances with Danes, Norse and the English of Bernicia, made it natural that they should commit their resources to an expedition much farther south than the Tyne-Tees region where they had traditionally waged war.

There is however no unambiguous mention of the North Welsh in our sources, despite the fact that their participation in the alliance was confidently anticipated in Wales in the 930s, and despite Idwal Foel of Gwynedd's inveterate hostility to the West-Saxon kings.³³ There are indeed mentions of "Welsh" and "Britons" in Anglo-Norman and Irish material which could mean the North Welsh, but they almost certainly signify the Strathclyde Welsh, who we know were at the battle.³⁴ Of course it is not impossible that bands of noble mercenaries left Gwynedd to join the invaders, just as Breton *milites* might be among Athelstan's following,³⁵ but it seems clear that Idwal himself did not lead his army into Northumbria: he was an important figure in the English and Celtic worlds,³⁶ and had the North Welsh fought at *Brunanburh* this would surely have merited mention in one of our sources, not least in the eyes of the author of the OE poem on the battle. Using the *Armes*, we might speculate that the agreement reached through diplomacy was that Idwal would bring his forces into the campaign of 938, perhaps to attack Athelstan's western frontier. Or was the hostile presence of Hywel Dda and the "Anglophile" kings of South Wales enough of a deterrent to Idwal in 937, as Sir John Lloyd suggested?³⁷ Much of the history of Wales in this period is hopelessly obscure, but it is worth noting here that in 942 Edmund was obliged to fight wars on both flanks, liberating the Five Boroughs and killing Idwal Foel.³⁸ The threat of North Welsh alliance with the Northumbrians existed long into the tenth century, but we have no evidence that it materialised in 937. Accordingly we should not try to recover the strategy of the campaign by reference to a hypothetical Welsh connection.

The overall picture from our primary sources is clear. Late in the year the allies were established in southern Northumbria and ravaging, presumably southwards. After a long delay Athelstan took a great levy out of Wessex and Mercia and attacked them (both the Latin and OE poems are clear that the king took the offensive).³⁹ As in many famous battles of the period the final advance was made at dawn, and in a huge and savage struggle the English won a complete victory. The earliest sources describe a regular pitched battle between dense infantry lines, not a rout. Bands of West-Saxon troops who were probably mounted (*eorodciste*) then harried the defeated invaders in a sustained pursuit which lasted *ondlongne dæg*, "all through the day", a phrase which perhaps indicates that the battlefield was at least the best part of a day's ride from the ships.⁴⁰ This account leaves an

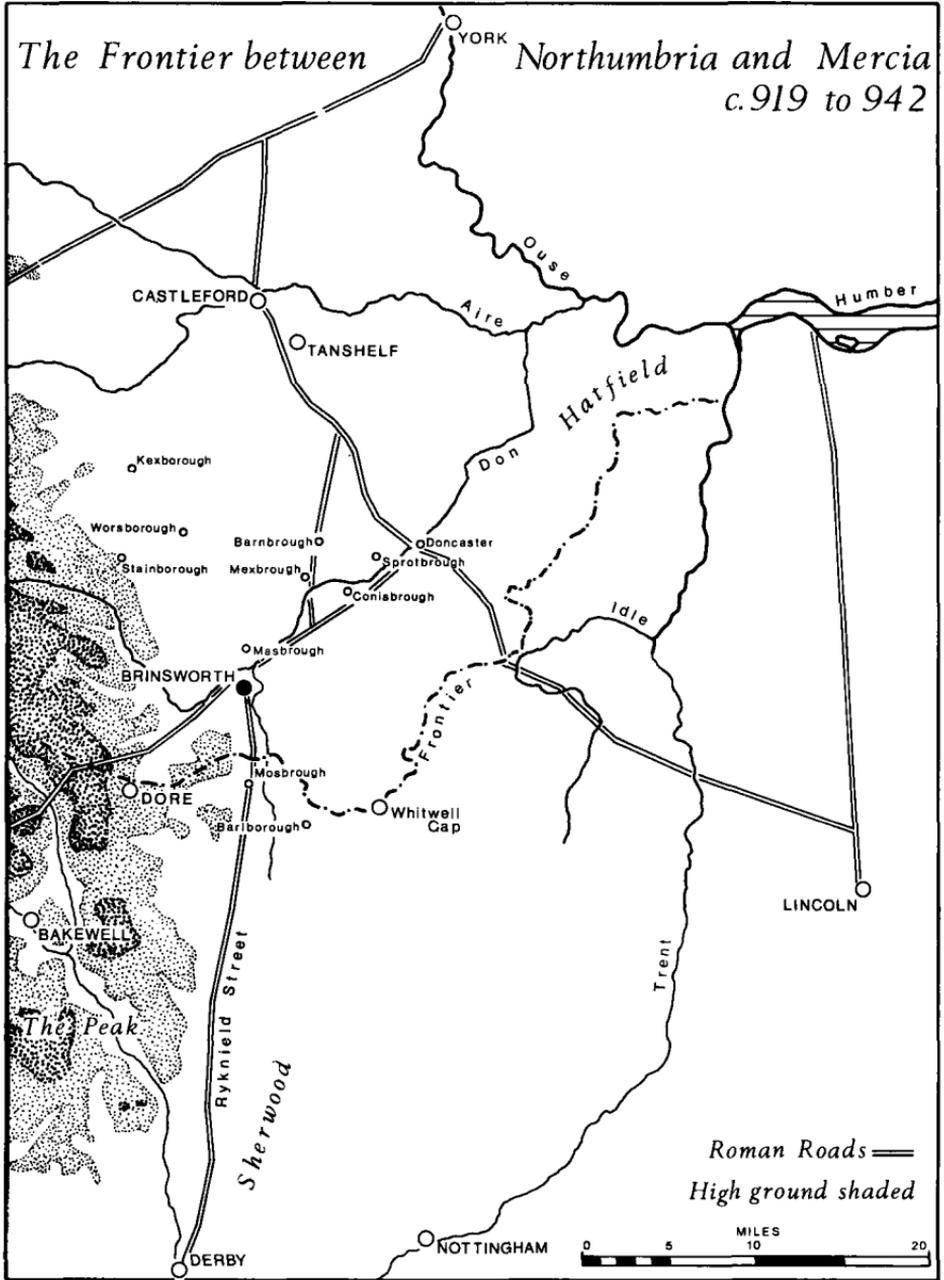
obvious implication: that after Athelstan had made his Mercian rendezvous and launched his rapid attack on the invaders, the battle took place in the region between the hostile peoples, and that the lost *burh* therefore lay in the border zone between the Northumbrians and the southern English. This would be entirely in agreement with what we know of the wars fought from York between 927 and 954.

The tenth-century annals show that the main route from York into the Five Boroughs was the Roman road from Tadcaster to Castleford and Doncaster, where it divides eastwards to Lincoln and westwards via the ford of the Don at Templeborough to Derby and the double fortress at Nottingham. (As F. T. Wainwright demonstrated, Derby and Nottingham were the *foci* and strongpoints of the network of forts built by Athelstan's father to protect the newly-won Danelaw from incursions from the north).⁴¹ This westerly route was the axis of the early tenth-century campaigns in this region. It was at Tanshelf near Pontefract that the Northumbrians met Eadred in 947.⁴² In 948 Eadred was defeated by an army from York at the crossing of the Aire at Castleford.⁴³ It was also by this road that Edmund had advanced to the northern border of the Mercians in 942, an advance bounded in the OE poem by Dore and Whitwell, places respectively six miles west and seven miles east of the road.⁴⁴ Athelstan himself made at least three visits to York, and he probably also came north by Rykniel Street in June 934 when his Mercian rendezvous was Nottingham, where he was joined by Scandinavian earls from the Five Boroughs.⁴⁵ This route traverses the narrow neck of land between Peakland, Sherwood, Hatfield, and the marshy lower reaches of the Humber tributaries; it would have been dry late into the year, and there seems a good case for thinking that Athelstan would have used it for his final advance once the Mercian levies had joined him.

Where then did the battle take place? Our sources tell us that it was on a prominent hill: this is given us by Simeon's *Wendun* or *Weondun*, and presumably Æthelweard's *Brunandun* is an authentic tenth-century variant.⁴⁶ It was obviously on or close to a major road north and south. Most important, it was evidently at a strategic site. It can be no coincidence that the fighting took place around a fortification.⁴⁷ *Ymbe Brunanburh* suggests a place of some significance and indicates that in the battle one of the armies was holding a position which included or centred on the *burh*. Here the Latin and the OE poem agree that Athelstan

mounted the offensive, so either his advance must have forced the invaders to defend, or they had fallen back on a strongpoint.⁴⁸ Where in the region between York and the Five Boroughs can there have been a fortification or series of fortifications which correspond to the situation revealed in our sources? There is an obvious answer: the fortified border between the Northumbrians and the Mercians.

It is now known that there was a line of forts along the southern frontier of the Northumbrians in the Viking era, straddling the Roman roads and controlling their crossings over the Don.⁴⁹ Some of these works utilise ancient sites, but some, such as Conisbrough (which appears in a document of 1002-4 as *æt Cunugesburh*⁵⁰), bear Scandinavian names which point to more recent occupation.⁵¹ One seems to have been called *Merces-burh*, "the fort on the frontier", and was situated immediately to the north of the Don ford at Templeborough.⁵² As to the scale of these works we have been completely in the dark until only recently. But discoveries at Doncaster could suggest that the Don forts were comparable in size to the powerful ones built along the Dee and the Mersey from *Cledamutha* to Manchester. At Doncaster great double ditches from this period were located outside the Roman defences, forming a 300-yard square with the River Cheswold and the Don marshes on the north-west side.⁵³ These arrangements bore a remarkable similarity to the West-Saxon forts in the south and may well date from the same time. It would appear that we have here an organised system of defence along the Northumbrian border from comparatively late in the Anglo-Saxon period. The place-name evidence (though not conclusive) makes it fairly certain that the forts were occupied in the Viking era. In view of the political situation in the north in the first quarter of the tenth century, it seems most probable that they date from some time after the seizure of York by Ragnald and his Norse-Irish army in or before 919. The reason for their construction must have been that hostile rulers had come into direct contact with each other, and this is precisely what happened in 920 when Edward the Elder, having fortified the Five Boroughs and the Dee-Mersey line, turned his attention to Ragnald and moved Anglo-Danish levies into north-eastern Mercia. In that year the West-Saxon king was with his army in what was soon to become Derbyshire, and Ragnald and the Northumbrians felt impelled to submit to him, along with the North British kings. Where they did so the *Chronicle* does not



Map 1

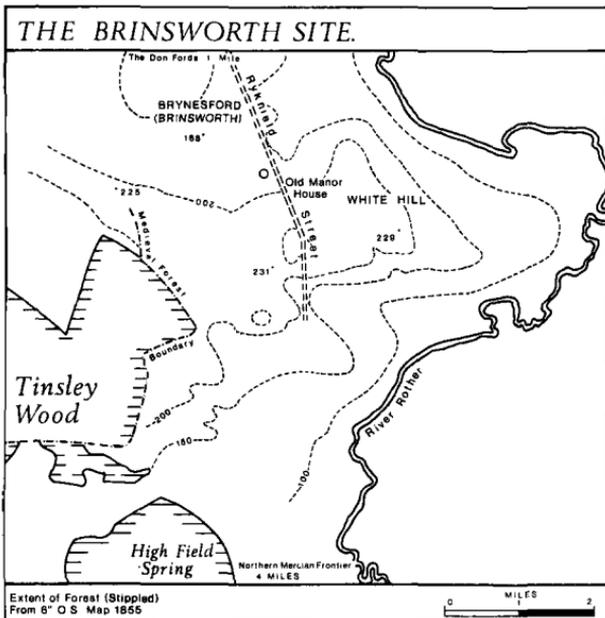
say, but in the Parker manuscript at 924 *rectius* 920, which was written within a few years of these events, the submission occurs in the sentence following Edward's construction of the *burh* at Bakewell in the Peak.⁵⁴ The logical inference from this is that Edward met Ragnald at the Northumbrian border, most likely at Dore, where the Northumbrians had bowed to Edward's great-grandfather,⁵⁵ and which is only ten miles from Bakewell. Coming on the heels of an unbroken series of English military victories, the submission to Edward undoubtedly gives us a context for the construction or refurbishing of the Don forts. Set against any Northumbrian fortifications north of the Don, a *burh* like Doncaster was the first step in consolidating the newly settled and Christianised Danelaw, and in the second quarter of the tenth century that was one of the West-Saxon kings' chief "political" preoccupations.

Situated on the traditional line of the Northumbrian frontier as it had stood in the eighth century, these forts were the main barrier across the chief military route north and south. But they were not the only one. Three forts lying a few miles to the north-west in the Dearne valley may be connected with them, as A. H. Smith suggested.⁵⁶ To the south of the Don line were other forts, and there is clear evidence to connect them with the history of the second quarter of the tenth century. In 942 the contemporary poem in the *Chronicle* specifically says that the northern frontier of the Mercians ran from Dore, south-west of Sheffield, to the Whitwell Gap. It had been at Dore in 829 that the Northumbrians met Egbert of Wessex, so doubtless the River Sheaf at Dore was the boundary then as it was in 942. However, instead of following the Sheaf down to the Don, the 942 border cuts eastwards and crosses Ryknield Street five miles south of the Don, following the later shire boundary to Whitwell.⁵⁷ The OE poem says clearly that this line was the northern limit of the Mercians in 942, which could suggest that the reorganisation of the Danish Midlands into shires had already taken place here by 942 (the terminal dates in fact are 917, when Derby fell to the English, and 940, when the shire was taken by Anlaf Guthfrith's son after Athelstan's death). Whatever the motives for this apparent adjustment of the northern frontier of the Mercians, there can be no disputing a tenth-century date for the line from the Sheaf along Meers Brook and Shire Brook to Whitwell.⁵⁸ Furthermore the stress in the 942 poem on this line being attained and held by Edmund's army after the campaign of that year implies that here too there may have

been forts. Again the English Place-Name Society volumes on Derbyshire show this to have been the case. Only two names survive, *Moresburh*, “the fort on the moor”, which lies on Rykniel Street, and *Barleburh*, “the fort at Barley”.⁵⁹ The latter, as Professor Kenneth Cameron indicates, is a replacement of an earlier Anglian name and not itself of the early OE period, a hint which accords with the other evidence for the dating of the boundary.

The forts across Rykniel Street on the Dore-Whitwell line undoubtedly served to protect the approach to Derby along the main military road from York. Although the forts of Edward the Elder and Æthelflæd west of the Pennines are well documented and have attracted much modern comment, we know next to nothing of the state of affairs east of the Pennines after 917, although the Humber border had by far the more momentous history. This narrow zone had been the battleground for the *imperium* in the seventh century and continued to be so in the tenth. This part of northern Mercia was crucial to the rule of the West-Saxon kings south of the Humber. Indeed the steps can still be traced by which these kings, from Edward the Elder to Æthelred, built up their influence there by establishing a landed military aristocracy with southern ties. Early on in his reign Edward encouraged his thegns to buy land in Derbyshire from Danish settlers, and Athelstan seems to have continued this policy.⁶⁰ Many estates in the south of the shire were given to Wulfsey *Maur* immediately after the recovery of this territory in 942, given even before the dispersal of the victorious army at Winchcombe.⁶¹ By the end of the century the important Mercian family of Wulfric Spot possessed numerous estates along the 942 border and held at least two of the forts on the south bank of the Don, *Doneceastre* and *Cunugesburh*.⁶² All these holdings should probably be viewed as part of a royal policy, the creation of a buttress in northern Mercia during the period when Northumbrian independence was a real force to be reckoned with. Until Edgar’s time, West-Saxon rule and law effectively stopped at the Humber. North of the boundary existed only the coercive arrangements made by an overlord towards his subject peoples: the payment of tribute, the exchange of gifts, the taking of hostages. Though Athelstan might claim to be “king of all Britain” and draw the line of his *regnum* at the Eamont and the Duddon, in practical terms the limit of his rule as *rex angulsaxonum et mercianorum*,⁶³ or even *Angelsaxonum Denorumque rex*,⁶⁴ was the Humber.⁶⁵

Between the upper Trent and the Aire, then, was a heavily fortified zone where the wars of the second quarter of the tenth century were waged. I have argued that the general tenor of our sources leads us to expect the site of *Brunanburh* in this area. If this be accepted, there is a possible site for the *burh*. South of the confluence of the Don and the Rother there is a great hill which dominates the Don valley, the Northumbrian frontier and the ford which carries Ryknield Street over the Don. On this hill, White Hill, stood a Domesday settlement called *Brynesford*, "*Brȳni*'s ford".⁶⁶ In later medieval times this centred on a walled and ditched manor house with an open central enclosure which stood at the side of the Roman road where it crossed the top of the hill.



Map 2

The evidence of the place-name is not decisive: what the Norman scribe wrote down in the later eleventh century implies a *Brȳni*, not a *Bruna* or a *Brune* as in *Brunanburh*.⁶⁷ This does not allow us to be definite about the name the site bore in 937. Indeed the uncertainty over *Brunanburh* has always been compounded by the multiplicity of names for the site which arose as early as the tenth century, suggesting that the real location was soon forgotten

in the south of England. It is the strategic significance of *Brynesford* which forces our attention upon it. The place was a vital military position, perhaps the most important on the Viking age route from Northumbria into the Five Boroughs. It commanded the river crossing of the main road at the point where it passed through the Northumbrian *limes*. Five miles to the south lay the forts on the Dore-Whitwell line where the English army stopped in 942. What more natural site than this no man's land for a tenth-century battle with the *Suðangli*? If the White Hill massif was indeed where *Brunanburh* stood, then Athelstan may have made his Mercian rendezvous at Derby or Nottingham before making the rapid advance which compelled Constantine, Anlaf and their allies to fight a defensive battle around the *burh*.⁶⁸

There are many unresolved *Brunanburh* problems, and most are likely to remain so, given the confusion over name forms in our sources. In Simeon of Durham, for instance, it is generally accepted that we have a genuine tenth-century northern name for the battle site, *Weondun* or *Wendun*.⁶⁹ Ekwall and Stenton took *Weondun* as the best form and assumed it to contain OE **wēon*, an oblique case of an adjective **wēoh*, "holy".⁷⁰ *Æt Weondune* would then be comparable to Weedon in Buckinghamshire, which appears as *Weodun* in 944-6, and would be an authentic survival from Anglo-Saxon paganism, one of the twenty or so names believed to contain OE *wēoh* or *wīh*. None of these names has so far been found north of the Humber, few in Lincolnshire and the East Midlands, and none in Lancashire and Cheshire. This geographical distribution led Stenton to think that the allies had penetrated far into England, a good deal south of their embarkation point. However some of these assumptions are now questionable. Margaret Gelling has shown that the case for an adjective **wēoh*, "holy", in OE place-names is not sufficiently strong to be regarded as established.⁷¹ With the alternative form of *Wendun* given by the *Historia Regum* we cannot even be sure which was the original form of the name. The Brinsworth site certainly has the characteristics of the known pagan sanctuaries. Their distribution pattern tends to be concentrated on the borders between kingdoms.⁷² Many are situated on prominent hills and often near Roman roads. White Hill at Brinsworth was all these things, and the Roman settlement at Canklow on its northern side produced a temple podium.⁷³ But the early forms of the name (which are only late fifteenth century) point to an OE *wiht*, "bend in a river", rather than *wīh*.⁷⁴ In conclusion, the most we can

derive from Simeon of Durham is that the site of *Brunanburh*, whether it was called *Wendun* or *Weondun*, was on a prominent hill which must have been known to northern travellers. More than that these names cannot help us.

If *Brunanburh* was indeed on the southern boundary of the Northumbrians, in a region more heavily fought over than any in Anglo-Saxon history, then a fascinating symmetry emerges with the struggles between the Northumbrians and the *Sudangli* in the seventh century. Texts based on the lost York annals of the tenth century confirm that the events of 927-54 were seen by contemporaries in the light of these ancient wars, for "since the coming of the English the Northumbrians had been subject to no king of the South Angles before Athelstan".⁷⁵ With this in mind *Brunanburh* falls into place not only as a momentous confrontation between Celt and Saxon, and as the culminating triumph of the West-Saxon kings over the Scandinavians in Britain, but also as one of the last of the great border battles between the Northumbrians and the southern English, such as Bede describes in the seventh century wars of northern history, *in finibus gentis Merciorum*.⁷⁶

¹ A. Mawer, 'The Redemption of the Five Boroughs', *English Historical Review* 38 (1923), 555.

² A. Campbell, *The Battle of Brunanburh* (1938), 65.

³ Campbell (1938), 80.

⁴ J. Hoops, *Reallexicon der germanischen Altertumskunde* II (1976), 92-3. See the discussion in Campbell (1938), 57-80. Bromborough in Cheshire, though unproven, still holds the field: A. H. Smith, 'The Site of the Battle of Brunanburh', *London Medieval Studies* I, part 1 (1937), 56-9; J. McN. Dodgson, 'The Background of Brunanburh', *Saga-Book XIV* (1953-7), 303-16, and *The Place-Names of Cheshire IV* (1972), 237-40. As Dodgson shows, the place-names *Brunanburh* and Bromborough are identical. But *Brunan-* names with various second elements must have been common in OE, Campbell (1938), 63, and the Norse community in the Wirral cannot be shown to have any relevance to the campaign of 937. On the arguments brought forward below, the background of *Brunanburh* is the traditional warfare on the routes south of York. As we shall see, the geographical and political facts given by our sources do not support the identification with Bromborough.

⁵ W. Stubbs, *De Gestis Regum Anglorum* (1887-9), I 151, translated by D. Whitelock in *English Historical Documents c. 500-1042* (1955), 282-3. Cf. P. Hunter Blair, 'The Northumbrians and Their Southern Frontier', *Archaeologia Aeliana* 4th series 26 (1948), 100-1. Hence in 934 Athelstan went *versus aquilonarem plagam* to get to Chester-le-Street out of southern England: Simeon of Durham, *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia* (ed. T. Arnold, 1882-5), I 211. The poem quoted by William of Malmesbury will be referred to in my text as "the Athelstan panegyric", "the Latin panegyric", or "the Latin poem". It may be later than the tenth century but its author clearly had a good contemporary source. There are problems over its Latinity which remain to be solved, see Michael Lapidge, 'Some Latin Poems as Evidence for the Reign of Athelstan', *Anglo-Saxon England* 9 (1980), forthcoming.

⁶ F. M. Stenton, 'The Danes in England', *Preparatory to Anglo-Saxon England* (1970), 162.

⁷ D. Murphy, *Annals of Clonmacnoise* (1896), 151, *sub anno* 931 *rectius* 937.

⁸ Roger of Hoveden, *Chronica* (ed. W. Stubbs, 1868), I 57; cf. Simeon of Durham, II 382.

⁹ J. Earle and C. Plummer, *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel* (1892-9), I 112 (=ASC MS D 947); Simeon of Durham, II 126; Roger of Hoveden, I 56.

¹⁰ Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum* (ed. H. R. Luard, 1890), I 498.

¹¹ Florence of Worcester, *Chronicon ex Chronicis* (ed. B. Thorpe, 1848), I 132. This has been rejected by some modern historians, but with no good reason. Recent research has shown that other Norse-Irish invasions of Northumbria came down the east coast via the lowlands of Scotland, e.g. A. P. Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin I* (1975), 63, 95-6, 107-8.

¹² I. Williams, *Armes Prydein* (1972), 3 (lines 9-16), 11 (line 131), and 13 (lines 147-51); cf. introduction xii-xxiv.

¹³ W. Stevenson, *Asser's Life of King Alfred* (1959), 66-7; *Armes Prydein*, xxvi-xxx; N. K. Chadwick, 'The Celtic Background of Early Anglo-Saxon England', *Celt and Saxon* (1963), 348-51. On the Scots see A. P. Smyth, *Scandinavian Kings in the British Isles 850-880* (1977), 149-53.

¹⁴ Florence of Worcester, I 132; an early life of St. Catroe (*Chronicles of the Picts: Chronicles of the Scots*, ed. W. Skene, 1867, 116) says that the wife of a Norse king in York in the early 940s was a Scottish royal kinswoman, and though the passage is corrupt, this story may lie behind it. There seems no reason to doubt the presence at *Brunanburh* of Anlaf son of Sihtric: J. O'Donovan, *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters* (1856), I 641; two of his brothers were killed in the battle, *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, 151.

¹⁵ R. Vaughan, 'The Chronology of the Parker Chronicle, 890-970', *English Historical Review* 69 (1954), 60.

¹⁶ W. M. Hennessy, *Annals of Ulster* (1887-1901), I 457.

¹⁷ P. Lauer, *Le règne de Louis IV d'Outre-Mer* (1900), 27; P. Grierson agrees in 'Pre-Conquest Relations between Flanders and England', *Essays in Medieval History* (ed. R. W. Southern, 1968), 73.

¹⁸ *Annals of Ulster*, I 457.

¹⁹ M. R. L. Beavan, 'King Edmund I and the Danes of York', *English Historical Review* 33 (1918), 2.

²⁰ Earle and Plummer (1892-9), I 110.

²¹ *De Gestis Regum*, I 151-2.

²² On Urm (or Orm), Wendover, I 498, and F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (1947), 353 n. 2, where Danish rather than Norse ancestry is suggested. He witnesses charters as Urm from 929 or 930 to 956: W. de Gray Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum* (1885-99), nos. 665, 669, 937 (abbreviated as *BCS* henceforth).

²³ *De Gestis Regum*, I 146.

²⁴ *De Gestis Regum*, I 151-2.

²⁵ C. Blunt, 'The Coinage of Athelstan, 924-939: A Survey', *The British Numismatic Journal* 42 (1974), 92.

²⁶ *De Gestis Regum*, I 152.

²⁷ M. Lapidge, 'Three Latin Poems from Aethelwold's School at Winchester', *Anglo-Saxon England* I (1972), 130-1. For parallels, see J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Medieval History* (1975), 34-5.

²⁸ K. Leyser, 'The Battle at the Lech', *History* 50 (1965), 17.

²⁹ Earle and Plummer (1892-9), II 140; A. Campbell, *The Chronicle of Æthelweard* (1962), 54: *pugna immanis*; *Annals of Ulster*, I 456: *bellum ingens*; numerous contingents of the allied army are named in *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, 150-1. The Durham tradition of 615 ships, Simeon of Durham, II 93, is not quite incredible in the light of evidence from Britain and the continent viewed as a whole: see N. P. Brooks, 'England in the Ninth Century: the crucible of defeat', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5th series 29 (1979), 1-20.

³⁰ *De Gestis Regum*, I 152.

³¹ For instance Malcom I's devastation of Northumbria as far as the Tees in 949, M. O. Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland* (1973), 252, where two attacks by Kenneth son of Malcom are also recorded. Note too *ASC* MS A 945, Earle and Plummer (1892-9), I 110. Prior to *Brunanburh*, Constantine had undertaken at least two expeditions to the Tyne: F. T. Wainwright, 'The Battles at Corbridge', *Saga-Book XIII* (1946-53), 156-73.

³² D. P. Kirby, 'Strathclyde and Cumbria: a survey of historical development to 1092', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* 62 (1962), 91; A. O. Anderson, 'Anglo-Scottish Relations to 1093', *Scottish Historical Review* 42 (1963), 1-5.

³³ *De Gestis Regum*, I 142; J. W. ab Ithel, *Annales Cambriae* (1860), 18. Idwal is seen as a champion against the English in the poem *Cywrysedd Gwynedd a Deheubarth*, written between 942 and 950: W. Skene, *The Four Ancient Books of Wales* (1868), I 432-3; see on this I. Williams, *Poems of Taliesin* (1968), xxvi-viii.

³⁴ It is true that where Hywel is *ri Bretan*, *Annals of Ulster*, I 466, Malcom Mac Donald is *Ri Breatan tuaisgert*, "king of the North Britons": W. M. Hennessy, *Chronicum Scotorum* (1866), 234; elsewhere this might be rendered as *Rex Britannorum Stratha Cluaidhe* (*Chron. Scotorum*, 162). But it would be unwise to infer from this that the Britons (*Breatnaib*) at *Brunanburh* in *Four Masters*, I 641 along with Constantine and Anlaf son of Sihtric are North Welsh: the term is frequently used of the Strathclyde Welsh, e.g. *Annals of Ulster*, I 470, 484. As for Gaimar's assertion that together with Scots, Picts and Cumbrians at *Brunanburh* there were *Gawaleis* (*Lestorie des Engles*, ed. T. Hardy, 1888, I 147-8), jingles like this occur throughout the work, and the word is used indiscriminately for North, South, and Strathclyde Welsh.

³⁵ For an *epistola commendatoria* of a Breton *miles* in Athelstan's circle see W. Stubbs, *Memorials of Saint Dunstan* (1874), 381-2. Mercenaries travelled far to fight on such expeditions: the death of a "royal mercenary of Ireland" (*ri-amus Herend*) on a raid in 968 is noted in S. Mac

Airt. *Annals of Inisfallen* (1951), 158; the *Imer* "son of the king of Denmark" who was killed at *Brunanburh* according to *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, 151, could conceivably have been such a man (though see Campbell, 1938, 56-7). Doubtless Scandinavians from outside the British Isles fought in the battle for the allies just as *Egils saga* claims they did for Athelstan: Sigurður Nordal, *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar* (1933), 146, translated C. Fell, *Egils saga* (1975), 85-6; on the veracity of this material, A. Campbell, *Skaldic Verse and Anglo-Saxon History* (1971), 5-7.

³⁶ See the references in note 33, and add Sir John Lloyd's discussion in *History of Wales* (1911), I 333-43. Idwal visited Athelstan's court several times between 927 and 934: a list of his attestations is given in Lloyd (1911), I 353, to which should be added P. H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters* (1968), no. 1792 of 935. He was one of the Welsh kings present in the *totius Britanniae exercitus* (Simeon of Durham, I 75) which Athelstan led into Scotland in 934 (*BCS* 702, 703), which implies that the overlord used Idwal's military resources just as Edmund did with Hywel of Dyfed in his campaign in Cumbria in 945 (*Flores Historiarum*, I 500). There are some pertinent general remarks in 'Wales on the Eve of the Norman Conquest', *Aspects of Welsh History: selected papers of the late Glyn Roberts* (1969), 279-80.

³⁷ Lloyd (1911), I 336.

³⁸ Earle and Plummer (1892-9), I 110; *Annales Cambriae*, 18.

³⁹ *De Gestis Regum*, I 152; Earle and Plummer (1892-9), I 106 (lines 5-6) and 108 (lines 20-5). The OE poem says that fighting lasted from dawn until dusk but that the West-Saxons pursued their enemies "all through the day". The Latin poem implies that when Athelstan advanced to the battlefield the invaders fled almost immediately. In both cases there may be poetic licence, but the pursuit could well have taken up the greater part of the day. The Latin poem also says that many of the allies remained on the field where they were eventually destroyed: perhaps as Campbell (1938, 52 n. 5) suggested, the Scots fled and were pursued by the West-Saxons while the Norse held on and fought it out with the Mercians.

⁴⁰ Earle and Plummer (1892-9), I 108. The suggestion that the invaders embarked at a point completely different from that of their landing (Dodgson, 1953-7, 315 n. 48) cannot be accepted. If their fleet entered the Humber they can hardly have escaped from the Dee. No reliance can be placed on the OE poem's account of their flight. The poet may not have known how the various elements of the coalition made their way home, and he portrays their return in general and poetic terms. If the fleet landed in the Humber, as is most likely, then it will have returned via Scotland, and the notice of its arrival at Dublin early in 938 would support this (*Annals of Ulster*, I 457).

⁴¹ F. T. Wainwright, 'Æthelflæd Lady of the Mercians', *Scandinavian England* (1975), 312.

⁴² Earle and Plummer (1892-9), I 112 (*ASC MS D 947*).

⁴³ Earle and Plummer (1892-9), I 112 (*ASC MS D 948*).

⁴⁴ Earle and Plummer (1892-9), I 110 (*ASC MS A 942*): *swa Dor scadeþ, Hwitan wylles geat*.

⁴⁵ *BCS* 703.

⁴⁶ Campbell (1962), 54; Simeon of Durham, II 93: *apud Wendune*; Simeon of Durham, I 76: *apud Weondune, quod alio nomine Eibrunnanwerc vel Brunnanbyrig appellatur*. *Wendun* seems more than a stab in the dark. By the same token the northern author of the annals incorporated in Simeon's *Historia Regum* could give extremely circumstantial detail about Athelstan's campaign in Scotland, "as far as Dunnottar and *Wertermor*", Simeon of Durham, II 93. The *Waerteres* in Pictland were the "dwellers north of the moors", Earle and Plummer (1892-9), I 19=*ASC MS E 565*; see on this D. Whitelock, *English Historical Documents I* (1955), 146 n. 2, 252 n. 9. Such detail is suggestive of the antiquity of Simeon's annals.

⁴⁷ Earle and Plummer (1892-9), I 106.

⁴⁸ See note 39.

⁴⁹ A. H. Smith, *The Place-Names of the West Riding of Yorkshire VII* (1962), 46, n. 2. See map 1. The Don was the traditional line of the southern frontier of the Northumbrians. Here in the seventh and eighth centuries was a banked ditch which ran for eleven miles along the northern side of the river, a defensive work from the period when the Northumbrians fought for the *imperium* in this zone against the southern English, cf. Hunter Blair (1948), 117-19. I am grateful to Dr. David Hill for drawing the maps.

⁵⁰ D. Whitelock, *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (1930), 46; P. H. Sawyer, *Charters of Burton Abbey* (1979), 54-6. For the clear strategic importance of these sites see my map, and Sawyer (1979), xvi; on Conisbrough, Sawyer (1979), xxv.

⁵¹ A. H. Smith, *The Place-Names of the West Riding of Yorkshire I* (1961), 77: Mexborough, *Mechesburg* 1086 < OE *Mēoc*, as in *BCS* 801 *Meoces-dun*, or O.Dan. *Miuk*; I 64: Sprotbrough, *Sproteburg* 1086 < ?*Sproit(a)*, a personal name of Scandinavian origin; I 80: Barnbrough, *Berneborc*, -burg 1086 < O.Dan. *Biarni*; I 125: Conisbrough, *Cunugesburh* 1002-4 < ON *konungr*, possibly replacing earlier OE *cyning*, "king".

⁵² Smith (1961), I 186: Masbrough, earliest recorded forms *Morkisburg* and *Merkisburg* (1202) < OE *mearcas*-, *merces-burh*, as in Marksbury, Somerset, on *Mercesburh* in *BCS* 767 of 941. There may have been other fortifications, for instance at the ford of the Roman road between Doncaster and Templeborough, where the name Aldwarke appears: *Aldewerc* 1226. Smith (1961), I 180; Smith also notes that Thrybergh has been suggested as the site of the Ravenna geographer's *Trimontium*, (1961), I 173.

⁵³ I am grateful to the excavator, Malcom Dolby of Doncaster Museum, for discussing this with me.

⁵⁴ Earle and Plummer (1892-9), I 104 (*ASC MS A 924 rectius 920*).

⁵⁵ Earle and Plummer (1892-9), I 60 (*ASC MS A 827 rectius 829*).

⁵⁶ They occupy high strategic positions over crossings of the Dearne and the Dove: Smith (1962), VII 46 n. 2. They are: Smith (1961), I 318, Kexbrough. *Ceze-Chizeburg 1086 < ON Kepir*; I 292; Worsborough. *Wircesburg 1086 < ?OE Wirc or Wyrce*, unrecorded personal name, possibly a variant of *Weorc* as in *Weorcesmere*, *BCS 1282: I 312*; Stainborough. *Stanburg 1086 < ON steinn*, "stone", replacing earlier OE *stān*.

⁵⁷ The ecclesiastical boundaries of the deanery of Doncaster in the diocese of York also follow this line, ignoring the incorporation of Nottinghamshire into the diocese in the middle of the tenth century, Smith (1962), VII 35 n. 2, Stenton (1947), 430.

⁵⁸ Smith (1962), VII 35. On the streams which formed this boundary, see 131-2: Meers Brook < OE (*ge*)*mære + brōc*, "the boundary stream": 137: Sheaf < OE *sceað*, "boundary"

⁵⁹ K. Cameron, *The Place-Names of Derbyshire* (1959), I xxvii; Mosborough, II 248; Barlborough, II 200. For other boundary names on this line, see Cameron on Markland, II 256, and Shirebrook, II 298.

⁶⁰ *BCS 658, 659*. See now Sawyer (1979), 5-7.

⁶¹ *BCS 771-3*; Sawyer (1979), 9-13.

⁶² Sawyer (1979), 54-5; Wulfric also held *Barleburh* and *Moresburh*, 55.

⁶³ Veste Coburg MS I, f. 168r; Ilona Hubay, *Die Handschriften der Landesbibliothek Coburg* (1962), plate 2 (c. 929).

⁶⁴ *BCS 648 (925 x 933)*.

⁶⁵ As late as the last month of his life, Athelstan was described by a Mercian clerk as *Rex AngulSexna* but *Norphyndra imperator*: Sawyer (1979), 7-8, xlvi.

⁶⁶ Brinsworth, WR Yorks. Smith (1961), I 177-8 = OE *Bryni + ford*. Thirteenth-century forms include *Brinys-*, *Brenes-*, *Brunis-ford* (see, for example, J. E. B. Gover, A. Mawer, and F. M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Nottinghamshire*, 1940, 117). The ford referred to is perhaps the main ford over the Don to the north. The Roman fort at Templeborough stood on low ground by the Don, but there is evidence for old earthworks at Brinsworth itself, presumably on or near the site of the Old Manor House, cf. Smith (1962), VII 24, 178.

⁶⁷ Campbell (1938), 61.

⁶⁸ The vexed question of the identification of *Brunanburh* with the ON name *Vinheiðr við Vínusköga* in *Egils saga* can only be touched on here. This is claimed to be "irrelevant to geography", Dodgson (1972), 239, after Campbell (1938), 80. But this cannot be proved, despite Campbell, 68-80. There is much controversy among Scandinavian historians over the trustworthiness of this kind of Icelandic tradition, and as the site of *Brunanburh* has not been identified, there can be no certainty in this particular case. A. L. Binns, for instance, has shown that in general the sagas often preserve good topographical and navigational detail: 'The Navigation of Viking Ships round the British Isles in Old English and Old Norse Sources'. *The Fifth Viking Congress* (1968), 103-17, and elsewhere he has demonstrated that tenth-century Latin annals from Northumbria were indirectly available to Norse writers of the thirteenth century: *The Viking Century in East Yorkshire* (1963), 46-52, and 'The York Viking Kingdom: Relations between Old English and Old Norse Culture', *The Fourth Viking Congress* (1965), 184. *Vinheiðr* then could be a literal translation of the Latin *Wendun*. This raises wider problems about the origin of such stories which cannot be entered into here. Let us note in passing that one scribe thought the *Vina* a tributary of the Humber. In *Hrokkinskinna*, a fifteenth-century manuscript compilation, partly based on *Heimskringla*, in the section corresponding to chapter 84 of *Heimskringla's Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar*, an addition to the *Heimskringla* text describes sailing from the Humber to the Ouse by way of the *Vina*, *upp eptir ánni Vínó til Úsu: Formanna Sögur VI* (ed. Sveinbjörn Egilsson, 1831), 406; A. L. Binns, *East Yorkshire in the Sagas...* (1966), 34. So *Vinheiðr* may have been thought of as in the region of the Don valley. In this connection see Smith (1962), VII 127, on the old course of the Don, and for "Humber" usages for the Don as late as the fourteenth century, Hunter Blair (1948), 116. It is worth noting here the striking correspondence between the Brinsworth site and the famous description of *Vinheiðr* in *Egils saga*, Nordal (1933), 132, Fell (1975), 77, with its forts north and south of the field, its gentle slopes north and south, the steep slope to the river, and the narrow gap to the south where the river and the forest come close together (see map 2). Tinsley Forest at Brinsworth is mentioned in Domesday Book and has never been essarted, J. Hunter, *South Yorkshire* (1831), II 31: the medieval boundary ditch, which is the county, borough and parish boundary, is still visible, so the shape of the land in the late Anglo-Saxon period can be determined. Forceful objections have been made to the acceptance of traditions such as that in *Egils saga*, notably by L. M. Hollander, in 'The Battle on the Vin-Heath and the Battle of the Huns', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 32 (1933), 33-43, and by A. Campbell in his 1938 work, 68-80, but the relation of the *Vinheiðr* story to the events of 937 may be more complicated than was once thought.

⁶⁹ Simeon of Durham, II 93, I 76.

⁷⁰ E. Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names* (fourth ed. 1960), 507; Stenton (1970), 291.

⁷¹ M. Gelling, 'Further Thoughts on Pagan Place-Names', in F. Sandgren, *Otium et Negotium* ... Presented to O. von Feilitzen (1973), 114.

⁷² Gelling (1973), 114. See P. O'Riain, 'Boundary Association in Early Irish Society', *Studia Celtica* 7 (1972), 12-29, for some general remarks on the connection of ancient routes, sanctuaries and royal residences with borders in early medieval society; on battles in particular, P. O'Riain, 'Battle-Site and Territorial Extent in Early Ireland', *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* 33 (1974), 67-80, esp. 77, 80. Such considerations could influence the siting of tenth-century battles: Smyth (1975), 99. There had been a Northumbrian royal residence also in the Don valley, Smith (1962), VII 34 n. 3.

⁷³ Personal communication from D. Greene. On the Roman road over this site see D. Greene, 'The Riknild Street. The Route across Brinsworth Common near Rotherham', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 38 (1952-5), 112, with map facing.

⁷⁴ Smith (1961), I 178. Compare M. Gelling, *The Place-Names of Oxfordshire* (1953-4), II 286: Whitehill in Tackley < *Wihthille*, *Wythull* 1004, in J. Kemble, *Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici* (1839-48), no. 709, "hill with a curved hollow".

⁷⁵ R. Vaughan, 'The Chronicle Attributed to John of Wallingford', *Camden Miscellany* 21 (1958), 45. See on this text D. Whitelock, 'The Dealings of the Kings of England with Northumbria in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries', *The Anglo-Saxons* ... Presented to Bruce Dickins (1959), 71.

⁷⁶ *Bede's Ecclesiastical History* ... ed. B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (1969), 180.

REVIEWS

THE DISCOVERY OF A NORSE SETTLEMENT IN AMERICA. EXCAVATIONS AT L'ANSE AUX MEADOWS, NEWFOUNDLAND 1961-1968. By ANNE STINE INGSTAD. With contributions by Charles J. Bareis and Jon H. Winston, Arne Emil Christensen jr., Kari E. Henningsmoen, Kristján Eldjárn, Reidar Nydal, Leif M. Paulssen, Rolf Petré and Anna M. Rosenqvist. *Universitetsforlaget*. Oslo, Bergen and Tromsø, 1977. 430 pp. + 63 plates.

L'Anse aux Meadows is a little fishing village on the northern point of Newfoundland near which, at Épaves Bay, the Norwegian explorer Helge Ingstad discovered in 1960 the traces of what he correctly hoped would prove to be a Norse settlement. During the course of 1961-68, he returned with seven expeditions and the site was excavated under the direction of his wife, Anne Stine Ingstad, who is the author of this volume together with others of several nationalities who were involved in different aspects of the project. A second volume is promised, by Helge Ingstad himself, devoted to historical discussion. The present volume, however, is an excavation report dealing with the investigation of three house-complexes, four boat-sheds, a smithy and a charcoal-kiln, and a number of other features, including two open-air cooking-pits. These remains are situated on a low marine terrace cut through by the Black Duck Brook which runs into an extremely shallow bay. Épaves Bay presents the largest expanse of meadowland to be found at this latitude, surrounded by bog and forest. The bay itself is named from the flotsam and jetsam that collects there, for it is a typical driftwood bay — most of the timber coming from Labrador. Charcoal and pollen analyses by L. M. Paulssen and K. E. Henningsmoen respectively indicate that the local vegetation has not changed profoundly during the last $7\frac{1}{2}$ millennia. There is thus no possibility that wild grapes would have grown here during the Viking Age, although many sorts of wild berries were present, as was *Elymus arenarius* var. *villosus*, sometimes identified as the 'self-sown wheat' of Adam of Bremen and *Eiríks saga rauða*. The fauna was rich and varied, judging by late 15th/early 16th-century accounts, ranging from caribou to fur-bearing animals, whilst the sea contained large numbers of whale, seal, salmon and cod.

When rediscovered in about A.D. 1500, northern Newfoundland was occupied by Beothuk Indians — nomads who migrated annually between inland and coastal area, living by hunting and fishing. Occasional Indian occupation of the terrace was demonstrated by the excavators, including a chert knapper's station of the Boreal Archaic. Implements of the Dorset Eskimo culture were also recovered, but there can be no doubt that the majority (and most probably all) of the turf-built structures were built by Norse Greenlanders around the year A.D. 1000. Finally, it should be noted that no traces were found of occupation by whalers or fishermen of historic times, but the shallowness of the bay would have rendered the site unattractive to them.

The three house-complexes are strung out along the terrace on the east side of the brook. Nearest the brook, on somewhat boggy ground and subject to spring flooding, lay a group of three structures (A, B and C). A is an east/west oriented house consisting of four rooms arranged in series; B and C are single-

roomed structures lying to its south. At the middle of the terrace, and aligned north-east/south-west along it, lay a second major house (D), with a single-roomed structure (E) beside it; D consists of three rooms, two in series with another along one side. To the north-east, farthest from the brook, was situated a six-roomed house (F), with an adjacent single-roomed structure (G) that may have been a bath-house; F had three rooms in series, with two in line along the north-west side and another along the south-east. West of the brook was discovered a smithy (J), behind which was a charcoal kiln, and four man-made depressions with turf walls, facing the shore, which are interpreted as boat-sheds. Although these three turf-built house-complexes vary slightly in the nature of their main buildings, they may all be paralleled in Greenland and Iceland during the late Viking Age and their affinities are explored in detail by the author, as are those of their simple, but distinctive, stone-lined hearths with ember-pits. The fact that a smithy was also found, and that nearly all the structures produced fragments of iron, also pointed to Norse occupation of these buildings and not to use by Eskimos or Indians. This conclusion was confirmed not only by the discovery of three distinctively Norse artefacts, but also by scientific dating methods; these are discussed below. In addition one should note the essay by Arne Emil Christensen jr. on boat-houses and their use in Scandinavia and the Atlantic Islands. That the simple structures trenched by him at *Épaves Bay* were used for boats is rendered more probable by the demonstration that the sea-level could then have been $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 m. above that of today for now 'not even small fishing-boats can put into shore'.

Ingstad argues that structures A/B/C probably represent the first phase of settlement on the terrace describing them as 'a contemporaneous farm complex', although there is nothing to indicate that their occupants engaged in any form of agriculture other than two scraps of bone from domestic animals (both probably of pig, although one might be of sheep or goat). These form the only surviving evidence for the presence of such animals on the site (the conditions for bone preservation are, however, extremely bad); as the author admits herself, these could have derived from provisions brought from Greenland. The complex is subject to flooding, which would surely have been worse with a higher sea-level, and one is left wondering whether it was intended for permanent occupation, or how soon it was replaced by one or both of the other complexes. None of the structures on the site showed signs of rebuilding and Ingstad estimates that their life in the Newfoundland climate could have been no more than twenty to thirty years. On the other hand, Ingstad suggests that the four boat-sheds may indicate that all the houses were in use at the same time with each shed probably representing a household boat; but they are in fact placed in two pairs and we do not know whether they are contemporaneous, nor do we know whether, say, one in each pair was used as a store for nets or other equipment. Boat-sheds do suggest some degree of permanent settlement, even if only over one or two winters, but one must remember that there is no evidence in the pollen diagrams for land-clearance and farming. As Henningsmoen concludes, 'the Norse settlement was too small and too short-lived to leave its mark on the vegetation.' Bog-iron and timber, hunting and fishing — these must have been the main attractions of this site rather than its more obvious meadows.

The exposition of the Norse structures at *L'Anse aux Meadows* is much to the author's credit, but there are three areas in which this report is seriously

deficient — the publication of the finds (apart from the iron, with its specialist report by A. M. Rosenqvist), the discussion of the Indian and Eskimo material, and the discussion of the radiocarbon dates. Three characteristically Norse artefacts were found: a bronze ringed pin, a soapstone spindle-whorl, and a stone lamp. The crucial find of the ringed pin is illustrated *only* by a colour plate of it lying partially obscured in the ground, without even the benefit of a scale alongside (almost without exception the excavation photographs lack this essential adjunct to their proper interpretation). Its discussion is cursory and even misleading since it is confidently stated that it is of ninth/tenth-century type when it is known to have been current also in the eleventh century, as at Dublin. Why no proper photograph? Why no drawings? Why no specialist report? Although there are photographs of the spindle-whorl, it too is without the drawings that would have enabled one to determine which of the two following statements is correct: the underside is described as 'concave and blackened by soot' on page 206 and as 'convex and sooty' on page 261. Which way the base curves would determine whether, as Ingstad claims, the whorl was cut from the base of a cooking-pot, or whether from a lamp (as W. W. Fitzhugh of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, has suggested to me). That it was in fact manufactured from a residual Dorset Eskimo lamp now seems likely following the determination that its soapstone was probably derived from an outcrop a mile from the site (R. O. Allen, K. K. Allen, C. G. Holland and W. W. Fitzhugh, 'Utilisation of soapstone in Labrador by Indians, Eskimos and Norse', *Nature*, vol. 271 (1978), 237-9).

Like the ringed pin, the native stone artefacts are not the subject of specialist reports and in particular there is little discussion of their detailed cultural affinities or dating. General opinion appears to be that there was no Dorset Eskimo presence in Newfoundland later than A.D. 600, but Ingstad seems determined to demonstrate from some rather doubtful evidence, which cannot be explored in detail in this review, that the site was occupied by Dorset Eskimos after the Norse had departed and that it was they, rather than Indians, who occupied secondarily room III in House D before it finally burned down. It is true that a Dorset Culture projectile point was found 6 cm. above the Norse floor of this room, but then pieces of iron were also found both 4 and 8 cm. above the same floor and these cannot be attributed directly either to Eskimos or to Indians. As Ingstad admits, it is possible that the point might even have fallen from a disintegrating turf in the roof and thus ultimately have derived from a pre-Norse Dorset phase. Again I am grateful to Bill Fitzhugh for his opinion that the Dorset Culture artefacts from L'Anse aux Meadows do not appear to belong to a late Dorset phase, but are consistent with the proven earlier phase of Dorset settlement in Newfoundland. Thus, if the Norse were run out by hostile natives, it is likely to have been the Indians who were responsible; in any case *their* post-Norse use of the site is clearly documented archaeologically in this volume.

R. Nydal of the Radiological Dating Laboratory in Trondheim presents a detailed account of his treatment and analysis of sixteen samples from L'Anse aux Meadows dated by the radiocarbon method. The calculated mean age of these samples is given as A.D. 920±30, but it is suggested that a systematic error of uncertain magnitude, perhaps 50 to 100 years, is introduced by the fact that most of the thirteen charcoal samples may have been derived from driftwood. The other dates include one from whale-bone found in the hearth of

House F (A.D. 1025 ± 100 ; corrected date: 1040 ± 110) that is in agreement with one from the turf of its walls (A.D. 1000 ± 50 ; corrected date: 1020 ± 60); the third date is also from turf (wall of House A) and is of the same order (A.D. 1000 ± 90 ; corrected date: 1020 ± 100). If these three dates are preferred over the charcoal dates, then an early 11th-century date for the Norse settlement seems assured, a date that is in accordance with the archaeological evidence and historical probability. It is in fact only these three dates that H. T. Waterbolk ('Working with radiocarbon dates', *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, vol. XXXVII, pt. 2 (1971), 15-33, see pp. 22-3) regards as being derived from 'A-grade samples', giving a mean of 940 B.P. (as opposed to the mean of the charcoal samples of 1120 B.P.); this gives for him 'the best determination of the founding of the settlement' as c. A.D. 1030, after conversion to the Bristlecone chronology. Unfortunately Waterbolk's observations are completely ignored by Nydal whose own conclusion is that 'there is a reasonable agreement between the radiocarbon age and the assumed historical age [of A.D. 1000]. One must, however, be aware of the fact that agreement would have been found satisfactory also if settlement had occurred somewhat before A.D. 1000.' Ingstad, however, asserts that Waterbolk's date of c. A.D. 1030 is 'too late' simply on the grounds that several features of the houses indicate to her 'that they must have been built during a brief period around the year A.D. 1000.' But one is left unconvinced that variations in North Atlantic house-types at this period can be dated so confidently to within a generation.

More disturbing than this omission by Nydal is his failure to deal with five other radiocarbon dates from various of the sites; these are left to Ingstad to introduce. Of these, two are definitely from Norse contexts being from the turf walls of House A (A.D. 630 ± 80) and House D (A.D. 650 ± 70); the results are significantly earlier than those for the other two turf samples on which it was suggested above that particular reliance might be placed. Henningsmoen finds these older dates more acceptable than the younger ones on the grounds that sods contain 'considerable quantities of older, decomposed humus'. However, we are not informed if both pairs of samples are directly comparable in the manner in which they were taken nor whether their laboratory treatment was identical.

It will be apparent therefore that further expert analysis and discussion is required of the L'Anse aux Meadows radiocarbon dates before the general reader can be assured that a consensus of opinion has been reached on the interpretation of the results and their anomalies. Meanwhile we must rest contented that in general terms they support a late Viking Age date for the house-sites and smithy, whilst some further dates derive from subsequent occupations by Indians.

It is possible that some of the points raised above will have been clarified by the extensive excavations that have taken place subsequent to the Ingstads' own expeditions, in connection with the establishment of the site as a National Park and the construction there of a museum. These results are awaited with interest, as are the further discussions that the publication of Ingstad's report will make possible. In conclusion one can only remind the reader that the Ingstads' discoveries at L'Anse aux Meadows remain the only archaeologically proven evidence for Norse settlement in North America. Indeed one of the incidental benefits of this report is the clear manner in which Ingstad points out the main reasons why the claimed Norse finds in Ungava Bay are nothing

of the sort. Once again the Ingstads deserve to be congratulated for their perseverance and endeavour that is now commemorated by the publication of the volume.

JAMES GRAHAM-CAMPBELL

GRÆNLAND Í MIDALDARITUM. By ÓLAFUR HALLDÓRSSON. *Sögufélag*. Reykjavík, 1978. xxiv+455 pp.

The contents of this book fall into three main sections: an edition of *Grænlands annál*, together with other Norse writings about mediaeval Greenland, a study of the manuscripts, sources and authorship of *Grænlands annál*, and an essay on *Eiríks saga rauða* and *Grænlendinga saga*. This is the first time that *Grænlands annál* has been published complete, and the edition is distinguished by scholarship of the highest order from Ólafur Halldórsson. The text is given in modernized spelling (as are all the texts in the book), with a full list of variants at the foot of the page, and chapter headings, verses and marginalia are elegantly and strikingly set out.

Grænlands annál is a work of great diversity, and makes varied and fascinating reading. A compendium of information about Greenland, its subjects range from the elusive Gunnbjarnareyjar and sun-sightings in the far north to Hallur geit, who walked from Greenland overland to Norway living on goat's milk, and Jón Grænlendingur, who found one of the last Norse Greenlanders lying dead with his knife, sharpened away to a sliver, beside him. It also contains a text of *Eiríks saga rauða* (derived indirectly from *Hauksbók*).

In his study of the work, Ólafur gives a full and extremely clear account of all the manuscripts and establishes a hierarchy through a meticulous comparison of variant readings and the evidence of derivative works and translations. There is also a detailed description of the spelling and orthography of Björn Jónsson á Skarðsá, the scribe of the main manuscript. In the section on the sources of *Grænlands annál*, Ólafur discusses fifteen texts used by the author, demonstrating that in many cases these were quoted either from memory or from versions now lost. Much of the research here is based on studies made in recent years, and the section contains important new things, such as a fresh examination of the material from Björn Jórsalafari's *Reisubók*. The treatment of sources is arranged according to source texts and not the disposition of the present text, and one drawback of this is that quick identification of the source of a passage in the text is not always possible. For example, a note on the *eitt annál* mentioned tantalizingly on p. 8 of the text is tucked away in the comments on the additions to the material from *Hauksbók* on p. 223 — and the reader must learn where to look for such things himself.

On pp. 280-92 Ólafur examines evidence for the authorship of *Grænlands annál* and demonstrates convincingly that it was originally written by Jón lærði Guðmundsson in 1623, while Björn Jónsson á Skarðsá, to whom it was previously attributed, probably made only minor changes to Jón's work.

The works printed here with *Grænlands annál* make up an almost complete corpus of Norse sources on Greenland and its inhabitants in the Middle Ages. From Iceland there are, amongst others, extracts from *Íslendingabók*, *Landnámabók*, *Heimskringla* and *Flateyjarbók*, including complete texts of

Grænlinga saga and *Grænlinga þáttur*; from Norway come a long extract from *Konungs skuggsjá* and *Grænlandslýsing Ívars Bárðarsonar* in a revised Icelandic translation. As Ólafur notes in his introduction, this collection is not exhaustive, lacking the Greenland episodes from several sagas, but the emphasis is on sources of historical value, and it is extremely useful to have reliable editions of these texts together in a single book. The selection is rounded off with two groups of documents relating to the last recorded voyage from Greenland and the wedding at Hvalsey in 1408.

The third main section, 'Um Grænlinga sögu og Eiríks sögu rauða', is a discussion of these sagas' relationships to other works, the possibility of their mutual relationship, their dating and their internal coherence. Previous scholars have considered these matters, and due credit is given them, but Ólafur has gone further than any of them, making perceptive corrections (e.g. his paragraph on Ingólfur á Hólmlátri on p. 320) and pressing on to original conclusions on many matters. For example, he makes the interesting suggestion (pp. 395-6) that the bones found in the common grave near the south wall of Þjóðhildur's Church at Brattahlíð are those of Þorsteinn Eiríksson and some of the members of his failed expedition to Vinland. According to *Grænlinga saga* (cf. *Eir.* 206-41), Þorsteinn selected his crew specifically for their strength and stature (*valði hann lið at aflri ok vexti*; this fits in well with the unusual size of the skeletons) and after their deaths in the Western Settlement their bodies were brought back to Eiríksfjörður and buried at the church there. Ólafur has brought to bear an exceptionally wide experience and exacting methods, and any future treatment of the Icelandic material about Greenland and the voyages to the lands beyond it will have to take account of this book.

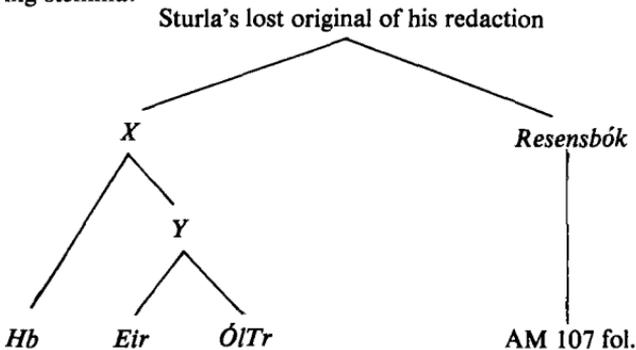
But this is not to say that Ólafur's conclusions are beyond dispute. Indeed, the dense, excursive section — the writing is necessarily dense on account of the complexity of the subject — '*Upphaf Eiríks sögu rauða*' (pp. 294-328) excites a combative vigilance in the reader, particularly in view of the conclusions summed up on pp. 327-8. These entail, amongst other things, a belief in an earlier *Eiríks saga rauða*¹ which was independent of *Landnámabók*, while the present saga is seen as deriving from it and *Landnámabók*, the latter however not in its *Sturlubók*-redaction. Granted that the equivocal and scanty evidence available admits of more than one interpretation, and granted that there are examples of works both lending material to *Landnámabók* and borrowing from it again in later versions, this seems an unnecessarily elaborate explanation of *Eir*'s textual structure and analogues. Ólafur's arguments for the existence of a pre-*Sib* tradition about Vífill, particularly in connection with genealogies (pp. 302, 375-8), are convincing, but that this constituted a version of *Eiríks saga*, with a beginning, a middle and an end, and a content and scope anything like the present saga's, has yet to be shown. As Ólafur notes (pp. 339-40), there is no reason to suspect that the traditions used by *Landnámabók* ever connected Þorbjörn Vífillsson with Greenland, which suggests that the saga was not among these. It seems to me that the simplest explanation of *Eir*'s reference to Brandur Sæmundarson as bishop Brandur *the first* (*Eir.* 420) and of what appears to be an addition by the saga author to the text *Eir* shares with *Landnámabók* — Eiríkur's promise of assistance to his friends (*Eir.* 40) — should be preferred, i.e., that *Eir* was composed after 1263, borrowed and adapted passages from a manuscript of the *Sturlubók*-redaction and took only one form, represented by the present

manuscripts. Any theory of adaptation in the other direction — from a lost earlier *Eir* into *Landnámabók* — surely bears the greater onus of proof.

It seems that in two parts of his argument, simpler explanations than Ólafur's are available.

(1) The relationship between *Eir*, *ÓlTr* and *Landnámabók* (pp. 297-300, 306-11).

It need not be that the author of *ÓlTr* took the first sentence of *ÓlTr*, ch. 122 (*Óláfr hét herkonungr er kallaðr var Óláfr hvíti*) from *Eir*. The wording of this sentence, together with the three other readings which *Eir*, ch. 1 and *ÓlTr*, ch. 122 have in common against *Stb*, ch. 95, and which *Hb*, ch. 82 shares, *Dýflinnar skíri, rauðr* and *hon* (this last missing from the list of variants in *ÓlTr* on pp. 299-300 (see *ÓlTr*, I, p. 270, line 17, last word)) may be from a common *Landnámabók* source in a line of descent different from that of AM 107 fol., in which case the discrepancies between *Hb* and AM 107 fol. need not be laid to Jón Erlendsson's account, nor *Resensbók*'s (see p. 299). This seems preferable to believing that the author of *ÓlTr* followed *Eir* in the wording of this one sentence which was probably materially available to him in his *Landnámabók* source. As for *ÓlTr*, ch. 220, the mention of *saga Eiríks* need not constitute a reference to it as a source (though see Ólafur's examples on p. 311), and the readings in common with *Eir* may again be from a common *Landnámabók* source. The matter which follows at the end of *ÓlTr*, ch. 220 suggests that the author's source had a disposition similar to *Landnámabók*'s, and if the author was following *Landnámabók*'s disposition here, then there seems no reason to believe that he was not also following its text. The fact that *ÓlTr*, chs. 221 and 231 seem to derive from a text like that of *Heimskringla* when the author might have been expected to use *Eir*'s dramatised account of Ólafur Tryggvason's dealings with Leifur and the conversion of Greenland (*Eir*, 171 ff.) is a further indication that *Eir* was not used as a source for *ÓlTr*. That the version of *Landnámabók* used by the author of *ÓlTr* was Sturla's or a copy of it is not beyond doubt, but is indicated by the appearance of the material of *ÓlTr*, chs. 110-29, corresponding to material in *Stb*, including the opening five chapters of *Stb* which are generally regarded as being Sturla's addition.² The reading *þorilldar þiodilldar* in *Hb* (ch. 77; Jón Erlendsson's copy) does not give a definite indication of the text of Haukur's original (see pp. 308, 317-18), but whether or not both forms stood in Haukur's text, and no matter which form stood in the text(s) he copied, this and the other readings mentioned above can be explained in terms of the relationships expressed in the following stemma:



X and *Y* represent now lost manuscripts of *Stb*.

(2) The relationship between *Eir*, *Eyrb* and *Landnámabók* (pp. 302-6, 312-15).

Ólafur argues that the section of text that is almost identical in *Eir* (13-14) and *Eyrb* (p. 11, lines 9-13), but which is substantially different in *Stb*, ch. 97, could not have been borrowed into *Eir* from *Eyrb* on two main grounds: (a) the ordering of the rivers defining the *landnám* of Auður djúpauðga (*Eir*: *milli Døgurðarár ok Skraumuhlaupsár*, *Eyrb*: *milli Skraumuhlaupsár ok Døgurðarár*; and (b) the author of *Eir*'s ignorance of *Eyrb*.

To deal with (a) first: the arrangement of two items in linear sequence can take only two forms, and relatively little can be built on the occurrence of either. Cases of transposition are common in copying, and if we entertain the idea that the author of *Eir* may have taken this passage from *Eyrb* then such a transposition would surely be unremarkable, and need not be regarded as a deliberate alteration. It would then be perfectly natural for him to retain the formula *milli -ár ok -ár* (see p. 306). The hypothesis that the author of *Eyrb* changed the order 'í það horf *sem hann taldi eðlilegra*' (p. 306; my italics) is purely speculative, since neither order is intrinsically more natural, and only a few lines before the passage in question *Eyrb* gives the *landnám* of Björn Ketilsson in an anticlockwise order: . . . *ok nam Björn land út frá Stafá, milli ok Hraunsfjarðar* . . . (*Eyrb*, p. 11).

To support (b), Ólafur notes the wide discrepancies between the sagas' presentations of Þórgunna (pp. 397-8). I cannot see that either this or *Eir*'s use of a literary motif here (see p. 397) means that the author of *Eir* could not have borrowed Þórgunna's name and country of origin from *Eyrb*. That the resemblances between the hauntings — and there are more than Ólafur mentions on pp. 396-7, including a partial verbal likeness (see *Eyrb*, p. 141, ll. 22-4; *Eir*, 234, 235, 240) — may be due to common oral sources surely does not preclude the *Eir*-author's having known *Eyrb*.

In connection with *Eyrb*, ch. 24, it seems far from clear that this was adapted from a text which was used separately by *Eir* and *Landnámabók*. In *Eyrb*, ch. 24, it is said: *gerðu þeir Eyjólfur ok Styrr þá eptir dæmum Arnkels* . . . This is a reference back to chapter 22 (*Eyrb*, p. 57) in which Arnkell assists an outlaw in evading his enemies just as Eyjólfur and Styrr assist Eiríkur in chapter 24. Certain details of chapter 22 are echoed in chapter 24 (*í Dímun/í Dímunarvági; út um Elliðaey/út um Elliðaey*), and while it is possible that the author wrote chapter 22 in such a way as to achieve this anticipation, it seems more probable that the later chapter was modelled on the earlier. In the light of these suggestions there seems little reason not to suppose that *Eyrb*'s account of Eiríkur's exile was the earliest of these three texts (*Eyrb*, *Stb*, *Eir*) and the source of *Stb*, while the natural explanation of the general correspondence between *Eir* and *Stb* is that *Eir* borrowed the chapter from *Stb*.

These alternative explanations involve, of course, conjectures, but in offering them I suggest that those given in Ólafur's discussion are not in all cases the most satisfactory. It is impossible to *prove* that Eiríkur's promise was not in *Landnámabók*'s source and was not dropped as superfluous (see pp. 316-17) but that is surely the more difficult explanation. The promise may not by itself prove adaptation from *Landnámabók*, but along with the other explanations I have mentioned it stands as a weighty piece of evidence which Ólafur has not quite explained away. If *Eir* was composed in one stage rather

than two, we need not seek an explanation of how the saga's double relationship to *Landnámabók* came about — this is one of the loose ends of Ólafur's treatment — and the ghost of an earlier *Eir* can be laid once and for all, early written sources for *Landnámabók* notwithstanding.

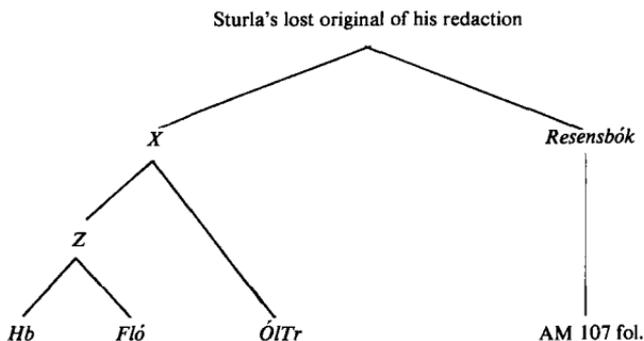
The remainder of this chapter contains an account of *Grænlandinga saga's* relationship to *Landnámabók* and then a detailed and penetrating comparison of the two Vinland sagas. This is arranged in sections, each treating separate voyages or events in the narratives. Two of these are especially useful for quick reference: '*Landalýsingar í Grænlandinga sögu og Eiríks sögu rauða*' presenting in two columns the main features of Helluland, Markland and Vinland, and '*Sameiginleg efnisatriði í Grs. og Eir.*', which gives a numbered list of points of agreement between the sagas. This comparison is distinguished by exceptional clarity, and the conclusion that the sagas are independent of each other is well-grounded and convincing. Ólafur dates both sagas tentatively to the beginning of the thirteenth century (cf. however above for the case of *Eiríks saga*). The book ends with short notes on *Grænlandinga þáttur*, *Konungs skuggsjá* and *Grænlandslýsing Ívars Bárðarsonar*, a very good index and two maps of the Norse settlements in Greenland. There is also a useful English summary. I found a few printing errors (p. 191: 'medioeriter'; p. 282: 'fogl'; p. 294: 'firyr'), but the overall production of the book is excellent. It has an attractive cover, and the twenty-odd photographs include reproductions of manuscripts, fine pictures of implements and clothing and the skulls at Brattahlíð, and a rather murky one of Skarðsa.

JEFFREY COSSER

¹ The extant *Eiríks saga rauða* is abbreviated hereafter as *Eir*. References are to numbered sections in Sven B. F. Jansson's text of the saga in his *Sagorna om Vinland*, 1945, 26-81. Other abbreviations: *Stb*: the *Sturlubók*-redaction of *Landnámabók* (the preserved manifestation of which is AM 107 fol.); *Hb*: the *Hauksbók*-redaction of *Landnámabók*; (References to *Stb* and *Hb* are to Finnur Jónsson's ed. of *Landnámabók*, 1900.) *ÓlTr*: *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, ed. Ólafur Halldórsson, 2 vols., 1958-61; *Eyrb*: *Eyrbyggja saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 1935.

² See Jón Jóhannesson, *Gerðir Landnámabókara*, 1941, pp. 67-75. The view that Sturla Þórðarson was the author of these introductory chapters has been challenged; see Sveinbjörn Rafnsson, *Studier i Landnámabók*, 1974, pp. 68-84.

Note by Richard Perkins: In touching on the relationship between the various redactions of *Landnámabók*, *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* and *Flóamanna saga* (abbreviated *Fló*) in my unpublished thesis (*An edition of Flóamanna saga*, etc., 1971, p. *433; cf. also p. *166), I proposed this stemma:



This was done on the basis of parts of *Landnámabók* other than those for which Jeffrey Cosser suggests his stemma in the foregoing review. Now while my stemma was deduced from scanty evidence, it should be noted that like Cosser's it posits a lost manuscript (*X*) of the *Sturlubók*-redaction of *Landnámabók* (a) to which both *ÓlTr* and *Hb* go back, but (b) which was neither identical with Sturla's lost original of his redaction nor an intermediary between it and the preserved AM 107 fol. Further, it should be noted that the investigations of others seem to assume the existence of an intermediary between the texts in question in a similar position to *X* in Cosser's and my stemmata (cf. Helgi Guðmundsson, *Um Kjalnesinga sögu*, 1967, 20-36; *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, 1968, cxxii-cxxiv, particularly footnote 14; lxxvi, footnote 1). In connection with my stemma above, there are, incidentally, good reasons for assuming an especially close relationship, if not between *Fló* and Haukr Erlendsson's redaction of *Landnámabók*, then between *Fló* and Haukr himself (cf. *Studia Islandica*, 36).

KONGESAGASTUDIER. KOMPILATIONEN HULDA-HROKKINSKINNA. By JONNA LOUIS-JENSEN. *Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana*, XXXII. C. A. Reitzels Boghandel A/S. København, 1977. 204 pp.

The two manuscripts, *Hulda* and *Hrokkinskinna*, present a compilation, based on the earlier *Morkinskinna* and *Heimskringla* versions, of the lives of the Norwegian kings from 1035 to 1177, i.e. from Magnús the Good to Magnús Erlingsson. The foreword makes clear that Professor Louis-Jensen has been working on this material for many years. She has already published a facsimile edition of *Hulda* (*Early Icelandic manuscripts in facsimile*, VIII, 1968), and a printed text is promised in the *Editiones Arnamagnæanæ*-series. Such a text will indeed be valuable, since, apart from the facsimile, the only other available is in the old *Fornmanna sögur*, vols. VI and VII (1831 and 1832). Unfortunately use of the work under review is at present restricted until the new text appears, as all references are to it. It is hoped that the situation will soon be remedied by the early publication of the text volume.

The present work is valuable on two counts: first because it provides a great deal of new information about the *Hulda*-recension itself, and second because, as a result of much detailed comparison, we now know more about the manuscripts of the different recensions of the Kings' Lives and the relationships between them. This detailed comparison has necessitated a close study of the *Hulda-Hrokkinskinna*-compilation's two main sources, *Heimskringla* and *Morkinskinna*, and the results obtained will be invaluable for any new edition of these two texts.

There is an excellent summary in English of the thesis on pp. 190-96, so there is little point in trying to give an abstract here. However it is probably worthwhile indicating the chapter headings. After a short review of earlier work, Chapter I describes the two manuscripts and attempts to date them and their common original. The point is made (pp. 8-9) that Jón Hákonarson, for whom *Flateyjarbók* was written, almost certainly owned a copy, as is suggested by, *inter alia*, the absence in *Flateyjarbók* in its original form of the lives of any of the Norwegian kings of the period 1030-1177. Chapter II then deals with the known manuscripts of the *Heimskringla* lives with particular reference to the third part of *Heimskringla* (*HkrIII*) as it appears in *Hulda* and *Hrokkinskinna*. Of special interest here is the information obtained by a new examination of Peder Claussøn's translation of *Heimskringla*. Chapter III turns to *Morkinskinna*, the history of its text and its relationship to the present compilation. The information about the history of *Morkinskinna* and its various recensions, including that in the interpolated part of *Flateyjarbók*, is most enlightening. Chapter IV is concerned with the other minor sources which

have contributed to the compilation, whilst Chapter V examines the individual stylistic characteristics of the compiler's adaptation. In this latter chapter, particular stress is laid on the frequent use of the alliterative phrase (which may or may not be due to the compiler himself), on the modernisation of the vocabulary, on a clear attempt by the compiler to harmonise the differences between the styles of *Morkinskinna* and *Heimskringla*, and on the compiler's attempts to rationalise the verses. Finally, pages 156-89 provide us with a detailed outline summary of the sources for the whole of the *Hulda-Hrokkinskinna*-text.

Professor Louis-Jensen has triumphantly demonstrated that *Hulda* was well worth the protracted study she has given it, for her work provides us with a much more solid and trustworthy foundation for the further study of the lives of the Norwegian Kings.

A. R. TAYLOR

NORSK STADNAMNLEKSICON. Edited by JØRN SANDNES, OLA STEM SHAUG and KOLBJØRN AUNE. Collaborators: Olav T. Beito, Knut Bergsland, Thor Frette, Botolv Helleland, Oddvar Nes and Ole Bernt Syvertsen. *Det Norske Samlaget*. Oslo, 1976. 359 pp.

Place-names are part of a nation's cultural heritage and nowhere more than in Norway, where they have long been bound up with the quest for national identity. The present dictionary is aimed at a fairly wide audience, which, however, does not mean that its content is not sound and reliable. On the contrary, it has been compiled by a team of professionals, most of whom are particularly concerned with onomastic research.

When one considers that there are five million place-names in Norway (of which only some 50,000 appeared in *Norske Gaardnavne*), the 5,500 or so names in this dictionary may seem a very small proportion. The principles of selection are, then, of prime importance. Those adopted by the editors are unashamedly pragmatic: basically, only names which are widely known and which are not immediately self-explanatory are included. Priority is given to the names of administrative divisions, towns and parishes. These are given more or less comprehensive coverage. But there are also a large number of names of such things as, e.g., farms, railway stations, post offices, bus-stops (*rutebilstopp*), ferries, harbours, airports, tourist huts and even sports centres. Names of such natural phenomena as rivers, waterfalls, lakes, fjords, stretches of sea and straits, islands, hills, mountains, and glaciers are also well represented. The nature and location of each of these is concisely recorded, so that the book also functions to some extent as a gazetteer. The scope is limited to the names of present-day Norway, including its Lappish names (dealt with by Bergsland and Frette). Only in the discussion of certain place-name elements is Shetlandic, Faroese and Icelandic material sometimes adduced for purposes of comparison.

The spelling of the names follows *Stadnamnresolusjonen* of 1957 which ordered the adoption of spellings reflecting local pronunciation but otherwise corresponding to *nynorsk* orthography. But whereas the Danish imprint on many names could thus be eliminated, no *resolusjon* can substantially resolve a basic difficulty besetting Norwegian place-name research, namely that

historical spellings, unless they antedate the impact of Danish influence, are usually most unreliable. Small wonder, then, that the local pronunciation of a name is of such importance and often the only clue to its etymology. The proportion of instructive historical forms is therefore small; it seems further decreased in this dictionary by failure to give historical forms in a number of instances where they do in fact exist (e.g. in the case of *Nordnes* and *Osterfjorden* which both appear in *Heimskringla*). And where historical forms are given, the source is not always indicated. On the other hand, as if to redress the balance, the local pronunciation of a name is nearly always given (in a slightly modified version of Johan Storm's phonetic alphabet). Non-local forms (*normerte uttaleformer*) which have developed outside the locality in question are sometimes also supplied.

The etymological explanations are concise and phrased to cater for scholar and interested layman alike. Only rarely, however, is a complete semantic interpretation of a name as a whole offered. For many names, the editors could, or had to be satisfied with known explanations; on the other hand, a good deal of original thinking has gone into a number of the articles (which are then signed by the respective contributors).

A useful feature of this dictionary is that it frequently records the relevant inhabitant names (*innbyggjarnamn*) where such exist (e.g. formations in *-ing*, *-bu*, *-daling*, *-sokning*, *-væring*, etc.). Indication of prepositional usage with the various names where it deviates from the norm is also of value. And apart from place-names proper, the dictionary also records a number of the most important and common place-name terminals (*grunnord*). In addition, some ninety first elements (*utmerkingsord*), such as *Blå-*, *Finn-*, *Kval-*, etc., are also treated in separate articles. And not infrequently, articles dealing with simplex names such as *Dal*, *Plassen*, *Rygg* amount to a general commentary on the element.

Cross-references are not this dictionary's strong point. There may have been good reasons for not listing all the separate elements individually with a reference to the names in which they are found, but this has meant that a lot of the very useful information packed into this dictionary is difficult to get at. Thus *-hogn*, treated under *Melshogna* and said to be a common element, and *-løs/-laus* (under *Brødløs* and *Dravlaus*) are not listed separately. Similarly, under *Alta*, where thirteen etymologically analogous names are mentioned, only seven of these are entered individually. In some cases, a cross-reference is given but the actual entry is absent, e.g. *-kallen* and *Storo* referred to under *Kjerring* and *Lillo* respectively.

A pertinent question is how useful this dictionary will be to the student of Old Norse literature. Thanks to the generally conservative character of modern spellings, a good many Old Norwegian names can be fairly easily found, e.g. *Haðaland* under *Hadeland*, *Orkadalsr* under *Orkdal* and, with a minimum of inference, such names as *Gerði* and *Heiðmørk* under *Gjerde* and *Hedmark*. Furthermore, restorative influences have put such lost names as *Fjaler*, *Gaular*, *Hjørungavåg* and *Valaskjold* back on the map. Again, some fifty names which would not be included by the normal criteria (for example †*Austþorp*) also appear. Some of them are listed in a form which is removed from Old Norwegian; the change may often be slight and present no difficulties to the user, although this is certainly not so of *Aumurð (-orð)* (*Heimskringla*) which is only listed under the form †*Ámord*, alphabetically arranged under *Á*

(like all forms beginning with Old Norse *Á*-, without, however, a note to this effect).

Editorial practice is very uneven with respect to names whose forms have changed considerably over the centuries. For a handful of names, the Old Norse form is entered separately with an appropriate cross-reference (e.g. under *†Eikunda(r)sund* and *†Skog(h)eimsherad*, we are referred to *Eigersund* and *Skaugum* respectively). This practice, if consistently carried through, at least as far as Norwegian names in Old Norse literature are concerned, would have increased the value of this dictionary enormously, particularly as many of the relevant modern forms are in fact listed. But as matters stand, the student of Old Norse is given little help with such names as *Naumudalr*, *Átreksstaðir* and *Njarðøy* which are only listed under their rather different modern forms *Namdalen/Numedal*, *Árstad* and *Nærøy*.

Finally, mention should be made of the brief but instructive introductory essays discussing various types of place-names, for example, settlement names, river names, street names, etc. These essays will be of great value to the uninitiated.

This is a most useful and welcome book, a treasure-house of information; it can only be hoped that in any further edition, more 'keys' will be provided to unlock its wealth more completely.

URS WAGNER

DET DANSKE RIGE I DEN ÆLDRE VIKINGETID. By ERIK KROMAN. *Rosenkilde og Bagger*. København, 1976. 177 pp.

When Erik Kroman published this book in 1976, he was 85 years old and probably the oldest active historian in Denmark. Unfortunately this fact has left its clear mark on the book. Not on its style which is very vigorous, but rather on its use of sources. Not only are specific references to sources all too scarce, but where they do appear they are more often than not to out-of-date editions which have long since been superseded. Various other technical shortcomings might also be pointed to, such as the appearance of a number of incorrect dates, the absence of a proper bibliography and the lack of adequate maps in appropriate places.

Moving from the technical to the methodological, it is discouraging to see a historian of Kroman's standing taking such an inconsistent and arbitrary approach to his sources. For example, the value of Adam of Bremen's *Gesta* is questioned in some places while in others it is accepted without reservation. Late sources are accorded too high a value, for example Simeon of Durham's *Historia regum*. This belongs to the 12th century and is very largely a compilation of older sources. Worse still is that sources which have long been shown to be spurious are used to make points which Kroman particularly wants to stress. The crudest example of this is his resort to Ingulph's *Chronicle of the Abbey of Croyland*. Finally, on one occasion at least, Kroman is guilty of treating one source which is dependent on another as independent of it and as bearing out what it says.

One of the most conspicuous traits of Kroman's book is his love of speculation. He puts forward a theory as to how things might have been (based on his interpretation of the sources) and thereafter treats his conclusion as

virtual truth. One must bear in mind that a good deal of what he says is nothing but speculation and that the source material gives us no *certain* knowledge of what happened in Denmark in the ninth and beginning of the tenth centuries. As far as I know, the question of to whom the words *tanmarkar* but on the smaller Jelling stone refer has not been settled in favour of Gorm, as Kroman seems to assume with a minimum of discussion. On the contrary, I can hardly be alone in being far from satisfied that Gorm could not have used these words of his wife. The main aim of memorial stones is rather to praise and honour the dead than to flatter oneself. There are exceptions, of course, and the larger Jelling stone provides an immediate example. But I do not feel that the smaller Jelling stone belongs to this category; the expression in question, perhaps best translated 'Denmark's improvement' or 'Denmark's salvation', is hardly one one would use of oneself, but rather of someone one loved and respected.

To write a history of Denmark in the ninth and tenth centuries is, given the nature of the source material, a difficult and thankless task. This does not mean that it should not be undertaken. But if it is, it must be on the basis of stricter historical methodology than that employed here. One must constantly bear in mind the quality of the source material and the quality of the results it is likely to produce. It may be irritating for the reader to be constantly coming across the words 'probably' and 'possibly'; but somewhere in the book, the author should have made clear that the paucity and poverty of the sources only rarely allows of anything approaching certain conclusions. But above all, it is unforgivable that this book is so replete with incorrect dates and references to unreliable sources and obsolete editions. Many of these faults could have been avoided with just a little more thought and care. On the other hand, some of Kroman's theories are fascinating and might well stimulate other historians to try and cast more light on this interesting period of Danish history. Perhaps, then, the best thing that can be said about this book is that it makes one want to come to grips with the problems oneself and attempt to find some solution to them.

LENE DEMIDOFF

SCANDINAVIAN KINGS IN THE BRITISH ISLES 850-880. By ALFRED P. SMYTH. *Oxford University Press*. Oxford, 1977. xii+307 pp.

When I reviewed Alfred P. Smyth's *Scandinavian York and Dublin*, I (1975) for *Saga-Book*, XIX, 4 (1977), 471-4, I suggested that the book now under review, which had not then appeared, but to which frequent reference was made in the earlier book, might help to clarify certain points which, it seemed to me, had been inadequately handled there. In one case, at least, the book now under review has fulfilled this function: in its final pages (260-66) Smyth makes it clear why, on p. 19 of the earlier book, he seemed to be referring to Healfdene of Northumbria and to Agnerus, a son of Regnerus Lothbrog according to Saxo, as though they were the same person. Furthermore, Smyth's discussion, in the book now under review (Chapters XIV and XVI-XVII), of the supposed blood-eagle sacrifice of Ælla of Northumbria shows more awareness of Sigvatr Þórðarson's *Knútsdrápa* as a

source for this notion, and of de Vries's rejection (in *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, XLIV, 1928, 161-2) of this particular instance of the sacrifice as an historical event, than the earlier book indicated. I did suggest, however, in reviewing the earlier book, that Smyth should have referred in this connection to Gustav Storm's *Kritiske Bidrag til Vikingetidens Historie* (1878), and it is a very serious criticism of the book now under review that no direct reference is made in it to this work of Storm's, the relevance of which to Smyth's subject extends far beyond the slaying of King Ælla.

Smyth's purpose here, as I understand it, is to show that 'Inwær of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* was the same as Imhar of Norse Dublin' (vii), and that this Inwær/Imhar and Healfdene of Northumbria were sons of Ragnarr loðbrók; and to use this relationship as a basis for showing 'the essential unity of Viking activity in Dublin and northern England' (264). This relationship cannot be established as historical on the basis of contemporary accounts alone, however, and Smyth has frequent recourse to material dating from much later than the period which forms his subject-matter in order to fulfil his purpose. Much of this material is legendary, and Smyth would have done well to take as a model for his own investigation Storm's balanced discussion (see Storm, 4-6) of C. A. E. Jessen's extreme view that 'every legend is a lie until it is proved true.' Jessen's *Undersøgelser til nordisk Oldhistorie* (1862), to which Storm is here referring, is another book to which Smyth makes, as far as I can discover, absolutely no direct reference. Neither of these works can have escaped his attention, however, since both are referred to under the heading of *Ragnars saga loðbrókar* . . . in Halldór Hermannsson's bibliography of the 'mythical-heroic sagas' (*Islandica*, V, 1912, 35-6), to which Smyth does refer in his own 'Select bibliography'; and Storm's book was written as a critical response to the first volume of J. C. H. R. Steenstrup's *Normannerne*, to the first (1876) and second volume (1878) of which Smyth also refers in his bibliography, and in the second volume of which Steenstrup replies (379-84), by no means always convincingly, to some severe and valid criticisms by Storm of his view that, as Smyth puts it, 'the Irish version of *Ragnars saga* survives in the tract known as the *Three Fragments*' (62) — a view of Steenstrup's which Smyth reproduces, with very little modification, in Chapter IV of the book now under review. It is true that Smyth does refer, notably here (66, n. 53) and in his Appendix VIII (279, n. 1), to writers who have taken Storm's views into account on this point, but his total failure to mention Storm either in his footnotes or his bibliography must be regarded as irresponsible, since it prevents the reader from checking up easily on points where Storm's views argue persuasively against his own. Another example of this is the 'expedition of the sons of *Ragnall* to Spain and North Africa' to which Smyth refers (on p. 161) in the course of his Chapter XI ('Scandinavian Dublin and the slave trade with Islam'). Storm (67-8) regarded this as a Norwegian rather than a Danish expedition and as having nothing to do, consequently, with Vikings who came to be regarded as sons of Ragnarr loðbrók. Smyth would no doubt reply to this that a distinction between Danes and Norwegians is irrelevant here in view of the argument put forward in his second chapter ('The Viking dynasty of the *Kattegat*'), where he says of Ragnarr loðbrók and his family that 'theirs was a dynasty of sea-kings, rather than of rulers of a large and settled territory' (31). Very well; but he should then be prepared to answer Storm's suggestion (see Storm, 85-6) that the brothers Halbdeni and Sigfridus

(the former arguably identical with Healfdene of Northumbria, and the latter arguably a prototype of Sigurðr ormr-í-auga, son of Ragnarr loðbrók) who are mentioned in the *Annales Fuldenses* for 873, were closely connected with one of the two main ruling families in Denmark in the ninth century. This he does not do. It is depressing to find from this new book of Smyth's and from a number of enthusiastic reviews of it (by D. P. Kirby in *English historical review*, XCIV, 370, 1979, 162-3, by I. N. Wood in *Northern history*, XV, 1979, 241-2, and by H. R. Loyn in *Scandinavica*, 18, 2, 1979, 153-6), that medieval historians in these islands seem largely unaware of the basic rule of Viking studies that in none of the frequent cases where Steenstrup and Storm have both treated the same aspect of Viking history should one accept Steenstrup's view without comparing it critically with Storm's. I say 'critically', of course, because neither scholar will necessarily be right; but the disagreement between them is often strong and healthy enough to be a useful guide to the truth — which may often be that no certain truth can be established.

Smyth's failure to mention Storm's book is all the more surprising in that its importance in relation to Steenstrup's and Jessen's writings (as well as to those of Lauritz Weibull) has recently been emphasized by Hugo Yrwing in a discussion led by Rolf Arvidsson in *Mediaeval Scandinavia*, 5 (1972), 96-138 (see especially pp. 130-31). Among other important works missing from Smyth's bibliographical references may be mentioned Harris Birkeland's *Nordens historie i middelalderen etter arabiske kilder* (1954), which would have helped to control his discussion of the possible Arabic contacts of Vikings who came to be regarded as sons of Ragnarr loðbrók; and Folke Ström's 'Kung Domalde i Svitjod och "kungalyckan"', *Saga och sed* (1967), 52-66, which might have led him to distinguish between *Ynglinga saga* and *Ynglingatal* in his discussion of King Dómaldi on pp. 219-20, and to link the sacrifice of that king more readily with Freyja than with Óðinn.

I have discussed in my contribution to the *Proceedings of the Seventh Viking Congress, Dublin, 15-21 August 1973* (1976), 93-123, the matter of the *Three fragments*, referred to above, and the question of whether Inwære of the *Anglo-Saxon chronicle* and Imhar of Dublin were the same person, and have nothing to add here to my earlier remarks. As to the further question, which I also discuss there, of whether Inwære and Healfdene were brothers and sons of someone who came to be known as Ragnarr loðbrók, I think it emerges clearly enough from my discussion that there is disagreement between the *Anglo-Saxon chronicle* and Æthelweard's chronicle as to the identity of the Viking leader who was slain in Devon in 878. According to the *Anglo-Saxon chronicle* this was 'the brother of Inwære and of Healfdene'; according to Æthelweard it was 'Healfdene, the brother of the tyrant Iguuar'. This disagreement (which is easy to miss, because A. Campbell mistranslates it in his edition of *The chronicle of Æthelweard*, 1962, p. 43, giving the impression that Æthelweard here agrees with the *Anglo-Saxon chronicle*) does not, of course, interfere with the notion that Inwære and Healfdene were brothers, but it does upset the view that they were sons of someone with a name corresponding to Ragnarr, since if Æthelweard is right on this point, then the Healfdene slain in Devon in 878 cannot have been identical with the Albann who, according to the *Annals of Ulster*, was slain at Strangford Lough in 877 and who arguably was a son of one Ragnall. Now Smyth would no doubt reply to all this: 'But Æthelweard is

not a contemporary source and his clumsy translation and editing of the *Anglo-Saxon chronicle* must be treated with caution,' as he says in a different context on p. 234 of the book now under review. On the other hand, Smyth himself treats Æthelweard as a reliable source for ninth-century events elsewhere in his book (notably on pp. 236-7, 241 and 243) and it should be remembered that Æthelweard's chronicle, according to Dorothy Whitelock, 'has authentic details of its own, especially in relation to south-western affairs' (see *Seventh Viking Congress*, p. 120, n. 195).

Unfortunately Dr Smyth's anxiety to find a unity in his subject-matter leads to a serious disunity in his approach. In order to fulfil his ultimate purpose, as outlined above, he is all too ready to use sources inconsistently, as his treatment of Æthelweard illustrates. He tends to ignore relevant sources when their evidence does not suit him, as Roberta Frank has noticed in pointing out (in her review of Smyth's book in the *American historical review*, 84, 1, 1979, 135-6) his failure to convey directly the evidence of the *Annales Xantenses* that Reginheri, who sacked Paris in 845, died soon after that event; and he also tends to draw on sources of dubious relevance without sufficient discussion of their age and reliability, as in his references to the *Annals of Lindisfarne* (pp. 23, 195 and 236) and in his suggestion that part of Book IX of the *Compendium Saxonis* is 'based on an early draft of Saxo's *Gesta*', and 'much closer to Saxo's original source' (p. 89). The footnote with which he seeks to support this suggestion leaves a number of obvious questions unanswered, as does his statement two footnotes later that 'Maelbrigte was a stock Celtic name used by later Scandinavian compilers to describe Irish and Scottish rulers' (pp. 89-90). A number of elementary mistakes — one of them occurring on the very first page of the book — does not increase the reader's confidence. On p. 1, Dr Smyth claims that it is 'in the opening lines of *Ragnars saga*' that Ragnarr loðbrók is said to be the son of Sigurðr hringr; on p. 41 he makes the decisive statement that '*Völsunga saga* survives in one manuscript only;' and on p. 222 what is presumably meant to be the plural form of *bóndi* is given as *bondar*. This latter form, incidentally, in Professor Loyn's review, referred to above, becomes *bondir* — a further mistake which illustrates in miniature the kind of harm which can so easily be done by a book like this new one of Dr Smyth's.

I can summarize my view of this book by quoting some remarks from Peter Foote's recent review of Lars Lönnroth's book on *Njáls saga* (in *Scandinavica*, 18, 1, 1979, 49-58) which seem to me more relevant to Dr Smyth's book than to Dr Lönnroth's (about which, in my view, they are too polite): 'However well disposed one may be to a general argument, it is tiresome and in the end destructive of confidence to meet it conducted to the accompaniment of . . . imperfect learning.' Further, and more constructively: 'A book whose almost every page offers something to correct or modify, ponder or argue about, teaches us to be wary and makes good material for a discussion group. I trust the book will be read as much as it deserves to be.'

Finally, I would note that Roberta Frank has kindly informed me that a reply by Patrick Wormald to her review, referred to above, and a reply by her to his reply, are shortly to be published in the February (1980) number of the *American historical review*; and that Donncha Ó Corráin has also been kind enough to let me know of a lengthy review by him of Dr Smyth's book, forthcoming in *Irish historical studies*.

COINS AND COINAGE IN VIKING-AGE NORWAY. By KOLBJØRN SKAARE. *Universitetsforlaget*. Oslo, Bergen and Tromsø, 1976. 248 pp.+22 plates.

Dr Skaare's thesis, which has been published only in English, is the outcome of twenty years' work on the coinage and monetary history of Norway. It deals with imported coins of successive periods — Roman, Merovingian, Frankish, Byzantine and so on — and then, in considerable detail, with the national coinage which began in a very small way under Olaf Tryggvason (995-1000) and Olaf Haraldsson (1015-30), but which enjoyed a period of flowering only under Harald Hardråde (1047-66). Numismatists are hard to please; but they will, on this occasion, express themselves fully satisfied with the way in which the facts have been put on record. Skaare has assembled a comprehensive catalogue of some 184 Norwegian finds of coins from before c. 1100, and also a corpus of some 270 Norwegian coins, c. 995-c. 1065. The coins are meticulously described and illustrated, and even their alloy has been established, by neutron activation analysis.

The earlier material is likewise carefully summarized. Islamic dirhams began to enter all parts of Norway in quantities by the end of the ninth century, and were quite generally used as a medium of payment within the country. Their place was taken in the eleventh century by German and Anglo-Saxon pennies. All this is part of the wider phenomenon of the accumulation of silver stocks in the northern world, and there are, for example, only minor differences between the coins found, period by period, in Norway and in Sweden.

The first Norwegian coins, reading ONLAF REX NOR, imitate Anglo-Saxon *Crux* pennies (c. 991-7) and were struck probably before 998. Their attribution to the earlier Olaf, disputed at one time, is confirmed by the occurrence of one specimen in the Igelösa find concealed soon after 1005. In all, only three specimens are known, all from the same pair of dies. Olaf Haraldsson's coins were equally 'a transient phenomenon, not an established institution'. There were, perhaps, as few as four pairs of dies used. Harald Hardråde's *Triquetra* pennies, by contrast, were struck from well over a hundred pairs of dies and we may confidently assume that a million or more coins were produced. In the earlier part of the reign they were of 80-90% silver. Some time before 1060, there began an intensive issue of pennies which were only about one-third fine. Some of the specimens analysed fall even below that. *Triquetra* pennies circulated in all parts of Norway and have even been found, for example, in Lapp offering-places in Northern Sweden. They mark the introduction of 'normal' currency in the country. The numismatic evidence, fully deployed, thus provides unambiguous evidence for the monetary history of Norway in the second half of the eleventh century. For the period from c. 900 to c. 1050, it is less easy to dispose of the uncertainties, since, even if we can establish how many dirhams or how many Anglo-Saxon coins were struck, there is no way of telling what proportion of them found their way to Norway. From the relative frequency of earlier and later finds, one should however assume that there was a plentiful circulating medium from the early tenth century onwards.

D. M. METCALF

ORKNEYINGA SAGA. THE HISTORY OF THE EARLS OF ORKNEY. Translated by HERMANN PÁLSSON and PAUL EDWARDS. *The Hogarth Press*. London, 1978. 223 pp.

Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards have produced a vigorous, even racy, English version of *Orkneyinga saga*, full of life and energy, which will certainly make the saga accessible and enjoyable for those who want to read it for pleasure and interest. It has a short introduction, an excellent annotated index of persons, and a brief place-name index which correlates the Icelandic forms with those modern English forms used in the translation itself.

As is generally true for the translations produced by Hermann Pálsson with various other scholars, the translation itself is a paraphrase rather than a translation proper. Sometimes the freedom with the original text seems slightly excessive: a spot-check at the very beginning of the saga produced the following comparison:

En Nórr fór þaðan vestr á Kjölu ok var lengi úti ok svá, at þeir vissu ekki til manna, ok skutu dýr ok fugla til matar sér, fóru þar til, er vötn hnigu til vestrættar af fjöllum. Þá fara þeir með vötnunum ok kómu at sjá; þar var fyrir þeim fjörðr mikill, sem hafsbótin væri; þar váru byggðir miklar, ok dalir stórir gengu at firðinum. Þar var safnaðr fyrir þeim, ok réðu þeir þegar til bardaga við Nórr, ok fóru þeira skipti eptir vana: allt fólk fell þar eða flýði, en Nórr ok hans menn gengu yfir sem lok yfir akra. Fór Nórr um allan fjörðinn ok lagði undir sik ok gerðisk konungr yfir þeim heruðum, er þar lágu innan fjarðar (*Íslensk fornrit*, XXXIV, 1965, p. 4).

“From there Nor and his men journeyed on westward to the Kjolen Mountains. For a long time they saw no sign of people, and for food they had to shoot birds and deer. When they came to the watershed where the rivers start to flow westwards, they took the same direction till they reached the sea. Ahead of them lay a great fjord, as big as a gulf, with large settlements and broad valleys stretching up from the sea. There they ran into a crowd of people who immediately started a fight, but the outcome was just as before; either the natives were killed, or they had to run, for Nor and his men went through them like tares through a field of wheat. After that he travelled right round the fjord, claimed the whole region as his property and made himself king over the territory east of the fjord” (translation, p. 28).

The syntactic reorganisation in the English version is wholly justifiable: the succession of paratactic clauses which gives the Icelandic its fluency and directness would merely seem clumsy in English; equally, the terse Icelandic idioms require some expansion in English. Other alterations, however, smack of carelessness: *skutu dýr ok fugla* translated as “they had to shoot birds and deer”; *var (lengi) úti* omitted; *dalir stórir gengu at firðinum* translated as “broad valleys stretching up from the sea”; “After that . . .” is not in the Icelandic; *innan fjarðar* translated as “east of the fjord”. Sometimes the English simply gives the wrong impression of the Icelandic, e.g. *Þar var safnaðr fyrir þeim, ok réðu þeir þegar til bardaga við Nórr* translated as “There they ran into a crowd of people who immediately started a fight”. The English gives the impression that a mob picked a fight with strangers, where the Icelandic means that a local levy was raised to beat off invaders. Sometimes also the terse intensity of the Icelandic can be reproduced in English, and is not: *allt fólk fell þar eða flýði* can be translated literally: “all folk fell there or fled”,

which is far superior to "either the natives were killed, or they had to run."

This translation is also marked by a breezy, almost colloquial style, with forms such as "wasn't" and "that's" which imply the spoken voice of a narrator. This is wholly foreign to the original, and to most saga-literature, where no persona of a storyteller intervenes between the events and the hearer or reader. This criticism can be made of other translations in which Hermann Pálsson has collaborated with Paul Edwards; the collaborations with Magnus Magnusson and Denton Fox have produced a classic, impersonal clarity of style which (to my ear) is far more suitable. The colloquialisms not only produce the spurious persona of a narrator, they also at times trivialise the subject-matter: "'You've not done well, kinsman,' he said, 'to break your oaths, though probably the cause lies in other people's sinfulness rather than your own. Now, I'll offer you three choices and you can take your pick, for I'd not have you violate your oaths . . .'" (translation pp. 86-7). This can hardly be taken seriously as the last speech of the martyred St Magnus, and it has nothing of the restrained and dignified tenderness of the original.

This translation, then, provides a racy and enjoyable version of the saga. It will not satisfy the serious student or the scholar, both of whom will still need to use Taylor's translation (Edinburgh, 1938). A new edition of Taylor's translation, incorporating his later work up to his death in 1972, remains a major desiderandum. It is to be hoped that the present translation will soon appear in paperback and at a price which its potential audience can afford; the present edition, however, is reasonably well produced, though not without misprints.

PAUL BIBIRE

HALLFREDAR SAGA. Edited by BJARNI EINARSSON. *Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, rit 15. Stofnun Árna Magnússonar*. Reykjavík, 1977. cxliv+116 pp.

Bjarni Einarsson's new edition of *Hallfreðar saga* partly supplements, partly derives from his already substantial publications on the saga, notably his diplomatic edition in the *Samfund*-series (1953) and the relevant part of *Skáldasögur* (1961; revised version in *To skjaldesagaer*, 1976 (cf. following review)). The present edition is based on a re-reading of the manuscripts, and variant readings from *Húsafellsbók* (Stockholm Papp. fol. nr. 22), not previously printed, supplement those of the defective and closely related AM 54 fol. The layout of the 1953 edition is reproduced with little alteration. The texts of *Möðruvallabók* (M) and AM 61 fol. (61), the main representative of the redaction in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar in mesta* (Ó), appear in parallel, with minimal editorial annotation, and those of AM 62 fol. (62) and *Flateyjarbók* (F) are printed parallel in the parts of the saga where they can be regarded as independent of M and 61; elsewhere they are covered by the critical apparatus. The introduction is a rewritten, Icelandic version of that intended for the edition of 1953 but hitherto unpublished. Here the editor proceeds from a concise but thorough description of the manuscripts to an examination of their textual relationships — the fullest since Willem van Eeden's in *De overlevering van de Hallfreðar saga* (1919) and three subsequent articles (1920, 1921, 1930). Bjarni's proposed stemma, which he stresses is valid only for the text of

Hallfreðar saga, confirms the fourfold grouping of Ó manuscripts postulated by van Eeden but redefines the relationships between the groups and between M and F. In the last main section of the introduction, Bjarni examines episodes from the saga, seeking especially to determine whether the sparsely-worded M or the fuller Ó text is closer to the original. There is some overlap here with his chapter on *Hallfreðar saga* in *Skáldasögur* where, however, the emphasis was more on relations with other sagas, and on certain of the verses. Neither discussion covers the complete saga, so that, for example, the presentation of Óttarr's 'verdict' that Hallfreðr should go abroad, leaving Kolfinna to Griss, is discussed in the 1977 edition (pp. cxiv-cxvi) but not in *Skáldasögur*, whilst the first scene of the saga, the 'burning in' of Þorvaldr skiljandi, is discussed only in *Skáldasögur* (pp. 171-3). More plentiful and precise references to *Skáldasögur* might have helped the reader of the 1977 edition here. Bjarni's conclusions confirm the view of Einar Ól. Sveinsson (editor of the saga in *Vatnsdæla saga* (*Íslensk fornrit*, vol. VIII, 1939)) that, whilst neither M nor Ó preserves the archetypal saga, the wording of Ó is on the whole more original. In the M text, Bjarni detects two strata of shortenings, one in common with F (where F belongs to the M redaction) and a later one peculiar to M. As for the Ó redactor, he not only modified the saga in order to insert it episodically into *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, but also expanded and shortened passages in accordance with his view of Hallfreðr primarily as Christian convert and skald to a missionary king rather than as love-poet. Bjarni's examination of the close of the saga in this light is of particular interest, and is reproduced in the English summary which concludes the introduction.

DIANA EDWARDS

TO SKJALDESAGAER. By BJARNI EINARSSON. *Universitetsforlaget*. Oslo, Bergen and Tromsø, 1976. 190 pp.

Bjarni Einarsson describes this book as 'en omarbejdet oversættelse' of the main part of his book *Skáldasögur* (Reykjavik, 1961). The new book is in fact a re-writing rather than a 'revised translation' (into Danish) of those parts of the earlier book which dealt with *Kormaks saga* and *Hallfreðar saga*. This book does not, therefore, replace the earlier work, since Bjarni has omitted the discussion of *Bjarnar saga Hítðlakappa* and of *Gunnlaugs saga*, and has also pruned some technical material which remains of value. But the new book cannot be disregarded either, since Bjarni has often made significant alterations to minor points, or has changed their emphasis.

Bjarni's central thesis, and its presentation, remain as controversial as in 1961, and unfortunately he has not seen fit to reply to some of his critics. Of these the most important is probably Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, in a major article in this periodical (*Saga-Book* (1966), pp. 18-60). It is most striking that four sagas of poets (*skáldasögur*), *Kormaks saga*, *Hallfreðar saga*, *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu* and *Bjarnar saga Hítðlakappa*, share substantially the same story with *Laxdæla saga* and a few *þættir*; the influence of the same story can also be seen elsewhere, e.g. in the narrative of Björn Breiðvíkingakappi in *Eyrbyggja saga*. Further, the regional distribution of these narratives in Iceland is striking: those dealing with heroes from the Húnavatn area (the first two), and those dealing with heroes from Borgarfjörðr and Breiðafjörðr, form

two distinct groups in terms of narrative form and content. Bjarni considers that this common narrative, and the love-poetry which accompanies it in the four *skáldasögur*, are directly derived from the romance of Tristan and Isolde and the ideas of courtly love associated with that romance. This thesis, of course, has ramifications far beyond the field of Norse literature, and must be seen in terms of one of the most passionately fought, yet still unresolved, controversies of the sixties. Bjarni believes, with C. S. Lewis, that courtly love is essentially an invention of the twelfth century, which has formed part of Western culture ever since. If so, then the features of courtly love, and the narratives which express them in archetypal form, can be quite precisely placed in time and culture. But if, on the other hand, the ideas of courtly love, the types of behaviour which these inspire, and so the narratives derived from them, are universal to mankind, then such narratives and the love-poetry which they contain can be produced at any period and place. This is Einar Ól. Sveinsson's view.

Attempts to prove either position have centred upon *Kormaks saga*, since both Einar and Bjarni agree that it is probably the oldest of the *skáldasögur*. The arguments fall into two groups: firstly, to establish the date and *rittengsl* of the prose narratives, and secondly to establish the relationship between the prose narrative and the verses which it contains. Bjarni's case is considerably stronger for the first of these. The number of detailed minor correspondences between the texts which share the same basic narrative cannot be due to chance and coincidence: there must be a literary relationship between these texts, as Gwyn Jones pointed out long since (*Saga-Book* (1946), p. 285). Bjarni is also largely convincing in establishing a relationship between this narrative and that of Tristan and Isolde (not necessarily through the surviving *Tristrams sögur*), though he does not distinguish sufficiently clearly between, on the one hand, derivation, and on the other, influence from the Tristan-story. This distinction is of course crucial.

Secondly, both Bjarni and Einar discuss the relationship between verse and prose in *Kormaks saga* at some length. Bjarni's view is that composition of verse and prose was simultaneous, probably by the same individual, who was composing a unified romance in the guise of an Icelandic saga. In this he has to perform a range of intellectual acrobatics in order to dismiss the notorious discrepancies between verse and prose. In particular his discussion of v. 15 (pp. 47-50; *Skáldasögur*, pp. 72-5, 285-6) involves methodological problems, and remains as unconvincing as in 1961. In this and many other instances, moreover, Bjarni does not merely put forward an explanation as possible, but as though certain. This shakes the reader's faith in his general judgement. Einar's argument is an attempt to prove that the verses of the saga can be shown on internal evidence to be 'genuine', i.e. composed during the period to which the saga itself attributes them, the tenth century. His discussion is most impressive, and is one of the clearest and most closely argued presentations of the criteria for dating skaldic poetry. However, it also exemplifies a number of the problems involved in such dating. Some of our criteria may be modern scholarly inventions, and in any case, it is never possible to prove that a late poet may not have imitated early linguistic or metrical features. Further, the corpus as it stands has largely been emended to fit scholarly opinion about its date. On the question of literary influence in these verses, see also Jónas Kristjánsson in *Saga Íslands*, III, 1978, pp. 286-7.

In conclusion, a number of points may be made. Firstly, Bjarni's attempt to prove that verse and prose in *Kormaks saga* are wholly interdependent, and must therefore have been composed together, is itself not crucial to his basic thesis, although it would of course establish the late date of the poetry. But the poetry itself could have been composed during the 12th century, under the first impact of the continental ideas of courtly love, and a saga later woven around it. If however the poetry is as early as Einar wishes to establish, then it cannot have been composed under troubadour influence, and the attitudes which it expresses and the narrative which it implies must have developed independently. Secondly, the attitudes expressed in the poetry, and indeed the whole world of this saga, are wholly foreign to the literature of the Dark Ages, the period to which Einar attributes the poetry. Tales of tragic, adulterous love are, let us say, uncommon in Dark Age literature; the emotions which would be associated with such tales do not usually receive any expression at all, let alone a sympathetic presentation, in Dark Age literature. Bjarni's basic thesis, in other words, is considerably stronger and more plausible than his presentation of it.

PAUL BIBIRE

SAGADEBATT. Edited by ELSE MUNDAL. *Universitetsforlaget*. Oslo, Bergen and Tromsø, 1977. 286 pp.

Else Mundal's instructive guide to saga scholarship since about 1800 invites comparison with two other recent publications. First, there is Theodore M. Andersson's masterly survey *The problem of Icelandic saga origins* (1964), which has firmly established itself as an indispensable textbook and a classic of its kind. Then we have Walter Baetke's *Die Isländersaga* (1974), which is a useful anthology containing selections from the works of eighteen scholars over the period from 1871 to the present. *Sagadebatt* combines the best qualities of both these books. Like Andersson, Else Mundal presents the history of saga criticism over the past century and a half as a continuous intellectual process, and, following Baetke, she provides us with the actual arguments of several saga interpreters. She has, on the whole, chosen her authorities wisely and she writes well. After a brief prefatory chapter exploring the situation before the nineteenth century, she introduces P. E. Müller and invites him to open the debate with his observations on the authenticity of the sagas (1817). The remaining disputants are two further Danes (Carsten Hauch and Paul V. Rubow), five Norwegians (Rudolf Keyser, Alexander Bugge, Halvdan Koht, Hans E. Kinck and Knut Liestøl), four Icelanders (Finnur Jónsson, Björn Magnússon Ólsen, Einar Ólafur Sveinsson and Sigurður Nordal), a Swiss (Andreas Heusler) and a German (Walter Baetke). In a critical survey of the kind Dr Mundal is attempting, we should certainly expect to hear the voices of these eminent scholars; but I can hardly be the sole admirer of her book to regret the omission of such outstanding authors as Konrad Maurer, W. P. Ker and Axel Olrik, all of whom are represented in Baetke's anthology. Undergraduate students tackling such difficult topics as the historicity of the sagas, their origin, date, authorship, oral and written antecedents, aesthetic qualities and so on, will find Dr Mundal's guidance worth following, while more seasoned saga enthusiasts will appreciate her

intelligent handling of the once crucial controversy 'freeprose' versus 'bookprose'. Modern critics will, no doubt, be inclined to reject some of the premises on which Heusler and others based their arguments, though few are likely to deny that all the pieces included in the volume are well worth reading. One of its pleasing features is the sympathetic and skilful manner in which Dr Mundal places each individual contribution in the context of the saga debate taken as a whole.

HERMANN PÁLSSON

DE NORSKE CISTERCIENSERKLOSTRE 1146-1264 SETT I EUROPEISK SAMMENHENG. By ARNE ODD JOHNSEN. *Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi. II. Hist.-Filos. klasse. Avhandlinger, ny serie no. 15. Universitetsforlaget. Oslo, Bergen and Tromsø, 1977. 96 pp.*

The author has an established position both as a discoverer and an interpreter of the materials for Norwegian church history. Here he is concerned with international contacts and shows how in this instance the practice of the medieval church tallied remarkably well with its high aspirations. Norwegian Cistercian houses were in close touch both with the general chapter at Cîteaux and with their English mother houses. Commerce took Norwegian ships to Lynn, Yarmouth and Grimsby; and this allowed monks from, for instance, Lyse (to the south of Bergen) to come as diplomats to the English king and on their statutory visits to their mother house of Fountains. Both in farming methods and in library provision, Norwegian Cistercians learned from England. On the one hand, they were architectural and technical innovators; on the other, they provided a Norwegian contribution to the European stock of Mary-miracle stories. Around 1125, the Benedictine William of Malmesbury wrote in praise of the new Cistercian order. Arne Odd Johnsen's book shows why William's enthusiasm remains entirely understandable to this day. The book closes with an edition of some relevant documents, namely the earliest account of the foundation at Lyse, taken from Hugh of Kirkstall's *Narratio*; King John of England's *privilegium* issued on behalf of the ship belonging to Lyse; and twenty-four statutes of the Cistercian general chapter.

JOHN SIMPSON

TRISTÁN EN EL NORTE. By ÁLFRÚN GUNNLAUGSDÓTTIR. *Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, rit 17. Stofnun Árna Magnússonar. Reykjavík, 1978. 366 pp.*

In exhaustively confronting the Old Norse translated *Saga of Tristram ok Ísönd* with what remains of the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman poem of Thomas, *Tristan* (*Les fragments du roman de Tristan*, ed. Bartina H. Wind, 1960), Álfrún Gunnlaugsdóttir undertakes a task of intricate difficulty; scholars of both Old Norse and French will surely welcome the re-opening of the question of the relationship between the two works, as also the full translation of the saga into Spanish provided by the author.

Álfrún's translation is of AM 543 4to, designated by her *a*, written in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, and likewise the basis of the three editions of the saga. These editions Álfrún considers defective (p. 15-16): Kölbing in his edition (*Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar*, 1878) 'in many cases emends the text by completing sentences which, in his opinion, were left incomplete, giving the original sentences or words in footnotes', thus complicating the reading of the text; he also 'changes the orthography of the manuscript and tries to adapt it to that of the thirteenth century. Here he becomes involved in inconsistencies, mixing archaic forms with more modern ones.' (Quotations from Álfrún's Spanish are here translated by reviewer.) Gísli Brynjúlfsson (*Saga af Tristram ok Ísönd*, 1878), according to Álfrún, 'also changes the manuscript orthography, adapting it to the forms of the thirteenth century, but falls into fewer errors than Kölbing. On the whole he reproduces manuscript *a* faithfully; only sometimes he changes words proper to seventeenth-century scribes, which he generally justifies in footnotes.' Bjarni Vilhjálmsson's edition (*Riddarasögur*, I, 1949) 'is based virtually entirely upon that of G. Brynjúlfsson'. So to obtain the purest text, Álfrún returns to the manuscript. She also provides translations into Spanish of the fifteenth-century vellum fragments (AM 567 4to and Reeves Fragment), sadly small, which represent the oldest surviving form of the saga, with critical comment; remarking (p. 21) that 'thanks to the vellum leaves we know that the paper manuscripts at our disposal for the main part of the saga are defective, and that many of the defects in them arise from the scribes.'

Clearly, a seventeenth-century manuscript cannot be the best witness to a thirteenth-century work, especially as Icelandic scribes are not renowned for fidelity to their original; but there is no more satisfactory text, so Álfrún is forced to make the best of a situation not ideal (p. 21): 'On the other hand, we do not know what the manuscript from which Robert translated was like. It probably differed somewhat from the fragments of Thomas which have come down to us. It is impossible to take these facts' (i.e. scribal mediation and the character of an original Anglo-Norman manuscript) 'into account in a comparison like ours. Nothing helps us to discover what in the text of the saga derives from the scribes. We are compelled to attribute to Robert the majority of the defects in the Norse version *vis-à-vis* the French poem.' So she sets out positively, on the assumption that the saga we have must be taken to represent the thirteenth-century translation by Brother Robert of Thomas's twelfth-century poem. The identity of Brother Robert, and his floreat of 1226 — to which manuscript *a* is the earliest witness — she does not discuss.

Although obliged to accept manuscript *a*'s text as representing Brother Robert's original work, Álfrún is careful to draw attention to places where she feels that scribal intervention may disguise or distort his translation; for example, speaking of the saga's rather loose treatment of lines 537-42 of Thomas's poem Álfrún notes (p. 176): 'Here we find an interpolation, or rather two, which are worthy of remark. The first, "And because he approached her so close and was so insistent . . ." seems to be one of those amplifications which abound throughout the saga. The second, which follows directly upon it, "but had he wished to use his strength he would soon have avenged himself", shows clearly how much Robert is "pro Tristan"; he cannot bear them thus to maltreat [his hero], and leaps to the defence of his honour. But, is it certain that this ingenuousness is truly Robert's? Is it not possible that some indignant

scribe may have been the author of the phrase? It fits so badly in context that everything points to a later addition.'

However, despite the difficulties of direct access, Álfur finally concludes that Robert was on the whole a methodical translator, whose modifications of Thomas's text were made deliberately and with sustained artistic intention; I quote from the 14-page French summary of the argument provided at the end of the volume (p. 343 ff.; my translation): 'Robert adopts the attitude of the narrator who claims to recount a story which, if not true, is at least credible . . .' he is an 'objective and invisible narrator', as opposed to the 'omniscient and present' author of Thomas's work. 'It is for this reason that he does not explain the reactions of the characters; he leaves them to act for themselves and to reveal themselves through their own actions. His attitude is not to have an opinion, either upon what happens, or upon the protagonists. The objective narrator cannot know in detail what the characters are thinking. At best he can guess, and then only partially, at their thoughts and intentions. Thus Robert omits almost entirely Thomas's interior monologues . . . What counts for the translator is the movement, the progress and rapid succession of the episodes . . . The insistence with which the love-factor is reduced and minimised is perhaps owing to the fact that love was not a current theme in the oldest sagas. However, we do not believe this to be the only reason. The consistent elimination of certain lines and certain episodes of the French poem in which the different aspects of love are exhibited and examined, seems to us to indicate that before this theme Robert adopts an attitude of reserve which we might term moralistic . . . Finally, the narrative tension, as it exists in the French poem, is lost in the saga because the translator omits almost all the lines whose role is to anticipate events. It appears to us that the refusal to give a clue in advance to what is going to happen subsequently results from Robert's desire to work out a different narrative tension from Thomas's. Robert's technique consists of not advertising events beforehand, of waiting for the dramatic moment itself to arrive, to reveal them suddenly, making them speak for themselves. His intention is to surround the narrative with a certain mystery, in order to then surprise his public . . . We consider that Robert's omissions are not the outcome of chance, laziness, or clumsiness (an opinion held by certain scholars). They result from a conscious and deliberate technique . . . Robert is aware of the limitations of prose as compared with verse. He wishes to try and bring to prose what it lacks when substituted for verse; that is, poetry. For this reason he has recourse to various figures of rhetoric to develop a rhythmic, sonorous and poetic style. He shows that he is a good stylist and possesses a rich and varied vocabulary. His familiarity with the Old Norse language is so deep that it is virtually out of the question that he should have been a foreigner, as some scholars maintain . . . There is a certain lack of coherence in Robert's work. Some episodes which should be connected are not connected, merely juxtaposed; (this lack of coherence is perhaps sometimes due to the scribes.) The greatest defect in the saga is its lack of internal unity.'

These conclusions result from a careful comparison with the Anglo-Norman original of all those episodes in the Old Norse where Thomas's text is available, and an examination of the rest of the saga in the light of the methodological and verbal patterns therein described, which convinces Álfur that the translator's technique and stylistic consciousness remain consistent. In the course of her investigation, Álfur quotes in the original what she deems necessary,

otherwise representing both Anglo-Norman and Old Norse in her own Spanish. There are summaries at the end of the volume in French and Icelandic, with an afterword in Icelandic by Jónas Kristjánsson.

Although Álfrún's discussion is unfortunately limited to the relationship between the saga and the fragments of Thomas's poem it is to be hoped that it will stimulate further investigation into the whole question of the saga, Brother Robert, and the surviving versions of the *Tristan* story; her work has helped to clear the way by elucidating some fundamental points regarding the Old Norse and Anglo-Norman works, making the saga accessible to Romance readers, and indicating some misunderstandings and errors of judgement in J. Bédier's monumental edition and study (*Le roman de Tristan par Thomas*. 2 vols., 1902-1905), which has hitherto been perforce the general source of reference.

Despite the limitations imposed upon it by its chosen scope, by the difficulties of writing in one language about works in two others, and by the uncertainties of textual transmission, Álfrún's book represents a brave step forward into territory much in need of exploration.

MAUREEN THOMAS

BOOKS RECEIVED: The Society has also received the following: Hilda Ellis Davidson, *Patterns of folklore*. D. S. Brewer, Rowman & Littlefield. Ipswich, 1978; Linda Gallasch, *The use of compounds and archaic diction in the works of William Morris*. Peter Lang. Bern, Frankfurt am Main, Las Vegas, 1979; David James, *Celtic art*. The Thule Press. Sandwick, Shetland, 1979; *Jomsvikingerne saga*, translated into Danish by Helle Degnbol and Helle Jensen. G. E. C. Gad. København, 1978; Jon Leirfall, *West over sea. Reminders of Norse ascendancy from Shetland to Dublin*. The Thule Press. Sandwick, Shetland, 1979; Sigurdur A. Magnússon, *Northern sphinx. Iceland and the Icelanders from the settlement to the present*. C. Hurst & Company. London, 1977; Jeffrey R. Redmond, *"Viking" hoaxes in North America*. Carlton Press, Inc. New York, 1979; Snorri Sturluson, *From the sagas of the Norse kings*, translated by Erling Monsen. The Thule Press. Oslo, 1979; Michael Taylor, *The Lewis chessmen*. British Museum Publications Limited. London, 1978. *J. R. R. Tolkien, scholar and storyteller. Essays in memoriam*, ed. Mary Salu and Robert T. Farrell. Cornell University Press. Ithaca and London, 1979.

HILDA A. C. GREEN

HILDA Green celebrated her eightieth birthday in 1979 and died peacefully a few months later at her home. Her last years like her early ones continued to be characterized by energy, independence, intellectual vigour, and an abiding interest in the Colleges of London University to which she gave her loyalty — Westfield where she was a student, undergraduate and postgraduate from 1918 to 1923, and Royal Holloway where she taught in the English Department from 1928 until 1967 when she retired.

For most of her life Hilda had few close family ties. She was born in China. Before she was two her mother had died, and her father had been killed in the Boxer Rising. She and her brother were brought up by grandparents, but her brother was killed in the 1914-1918 War. Perhaps this explains a little why she devoted so much of her affection and energy to the people and the way of life she found in a small residential college. Whatever the cause the results were admirable for all who knew her as colleague or teacher. She is remembered by her colleagues for many qualities of mind and character, for her breadth of learning, her capacity for enjoyment, her skills as a musician, her gift for friendship. Students, even those who were not directly taught by her, remember her with warmth and kindness. She had among them a reputation for eccentricity, based perhaps upon little more than her adherence to traditional values, and insistence on Saturday morning tutorials — “Saturday is a working day” — but students often cherish the eccentrics among their dons, and the contact with Hilda’s vigorous, sometimes astringent, personality is an experience that many students will remember and value.

Those of us who were taught by her remember Hilda for more than this. We remember that she was the first to introduce us to a literature and a study that for many of us remains a life-interest. She herself, taught by Bertha Phillpotts and inspired by W. P. Ker, did her best to pass on the enthusiasm, the stimulus, the awareness that had directed her own interests. These interests prompted her in 1935 to undertake a journey to Iceland. She retained enchanted memories of this first visit, of riding a pony through the wide glittering rivers; and the friendships she made then extended to the third generation.

Hilda’s gifts were in the spoken rather than in the written word,

and though she lectured with informed eloquence, her only extant publications are reviews of Old English texts. To read these is to regret that Hilda's learning, soundness of judgement, clarity of thought, and especially her understated wit in exposition, did not reach a wider audience. But in the friendship and affection of those whom she taught and those with whom she taught, and not least of her fellow members of the Viking Society, in their memories of Hilda's devotion to the academic and cultural life of her College and her University, is the kind of fame that, in the best medieval tradition, she might have wished for herself:

For þon bið eorla gehwam æftercweþendra
lof lifgendra lastworda betst.

C.E.F.

THE VIKING RUNES: THE TRANSITION FROM THE OLDER TO THE YOUNGER *FUPARK*

BY ASLAK LIESTØL

THE subject of this article is the problem of the transition from the older twenty-four-character runic script to the sixteen-rune system used by the Vikings. What I hope to show is that with a different approach from those which have hitherto been adopted, the problem is by no means as enigmatic as it seems.

The original rune row was invented somewhere in the Germanic world, sometime around the beginning of our era. It contained twenty-four runes, and the complete row in fixed order, the *fupark*, is known from several inscriptions. In most parts of the Germanic world runes fairly soon went out of use, but they were retained by Germanic-speaking peoples bordering on the North Sea and the Baltic. A western branch, the Anglo-Saxons and the Frisians, kept up the tradition well into the Viking Age, even adding new runes as their changing languages seemed to require them. They also gave the new runes names.

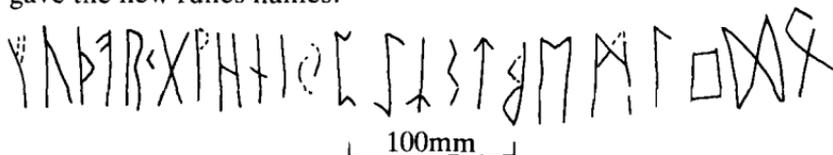


Fig. 1. The common Germanic *fupark* as represented on the Kylver stone, Gotland (fifth century).

What the Scandinavians for their part did is adequately and economically expressed by Ray Page in *An Introduction to English Runes* (1973), 191-2:

The Scandinavian peoples reduced their *futhark* from twenty-four to sixteen letters by discarding runes, some of which were clearly otiose, some of which we would think not dispensable at all. The runes *eoh/ih*, *Ing* and *peorð* (to give them their English names) were of rare occurrence in the early Scandinavian inscriptions. *Eoh/ih*, representing some quality of medial front vowel in the region of *i* and *e*, was obviously not essential, while *Ing*, which gave [ŋ], would seem to us a needless refinement since after all modern English manages without a special symbol for this sound. Why *peorð* was dropped, leaving *b* henceforth to represent both voiced and voiceless labial stops, we have no idea, for this seems to us a distinction worth preserving. As well as discarding these three rare runes the Scandinavian rune-masters got rid of five more common ones which again seem to us useful symbols, the two vowels *e* (*eh*) and *o* (*oebil*), the two consonants *d* (*dæg*) and *g* (*gyfu*), and the semivowel *w* (*wynn*). The vowel rune *úr* could easily

replace the last of these. For the two voiced consonant runes the equivalent voiceless symbols *Týr* and *kaun* could be substituted, with the result that, in the dentals and gutturals, as in the labials, the rune-masters did not distinguish between voiced and voiceless. The loss of the two vowel symbols *e* and *o* was never adequately compensated for, and the sixteen-letter *futhark* was an inefficient instrument for representing vowel and diphthong sounds.

In the earliest inscriptions the younger (sixteen-symbol) *fupark* is used in two distinct variants. We have alphabet inscriptions representing early forms of each — one on the well-known Danish rune stone at Gørlev, Zealand:

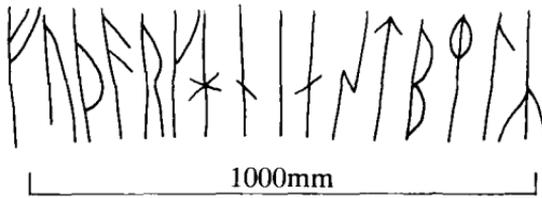


Fig. 2.

the other on a wooden stick found some years ago in the remains of the Viking town of Hedeby, situated on the Baltic side of the neck of Jutland:

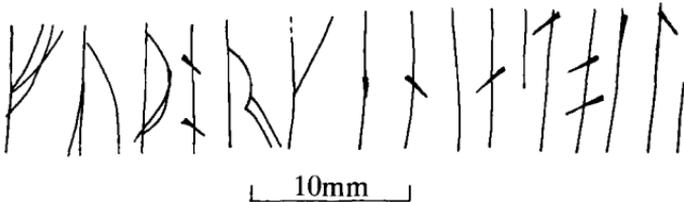


Fig. 3.

The difference between the two has to do purely with the shapes of the characters, like the difference between the roman and italic of our print. The first variant is usually called the normal or Danish *fupark* and the second the short-twig *fupark*.

The change from the twenty-four- to the sixteen-character system has puzzled runologists. Some early students denied that there was any connection between the two alphabets. Such a reduction seemed to them too unlikely and too silly. Others have resorted to a theory of cultural decline at the time of the transition, a time when, according to them, runes almost fell into disuse, surviving only as an instrument of magic. Magic has even been given the blame for the discarding of runes. The fact that twenty-four and sixteen are both divisible by eight has given rise to a lot of futile speculation about magic numbers and such like. More

rational theories have also been put forward. Some urge a purely graphic explanation, suggesting that the simplification was an attempt to render a kind of short-hand. Others hold that the reduction is in some way connected with syncope and mutation and other changes that took place in the Scandinavian dialects in the centuries preceding the Viking Age.

With the advent of modern phonology experts in this discipline have emphasized that the changes took place within a system. They speak learnedly of distinctive features, redundancy, allophonic variants, phonemicization and so on, and maintain that it is changes in the phonological system that are reflected in the simplification of the runic alphabet. Some runologists have reacted against this, flatly denying that the reduction of the alphabet was caused by changes in the language. Instead they point to the practical needs of those who carved runes or emphasize the importance of treating the rune row as an alphabet like any other.

It is not the purpose of this paper to survey all these proffered explanations. There may be some truth in a number of them since the transition was doubtless caused by an interplay of several different factors. In trying to understand these factors common sense will come in handy, especially if we try — as I think we must — to put ourselves in the position of the rune carvers in order to see the problems from their point of view, but still in as wide a perspective as possible. We also need to reconstruct their language and its system to the best of our ability. We can only guess at what their immediate need for a system of writing was and what they expected to achieve by it in terms of communication. But we can, to some extent, appreciate the practical problems they had to face as carvers — and even make experiments ourselves.

In handbooks of runology the reduction of the runic characters to sixteen is commonly criticized as an act of folly. But of course we cannot assume such an onset of mass lunacy. Instead of offering criticism, we might seek to understand the process.

The Viking runes seem to have served the needs of the Vikings well. The system was used for a couple of hundred years — all through the Viking Age — before any major changes were introduced. In this period of large-scale and widespread activity, military, diplomatic and commercial, a means of communication such as runes offered would have been very useful, and as far as we can judge from the scanty material that still survives, runes were indeed used for a variety of practical purposes. Clearly, therefore, they *must* have provided a serviceable system of writing.

In underestimating the usefulness of the sixteen-rune alphabet we are probably allowing our own training and erudition to lead us astray. The Roman alphabet is part of our life from early childhood. When studying runes we transliterate the characters into so-called Roman equivalents. We do it for the sake of clarity, we say, to make things clear to others, but I am afraid it is largely for our own convenience. Most scholars who venture into the field of runic research, including myself, have a tendency to reason on the basis of such transliterations rather than on the basis of the runic characters themselves. In doing so we carry with us a lot of dead weight, an extensive system of automatic associations with the Roman alphabet, established through years of schooling and study. The old twenty-four-letter *fupark* seems to us a very useful set of graphemes — when we look at the Roman equivalents. But the Vikings did not have the same associations; they knew no Roman characters. Their associations were based wholly on the runes themselves and the traditions connected with them. In the following I shall therefore refer to the runes by their appropriate names and in addition by their number in the original rune row. (Some runic texts, however, are for the sake of convenience cited in transliteration.)

The rune-carver must obviously have acquired some kind of recognised orthography, especially in frequent words and phrases, but confronted with words he seldom used, he would have had to resort to analysing sounds and to finding ways of expressing the results of his analysis in writing. It is difficult to say to what degree he would have used traditional spelling, or have been able automatically to find graphemic equivalents for phonemes, clusters of phonemes or even allophones. This must have varied greatly from carver to carver depending on his intellectual endowment and linguistic skills, in particular his ability to learn and his ability to analyse sounds. These are problems of great complexity, which I shall not venture to deal with here. But I wish, nevertheless, to caution against ignoring such factors when the interpretation of a difficult inscription is attempted, or when runic inscriptions are used as material in linguistic research.

Now back to the rune-carver of pre-Viking and Viking times. The ultimate criterion by which he determined the sound value of a runic character was the *name of the rune*. This might not seem to be an important point to the English-speaking reader, used as he is to the worst of all orthographies and to a quite inconsistent relationship between the letter name and the pronunciation of the

OE			PROTO- SCAND.	ON
<i>feoh</i>	1		* <i>fehu</i>	<i>fé</i>
<i>ur</i>	2		* <i>ūruR</i>	<i>úr</i>
<i>ðorn</i>	3		* <i>þurisar</i>	<i>þurs</i>
<i>os</i>	4		* <i>ansuR</i>	<i>óss</i>
<i>rad</i>	5		* <i>raidu</i>	<i>reið</i>
<i>cen</i>	6		* <i>kauna</i>	<i>kaun</i>
<i>gyfu</i>	7		* <i>gebu</i>	
<i>wynn</i>	8		* <i>wunju</i>	
<i>hægl</i>	9		* <i>hagalaR</i>	<i>hagall</i>
<i>nyd</i>	10		* <i>naudir</i>	<i>nauð(r)</i>
<i>is</i>	11		* <i>īsaR</i>	<i>íss</i>
<i>ger</i>	12		* <i>jāra</i>	<i>ár</i>
<i>peorð</i>	13		* <i>perþu</i>	
<i>eoh</i>	14		* <i>īwaR</i>	
<i>eolhx</i>	15		* <i>algir</i>	<i>ýr</i>
<i>sigel</i>	16		* <i>sōwīlu</i>	<i>sól</i>
<i>tir</i>	17		* <i>īwaR</i>	<i>Týr</i>
<i>beorc</i>	18		* <i>berkana</i>	<i>bjarkan</i>
<i>eh</i>	19		* <i>ehwaR</i>	
<i>man</i>	20		* <i>mannaR</i>	<i>maðr</i>
<i>lagu</i>	21		* <i>laguR</i>	<i>lōgr</i>
<i>Ing</i>	22		* <i>ingwaR</i>	
<i>dæg</i>	23		* <i>dagaR</i>	
<i>eþel</i>	24		* <i>ōþila</i>	

Fig. 4. The common Germanic *fubark* with the Old English, assumed Proto-Scandinavian, and Old Norse rune names. The sequence of the runes is that of the Kylver stone. In all Anglo-Saxon *fuborcs*, and in some Scandinavian ones, runes nos. 13 and 14 have changed places.

sound denoted by the letter in discourse. But the rune names were the rune-carvers' mnemonic tool for identifying the sound value of the symbols, as was also the case originally with the names of the Roman characters. The principle behind the rune names was in most cases acrophonic: the initial (or rarely the final) phoneme of the name suggested the sound value. Some peculiar transitions in the value of certain runes have been convincingly explained by pointing to a change in the name which resulted from sound changes in the language. The names formed part of the vocabulary of ordinary speech, most of them were common appellatives or proper nouns, and they were subject to the same developments as the rest of the vocabulary. If the initial (or final) sounds were affected, this could break the connection between the name and the traditional value of the rune. Best known are the changes which affected the original symbols for the phonemes /a/ and /j/:

no. 4 * <i>ansur</i> > <i>áss</i> > <i>óss</i>	—	/a/ > /ã:/ > /o:/
no. 12 * <i>jāra</i> > <i>ár</i>	—	/j/ > Ø

As the name of the rune for the glide /j/, **jāra* “year”, lost its initial sound, the rune carvers changed its value to /a/. The representation of the “homeless” glide was taken over by the *iss* rune (no. 11), which had the high front vowel /i/ as the initial phoneme in its name. There was already a rune for /a/ (no. 4) with the name **ansur* “god”, but this became /ã:s/ as a result (among other changes) of the loss of /n/ and the nasalization of the preceding vowel. For some time the two runes were used for oral /a/ and nasal /ã/ respectively, but in some dialects, at least, the initial vowel of **ansur* must have been *u*-mutated, giving /õ:s/. Eventually this vowel became further rounded and closed to /ō:/, and accordingly the **ansur* rune in time lost its value of /ã/. From the late Viking Age onwards it is no longer used to represent any kind of *a* sound, but instead denotes rounded vowels and occasionally the glide /w/.

These two runes (nos. 4 and 12) were retained in the younger alphabet, the change of name influencing only their value. But some other runes may have undergone similar changes of name, changes that could have affected their usefulness and made them superfluous or redundant. It has been suggested that this was the case with runes no. 19 **ᚱ** and no. 8 **ᚥ**, usually transliterated *e* and *w*.

The nineteenth rune **ᚱ** probably had the name **ehwar* “horse”. Originally it represented the phoneme /e/. The word was a common

appellative, and in the course of some centuries the pronunciation changed. I shall not venture to reconstruct any intermediate stage, I merely note that in classical ON it had developed into *jór*. At some time during the course of this development the connection between the name of the rune and the phoneme it originally represented must have been broken. The acrophonic principle was still active, however, and a rune carver of, say, pre-Viking times would probably have associated the character with a phoneme having the feature [high], for instance the vowel /i/ or the glide /j/. As a result of the previous loss of a special rune, no. 12 ζ , for the glide, he was used to representing both these phonemes with a single rune, no. 11 | *íss*. In these circumstances the **ehwar* (*jór*) rune must have seemed superfluous.

The rune for the other glide, /w/, no. 8 \mathfrak{p} , probably had a name beginning with *wun-*. We do not know the exact form — the Old English equivalent was called *wynn* or *wen* “joy”. These names seem to have undergone front mutation and an earlier form **wunjō* has been postulated. The initial /w/ must have been lost fairly early in Scandinavian, leaving two runes with names beginning with /u/, no. 2 **ūr-* and no. 8 **un-*. Later, initial /u/ in the name of the eighth rune would have been mutated to [y], but as long as the mutating glide /j/ remained, the variation [u]:[y] was merely allophonic and the fronting a redundant feature. The initial sounds of the two names must therefore for a time have continued to suggest that both runes represented the same phoneme and as a result the eighth rune was put on the shelf while the 2nd rune, \mathfrak{h} , took its place.

The last rune in the *fubark*, no. 24 \mathfrak{x} , may have suffered a similar fate. If its original name in Scandinavian was not **ōþala* but **ōþila*, as OE *epel* would suggest, its usefulness might have been reduced by *i*-mutation, as in OE. In Scandinavian the form of its name after mutation would probably have been **æðil*, and a special character for its rather rare initial vowel may have seemed in excess. No rune with a name suggesting non-mutated /o/ that could take its place as in OE had yet developed. The pre-Viking rune carver, searching his row of rune names for a graphemic expression for /o/, would probably have ended up with the options **ūr-* and **æðil*, perhaps even **yn-*. The preferred choice seems to have been **ūr-*.

If these assumptions are right, the names of four runic characters changed in a way that led the users to question what phonemes they represented, and three of them were found to be superfluous

or redundant. The fourth was retained to express the distinctive feature [nasal] in the very common vowel /ā/, a practice never adopted in the case of other vowels.

Most scholars who have dealt recently with the question of the transition to the sixteen-rune alphabet have emphasized that the final stage must have been a conscious reform, and I heartily agree. But the majority also assume that before this reform many of the old runes had fallen out of use and were virtually forgotten. I doubt that this was the case. In fact we know an inscription where the two alphabets are used side by side, in part to render the same text like a Rosetta-stone, happily though in the same language. This is of course the famous Rök stone from Östergötland. It is astonishing that it has never yet seriously been drawn into the discussion of the relationship between the older and younger *fupark*.

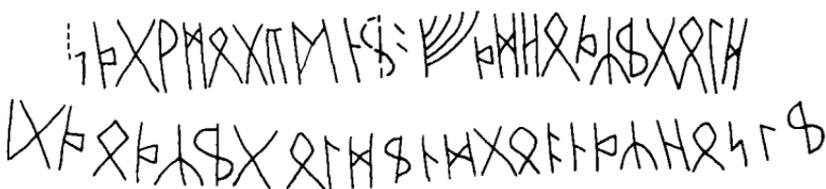


Fig. 5. The part of the Rök inscription in the older runic alphabet.

Transliterated, lightly edited, and translated it reads:

sagwmogmeniþadhoarigold/igaoarigoldindgoänarhosli;

sagumogmenni þat, hwar Inguldinga wari guldinnit kwanar husli;

I tell an ancient tale (or: I say to the young people) that, which of the Ingvaldings was paid (or: avenged) through a wife's sacrifice.

What we have to realise is, that after the sixteen-rune *fupark* was well established in Scandinavia, a rune carver in Östergötland knew at least twenty-one of the runes of the older alphabet and their values. His only means of recognising these values were the rune names. He must have learnt them along with the shape of the characters when he *nam upp rúnar*. We cannot of course share his knowledge in every detail, but we can hazard a shrewd guess at the framework within which he worked. We find the old runes in a part of the inscription where the carver has tried to conceal the meaning. This is done in a systematic way by using different types of cryptography. Luckily for us there is one expression which recurs in each of the “coded” sections as well as being found in the plain text (the carver probably wanted to provide the reader with a key), namely the latter's **sakumukmini**, as it is usually transliterated. Two possible renderings are suggested: *sagum ungmænni* “I say to the young people” or *sagum mogminni* “I tell an ancient tale”.

All cryptograms on the Rök stone use the substitution method, i.e. substituting one character for another according to particular rules. One of these rules states: “use the character with the next lower number in the sixteen-rune *fupark*” Accordingly one of the renderings of **sakumukmini** is **airfbfrbhn**. Another rule states: “represent the rune by a character on which two separate digits can be shown”. The first digit indicates whether the rune is to be sought among the last five (1), the middle five (2) or the first six in the *fupark* (3). The second digit gives the rune’s position within the particular section. In this way **sakumukmini** (with the first character and one or two of the lower branches of the others obliterated by damage to the stone) is written:



Fig. 6.

in figures: (25) 24 36 32 13 32 36 13 23 22 23. In the third cryptogram a form of the older *fupark* is used as a substitute for the current script. The part containing the parallel text appears like this (with one of the versions in the main text added below for comparison):



Fig. 7.

In executing this cryptogram the carver met some problems. The names of the 16 runes in the younger *fupark* would of course also have been applied to the corresponding runes in the older *fupark*, whereas the characters themselves could differ. Where this was the case, the carver’s task was easy. He could just substitute the old variant for the new. This applies to the 6 runes, nos. 9, 11, 12, 15, 16 and 20: **h q k l y m**. In several cases, however, the grapheme was identical in both rows. To make the cryptogram better the carver then searched among the surplus runes of the old row to find a stand-in for the rune he would otherwise have used. What he

sought was of course a *name* that suggested the phoneme he wanted to represent. In five cases he found what he was looking for. We can see the characters: Þ Ṣ ǫ X ƿ, but exactly what form of their names he knew is something we can only guess at.

If we look at the vowel representation first, we find that he used no. 8 Þ **wun-/*yn-* to represent unstressed /u/ in *sagum*. This choice is understandable, since in all probability the rune's name at that time began with a rounded vowel, after the loss of its initial /w/.

Different characters from the old alphabet, no. 11 ǫ **īsar/íss* and no. 19 Ṣ **ehwar (jór)*, are used for two phonemes that in the main text are represented only by the current form of no. 11 *íss*. Strictly speaking, there was no cryptographic reason for differentiation, since the old *íss* rune ǫ was sufficiently cryptic in itself. However, the carver may well have felt that the **ehwar (jór)* rune was a better grapheme to represent the first of the two phonemes. It is an interesting point perhaps worth a special study. The results might tell us something about the identification of mutated and broken vowels as well as giving us insights into other sound changes. It might also help us to decide which of the two proposed renderings of (**m**)*ukmini* is more likely to be right.

The third vowel rune in the parallel text is no. 24 ǫ **ōpila/ *æðil*, probably chosen to represent a rounded back vowel, either /u/ or /o/. The same applies in three other instances where this rune occurs outside the parallel text. But in a further three words, namely /hwar/, /wa:ri/, /kwā:naʀ/, it is chosen to represent the glide /w/. This shows two things: first the positive one that the main feature responsible for the choice was [rounded] since by this time the vowel in the name was almost certainly fronted; second, the negative one that, since the glide was *not* represented by no. 8 Þ **wun-/*yn-*, the pronunciation of this name with initial /w/ was unknown to the carver. The distribution of **ōpila/*æðil* and **wun-/*yn-*, the former representing /u/ (or /o/) and /w/, the latter /u/, could have prosodic origins since **ōpila/*æðil* occurs only in representations of vowels or glides in stressed syllables, while the single example of **wun-/*yn-* denotes unstressed /u/.

Two consonant runes are replaced, no. 6 ʃ *kaun* and no. 17 ʃ *Týr*. The substitute for the first, no. 7 X *gebu (gjǫf)*, is used for voiced and unvoiced velar stops /g/ and /k/. Matching this, rune no. 23 ƿ **dagar (dagr)* has taken the place of *Týr* and represents both voiced and unvoiced dental stops /d/ and /t/.

These were changes the rune carver found necessary in order to

shape the old alphabet into a serviceable cryptographic tool. For good measure he also threw in a sort of twig rune (with branches indicating the requisite, if unusual, number of digits) to represent no. 3 þ *purs*, although he did not bother to replace no. 4 ʀ *áss*, no. 10 ʁ *nauð* or no. 21 ʃ *lqgr*, which remain identical with the characters used in the plain text. The remaining three runes of the 16-rune *fupark*, no. 1 ʏ *fé*, no. 5 ʀ *reið* and no. 18 ʁ *bjarkan*, were not called for in this text. Consequently we have no clue as to their shape in the old alphabet the Rök carver was familiar with, but I confidently assume they were of the normal Danish type: ʏ, ʀ, ʁ.

There is a small “slip of the chisel” in the old-rune version of the parallel text. The younger *madr* rune, ʃ, was inadvertently used and “corrected” by adding a second stave to the left, ʃʃ. This seems to show that it was the carver himself who knew the old alphabet; he was not simply following an exemplar.

From what we know and what we may infer about the older runes used on the Rök stone, we arrive at the following *fupark*, which can be contrasted with the younger one found in the plain text:

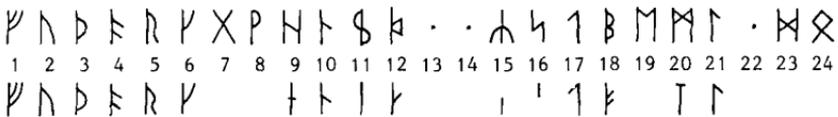


Fig. 8.

This seems a very normal older *fupark*, except for runes 11 and 12. The values of these two are beyond doubt, but their shapes are very atypical. This is usually explained as an arbitrary change, just to make the runes more difficult to recognise, but I think the explanation is rather to be found in the *fupark* itself and in the process of learning and transmission. I think there must have been a slip in the carver’s memory or at the stage immediately preceding him in the line of tradition. We must remember that those who preserved and handed down knowledge of the older *fupark* had to cope with *two* rune rows — a row of characters and a row of names. A row of phones or phonemes did not of course exist. What seems to have happened here is that the *grapheme* of rune no. 12 **jāra/ár* has been allotted to rune 11 in the row of names. It has taken up the *name and value* of *áss*, while the next *grapheme* in the line has been allotted to rune-name 12 and inherited the *name and value* of *ár*. It is difficult to imagine a mix-up like this occurring in a system of writing in general use. It would soon be corrected. But in a situation where a new system has been generally accepted and the

old one is on its way out, such confusion might well occur. The old writing will be thoroughly familiar only to the older generation and interested amateurs. A number of others will cope with it with varying degrees of success, but the majority of literate people will know nothing about it at all. This was the situation in Norway, for example, in the generations before and after the turn of the present century. Then Roman handwriting and print gradually took over from Gothic script and black letter. The same change is currently being completed in Germany. In the case of Rök we must presuppose a similar period of transition. In such a period somebody's memory failed and the result was that the shape of rune 12 in the older row of characters, \mathfrak{S} , became the basis for what we must assume was Rök no. 11, \mathfrak{S} . Correspondingly, it is the shape of rune no. 13 \mathfrak{K} we find reflected in Rök no. 12, \mathfrak{H} .

Assuming that such a displacement in the relationship of characters and names did take place in the older Rök *fupark*, then the old grapheme \mathfrak{I} must have disappeared. The loss of one place in the row of graphemes must have been balanced by the disappearance of a name in the row of names. There are three candidates, no. 13 **perþu*, no. 14 **īwar* and no. 15 **algir*, because the next rune, no. 16, clearly did not take part in the displacement. Some traits in the later history of runes suggest that it was **algir*, the supposed original name for the grapheme usually used for palatal *r* (<[z]), that was lost. All Scandinavian sources have another name for this grapheme, viz. ON *ýr* "yew", the basis for the reconstruction **īwar* and corresponding to OE *eoh/ih*, which according to the *Runic Poem* had the meaning "yew tree". This switch of names fits the notion of displacement in the system. The argument will perhaps be easier to follow if I present it diagrammatically. Below we have the middle section of the older *fupark*, the *hagall ætt* of 8 runes; this could have developed into a Rök variant of 7 runes in the following way:

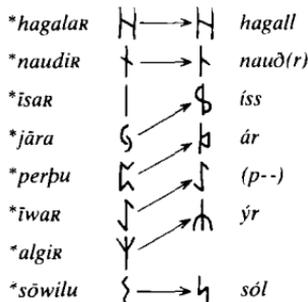


Fig. 9.

Such a development assumes the existence of the thirteenth rune, **perþu*, at the time of the Rök inscription or immediately before. Its old grapheme is attested by the inscription, and the existence of its name in the row of names may be supposed in order to account for the replacement of **algir* by **īwar/ýr*. Otherwise we should have to presuppose an *earlier* displacement and merger of runes 13 and 14, with a resulting loss of the name **perþu* and the character J . The use of that character in some of the Rök cryptograms seems, however, to argue against this. There is every reason to believe that the rune carver knew the shape from his version of the older *fupark*, and he probably called it by the reflex of **perþu* then current. There is also a possibility that J was used with its recently acquired value in one of the cryptograms. This would change an enigmatic **nit** to an equally obscure **nip**, unless a connection with *nipt* could be established, which would correspond nicely to *niðr* in an adjacent passage.

The presumed existence of a “p-rune” at the time of Rök is more than a curious anomaly. It affects our conception of the history of runic writing: the rune that originally represented the voiceless bilabial stop /p/ was still part of a script known in Scandinavia at the dawn of the Viking Age. The special character was known, and in all probability the name attached to it would not have lost its vital initial phoneme, although we have no precise idea of how the name was pronounced at this period. It follows that throughout the history of the older *fupark* in Scandinavia there was a grapheme that could be used to represent /p/. It was not discarded and forgotten. The reason we do not find it is merely the lack of frequency of the /p/ phoneme. It was not called for in Rök, nor was there a need for it in any of the earlier inscriptions that have survived, except perhaps on the Björketorp stone. There we read S B * which probably represents /spa:/ or /spɔ:/ “prophecy” or “I predict”. (Whether it is a verb or a noun is of no consequence for our argument.) Here, after /s/, we would expect the oppositions voiced/voiceless and non-aspirated/aspirated to be neutralized, leaving the writer with a choice in his identification: /p/ or /b/. Much to the confusion of runologists he chose /b/. A parallel is the spelling **gasdir** on the Myklebostad stone as a variant of the usual **gastir**.

The Rök inscription must have been composed in a milieu where the new 16-character *fupark* was firmly established, but where the older system was still remembered, although somewhat inaccurately. It is in such a milieu that certain peculiarities affecting the

rune for palatal *R*, no. 15 **algiR/ýr*, may have arisen, namely its transfer to the end of the row, and its use for a vowel (other than /y/, which later became the preferred value in western Scandinavia) in a group of late Viking-Age inscriptions, mostly from Västergötland (cf. H. Jungner and E. Svärdström, *Västergötlands runinskrifter*, 1940-70, nos. 33, 100-1, 103-5, 112-13 and L. Jacobsen and E. Moltke, *Danmarks runeindskrifter*, 1941-2, nos. 55, 127, 363).

The vowel represented by 𐌺 in these inscriptions seems to be /e/, or rather /e/ and the *i*-mutation product of /a/. This is best explained by assuming that the carvers used the old name for this rune which had developed into **ælgR* (*elgr*) after *i*-mutation and syncope. If this assumption is correct, it means that for some time there were two different traditions about the name of the *R*-rune, one in Västergötland where the old name was preserved and another in Östergötland where the name of the neighbouring rune in the longer *fupark*, **īwar/ýr*, was adopted instead. Judging by their shapes, the short twig runes, the Rök runes, seem to have been modelled on an older *fupark* that still had the grapheme | for no. 11 *íss*. This means that they were developed in an area where and/or at a time when the displacement discussed above had not taken place. It further leads to the assumption that the original short twig runes had **ælgR* as the name of the rune for palatal *R*. This rune probably also retained its place immediately before *sól*. The fact that the two graphemes seem to have been remodelled according to the same principle, $\text{𐌺} \text{𐌻} > | \text{ } |$, may at least point in that direction. However, a short twig rune row with this sequence is nowhere attested. The oldest short twig *fupark* known (Hedeby) has the **ælgR/ýR* rune at the end of the row. So has the oldest *fupark* with normal or Danish runes. How, then, can this development be explained?

If the change of name is a result of the displacement, there must have been an intermediate period when an older *fupark* had the name *ýR* for 𐌺 (Ψ) while the younger alphabet used the old name **ælgR* for |. In such a period when there was much uncertainty about the obsolete older runes, two runes with similar names might easily be confused, for instance nos. 14 and 22, **īwar* and **ingwar*, or in their younger form *ýR* and (probably) **yŋ(g)R*. Confusion of these could have been facilitated by the fact that the corresponding graphemes seem to have been rather similar in their later variants (Ψ and Φ). Under such conditions the *ýR* rune could have moved to the position of the long redundant **yŋgR*, immediately after no. 21 **laguR/lqgr*. This order, as well as the new name, could then

have been adopted by the younger *fupark* where **ælgR/ýR* would come last, as it in fact does in all known examples of this alphabet. Against such a long and very hypothetical line of causalities it may of course be argued that the confusion of names and positions (**algir* > **īwar*, 14 > 22) could have been completed before the creation of the 16-rune alphabet. But this leaves us with the difficulty of explaining the use of \blacktriangle for /e/ and /æ/ in Västergötland and with the problem of accounting for the unusual characters used by the Rök carver for runes nos. 11 and 12 in his old *fupark*. Neither of these characters seem ever to have formed part of the younger alphabet, so in Östergötland, at least, we should have to reckon with two separate displacements in an original row of five consecutive runes, one before the establishment of the 16-rune *fupark* and one after. The earlier displacement would have affected nos. 14 and 15 and would account for the change of name **algir/elgr* > **īwar/ýr*; the latter must be supposed to explain Rök 11 and 12 (12 and 13 in the original *fupark*).

Some may ask how the inscriptions usually assigned to the immediate pre-Viking period, inscriptions like the Blekinge group, the Sparlösa and Eggjum stones, fit into this matrix. I do not intend to say much about this question here. Besides involving arguments of a rather detailed and complicated nature, our attempts to understand the position of these inscriptions in the history of runic writing are hampered by the scarcity of the material, the difficulty of the texts, and our uncertain knowledge of the language and writing habits of the time (both doubtless subject to a greater or lesser degree of regional variation). In my opinion, however, there are no serious objections to the assumption that the Sparlösa and Eggjum inscriptions, like that of Rök, were composed in the transition period, after the 16-rune *fupark* had been established but while the older alphabet was still known. The Sparlösa stone, for instance, uses \blacktriangledown (**úrr*?, see note 3 below) as a grapheme for palatal *r*, as well as \blacktriangle and \perp . This could indicate that the carver's name for the latter characters was **ælgR*, but that he vaguely knew of a different name used elsewhere; he had, however, confused *ýR* and **úrr*. Certain inconsistencies in the representation of stops in the Eggjum inscription may indicate that the carver had grown accustomed to the simpler three-rune system of the younger *fupark* and occasionally lapsed into the new practice while trying to use the older alphabet. On the other hand, some of the vowel representations on that stone seem to reflect a different mode of identification from that used by the Rök carver. But this is hardly

unexpected in inscriptions so widely separated geographically, chronologically and probably also in culture and speech. The Eggjum inscription clearly calls for a reassessment. This paper is not the place for it, but I would suggest that, given the vagueness and uncertainty of the archaeological dating to the seventh century, an assignment to the following century should be considered.

By showing something of the Rök carver's background, I hope I have suggested the sort of circumstances in which a conscious reduction from more than 20 runes to 16 could have taken place. In the following we will see if we can sketch a plausible sequence of events.

Imagine a society in Scandinavia, say Denmark-Götaaland, with a stable agricultural economy. The leading families had extensive contacts with each other and their economic situation and connections enabled them to look to the outside world for ideas and impulses. The better-informed members of this upper class had kept up the art of runic writing, probably as a useful means of communication with associates far away and as a means of documentation for personal ends. The art was taught to interested members of the next generation by a set of mnemonic devices which I shall not go into here.

But the alphabet they used was old and worn. Sound changes affecting the names had caused several characters to appear of doubtful value. In this society there were groups of enterprising people, members of influential families and merchants who had their established contacts, trading routes and markets, but were also active in seeking new ones. We must imagine the dawn of the Viking Age — let us say early in the eighth century. Some of the active, impatient, up-and-coming members of these groups — the potential Vikings we might call them — found the runic alphabet deficient in several ways. It presented unnecessary options, and some characters were considerably more cumbersome to carve than others. Certain of the more complicated runes, for instance, required four strokes while others needed only two. The easiest, no. 11, could be cut in just a single stroke: |. A faster and easier system of writing seemed to be called for.

It has usually been supposed that the first stage in the development of the younger *futhork* consisted merely in the *reduction* of the older alphabet to sixteen runes. These sixteen characters were retained in their old form except for two, which were simplified by the removal of one of their two vertical staves. The new alphabet in turn was very soon radically changed by the development of the

short twig runes. This explanation is needlessly complicated. Some years ago I suggested a tidier model, with just one radical reform.

I believe that in the society I have sketched, there was a man with a strong urge to systematize and rationalize. He felt keenly the need for a quicker and more practical method of writing and wanted to do something about it. So he set about radically revising the older *fupark*. He created the *short twig runes*. If we compare the old runes with the new (short twig variety), we find that the average number of strokes has been reduced from three to two. Productivity up by 50% — at a stroke!

The reduction in the number of runes can be explained, at least partly, by the changes in their names discussed in the earlier part of this article. But we are left with the problem of the representation of the stops /ptk/, /bdg/. In the absence of evidence to the contrary we must assume that the older alphabet, as the supposed reformer knew it, had a full set of six graphemes for these, and that he discarded half of them. This of course makes it even more likely that the reduction to 16 runes was intentional and systematic.

We may seek an explanation in the phonological system of that time, but a more straightforward and down to earth approach might be to consult a man who used virtually the same phonological system in his speech and who knew and could use runes. I refer to Ólafr Þórðarson hvítaskáld, the nephew of Snorri Sturluson. In his Grammatical Treatise he says: “These four runes [no. 6 *kaun*, no. 16 *sól*, no. 18 *bjarkan* and no. 17 *Týr*] are used for two consonants because those consonants have a more similar sound than others, namely *g* and *k*, *s* and *z*, *b* and *p*, *d* and *t*.”¹ Disregarding the second pair (a *z*-rune was only created in the medieval period under the influence of the Roman alphabet), I think this is just the way the reformer may have reasoned. He may have been even more disposed to think along these lines because in his time the language was undergoing or had just undergone a series of radical structural changes. Not only might he have been influenced by the neutralization in certain positions of the opposition voiced/voiceless and non-aspirated/aspirated mentioned above, he may also have noticed the effects of the unvoicing of final stops (and spirants), by then doubtless achieved, which led to cases of neutralization in certain paradigms. In a modern manual of phonology we find wording strangely reminiscent of Ólafr’s: “Phonemes which participate in neutralizations are thus felt by speakers to be closely related”.² However this may be, the two sets of stops were judged to be so similar that there was no need to differentiate between

them, especially for a man who was about to remodel a system of writing with economy as his guiding principle. Once this decision had been taken, the only problem was to choose one character out of each of the three pairs. The choice was not difficult. He selected the character that was easiest to carve or to change — **ß** instead of **Ʒ**, **↑** instead of **⚡** and **∫** instead of **χ**. The names were of secondary importance since the distinction of voice was judged irrelevant.

I think we should also do well to seek Ólafr's opinion on the vowels. He comments on the order of the vowels in his *fubark* thus: "Úr³ is placed first because the sound is made in the front of the lips; óss is next: its sound is made in the mouth; íss stands next, because the sound is made in the upper part of the throat, but in the lower part of the throat if it is dotted, and then it sounds like *e*. Next is placed ár, because the sound is made in the chest."⁴ What should be emphasized here is his notion of points of articulation. Both back vowels, /u/ and /o/, are considered more front than both front vowels. To my mind this suggests a strong emphasis on the distinctive feature [rounded]. I leave it to more competent phonologists to allot Ólafr's view a place in the discussion on different systems of distinctive features conducted by, for instance, Chomsky and Jakobson. I would merely stress that his analysis makes it even easier to understand how the number of vowel graphemes could be reduced to virtually three. The *úr* rune represented all vowels articulated with rounded lips and replaced the old runes **wun-*/**yn-* and **ōpila*/**æðil*. The *íss* rune was used for vowels felt to originate in the throat and took over from **ehwar* (*jór*) (and later in part also from **algir*/**ælgR*). The third and fourth vowel graphemes represented sounds coming from a place further down. The system was in fact very crudely phonetic.

The problem of the two *a*-runes is still troublesome. Perhaps the reformer felt that the use of these graphemes which provided a crude distinction in a group of very frequent phonemes was so well established that it was worth preserving. There is also the possibility that the *ár* rune was retained because *áss*, with the nasalized initial vowel of its name, was not felt to be a good representative of the oral phonemes, especially since in most case-forms of the name (in some dialects at least) that vowel was *u*-mutated. On the other hand, the *áss* rune may have been retained simply because it belonged near the beginning of the rune row. In all systems which are regularly taught and learnt it is the initial parts which are best

known by pupils and have the strongest position in tradition. This may also explain the apparent reverence with which the rune reformer treated the first six characters in the older rune row; they all survived virtually unaltered.

What happened after the development of the 16 short twig runes is another story. I only wish to emphasize that in the transition period the old alphabet was still in use. Gradually, however, some rune carvers began to adapt it to the 16-symbol system of the short twig runes; such carvers wrote the inscriptions of the Helnæs group. Some of the old graphemes were then adjusted on the model of the new ones; the users of these runes wrote the inscriptions of the Gørlev group. In that way the so-called normal or Danish runes emerged. These runes, if my theory is correct, are really the old runes, reorganized and somewhat modernised under the influence of the short twig alphabet.

The reduction in the number of runes called for a new set of mnemonic devices. One was the new row of graphemes, the *fupark* of short twig runes, represented by the Hedeby inscription. The number and sequence of this row was also adopted by the users of the older *fupark* and that led ultimately to the type of rune row represented by the Gørlev inscription. A jingle was composed to help in the memorising of the names and their all important fixed sequence. Such a jingle, associated with the Gørlev type of *fupark*, is in fact preserved: the so-called *Abecedarium Nordmannicum* written down sometime in the first part of the ninth century, probably by Walahfrid Strabo. Runic poems that helped learners to memorise names and also possibly suggested the shapes of individual characters may very well have been inherited from the time of the older *fupark* and adapted simply by leaving out the obsolete verses.

The new system of 16 runes had two variant sets of graphemes but a joint row of names, similar orthographic practices and probably also a common set of pedagogic and mnemonic devices for the maintenance of the writing tradition. There were probably never any sharp divisions, geographical, social or functional, between the two sets of characters. In the following centuries the two alphabets continued to borrow from each other and both gave something to the *fupark* that finally emerged in medieval Scandinavia.

What I hope to have established by this article is:

- (1) That the history and development of the rune names are of central importance for our understanding of the development of runic writing in Scandinavia.

- (2) That the 24-rune *fupark* was preserved down to the Viking Age.
- (3) That those who used runes may have been guided by very rudimentary phonetic principles and that such principles may underlie the major reform of the runic alphabet in the pre-Viking period.
- (4) That there was only one major reform: the creation of a system of 16 short twig runes which competed for some time with the older *fupark*.
- (5) That subsequent to this reform there was a great deal of mutual influence between the two competing alphabets.

It follows from this study that several Scandinavian inscriptions in both systems should be re-examined with a view to giving a more accurate assessment of which phonemes the various characters represent.

¹ Björn M. Ólsen, *Den tredje og fjerde grammatiske afhandling i Snorres Edda* (Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur 12, 1884), 50. Þvi ærv þessir .iiij. rvna stafir settir fyrir tva samhliðendr, at þeir samhliðendr hafa líkara hlið enn aðrir, sva sem g ok k, s ok z, b ok p, d ok t.

² Larry M. Hyman, *Phonology: theory and analysis* (1975), 71.

³ Not *úrr*: the pronoun used in the subordinate clause is neuter, reflecting the medieval form of this rune's name, *úr*, which had two different meanings, "drizzle" and "slag". The *úrr*, "aurochs", which many believe provided the name for the second rune in the original Germanic *fupark*, had probably been exterminated in Scandinavia before the Viking Age and few people would have had any idea what a masculine word *úrr* meant. This may explain the medieval Scandinavian forms.

⁴ Ólsen (1884), 42. Þ er þvi fyrst sett at þat lióðar iframan verðum vörðum. A er þar næst; hann lióðar imuni. I stendr þar næst, þviat hann lióðar í ovan verðum barka, en í neðan verðum barka ef hann er pýnctaðr ok lióðar þá sem e. þar næst er A skipat þviat þat lióðar ibriosti.

THE JELLING MAN. DENMARK'S OLDEST FIGURE-PAINTING

BY INGEGERD MARXEN AND ERIK MOLTKE

THIS article demonstrates that the Jelling Man is not the armour-clad figure people say it is; it further maintains that blue is not always blue and that arsenical yellow is rare; and finally it puts a big black question-mark against the contention that paganism predominates in Gormr and Porwi's grave-chamber.

The Jelling Man is the little wooden figure pictured in all its present pitiable condition in figs. 1-2. It was found in the grave-chamber of Gormr the Old and Porwi "Danmarkar bot" in the northern mound in Jelling churchyard during the excavations undertaken in 1820-1 by Captain Bloch of the Highway Engineers; and it was first published in Finn Magnusen and C. J. Thomsen, 'Efterretninger om Monumenterne ved Iellinge, samt de i Aarene 1820 og 1821 der foretagne Undersøgelser', *Antiqvariske Annaler* IV, 1 (1823), 64-139. This valuable little publication was reprinted by Wormianum in 1973 and is now easy to come by. On p. 97 (1973, 36) it says that

. . . at the western end [*viz.* of the plundered chamber], on the partitioned plank-floor to the right were found . . . all the painted wooden pieces, including the carved wooden figure — on the level floor-surface in the soft damp earth, or really mud, which covered it [the floor] to a depth of half an ell.

The colours on the preserved pieces are referred to on p. 135 (1973, 74) and it is worth quoting the whole of this important description:

We have had a piece of it [*viz.* the largest openwork fragment with some colouring preserved on it still] reproduced in Tab. II, Fig. 2. The colours on it are these: *black* . . . except one edge which is *brown-red*; there are dots in this which have either been raised or laid on thick [*impasto?*]; the light edges are of a *yellow* colour with black dots. On the other side of the same piece the prevailing background colour now appears as a brown-red, under which one can glimpse a dark colouring, so that it looks as though the surface . . . has been lost in some places, leaving only the black underlay. Since the yellow in particular is well preserved, and seemed to us evidently oil-based, we were induced to request Professor Zeise for a chemical analysis . . . which he kindly undertook, and subsequently presented us with . . . his report, which reads thus: "I have investigated the paint on the pieces of wood delivered to me, especially to establish whether it contained an oily substance. A quantity was carefully scraped

off (in such a way, that is, that none of the wood itself came with it) and thereafter, following an appropriate method, it was subjected to an increasing degree of heat in a glass tube; in this process it displayed in the clearest possible manner a reaction characteristic of fatty substances. The colour can also be cleaned off with essential oils. In consequence it cannot be doubted but that it is an oil paint. It is true that the colour is macerated a little by water, but it is by no means implausible that this is merely a consequence of the very long period through which it has been exposed to the action of air and water. A couple of experiments with the yellow colour suggest that it contains lead oxide [litharge] . [Signed] W. C. Zeise."

In Jacob Kornerup's great work, *Kongehøiene i Jellinge og deres Undersøgelse efter Kong Frederik VII.s Befaling i 1861*, published in 1875, it says (p. 23) of the colours (referring doubtless to the openwork pieces, not to the manikin, which has no whitelead on it):

Red (perhaps Indian red, brown red), *black*, which in its application by brush also appears in small prominent flecks just like an oil paint . . . light yellowish, which chemical analysis showed however to contain lead oxide. The colour was doubtless originally white, *whitelead*, which has turned yellow.

(There is no mention of blue.) And Kornerup adds despondently (p. 23):

The wooden pieces gathered up in 1861 were drawn by the author soon after their discovery. Since then unfortunately they have shrivelled up a lot and the colours seem to have deteriorated.

Ah, if it had only been the colours!

On p. 22 of his work Kornerup says something which must have the utmost significance for an understanding of the Jelling Man: "Thomsen refers to some fragments of a second smaller figure of similar appearance." This other figure seems definitely no longer in existence. At least, it did not come to light when all the objects were looked out for new conservation and publication, the metal objects by Else Roesdahl (see *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 7, 1974, 208-23) and the wooden ones by Bodil Leth-Larsen (in progress).

There are two reasons why the Jelling Man is published in isolation here and now. The first is to promote discussion of what he really represents — this character who is always glibly identified as a warrior in chain-mail corslet — and what sort of scene he belongs in. The second is to make known what colours people used in the tenth century when they wanted to portray a male human figure.

Let us now look more closely at the Jelling Man and describe what the conservation analysis can tell us about its material, condition, colouring and other circumstances, remembering that it is an object that can be dated with the greatest confidence to *c.* 950



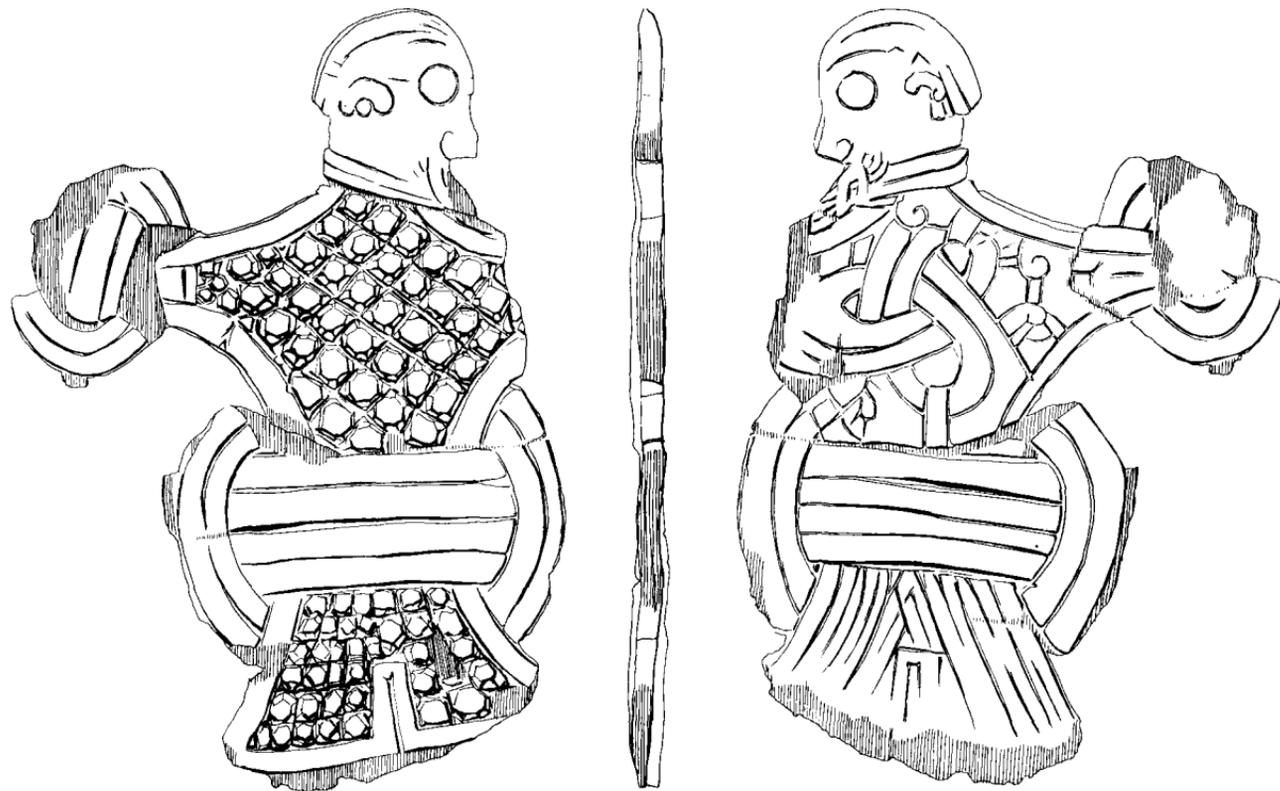
Figs. 1-2. The Jelling Man, front and back side. Present condition.



Fig. 3. The Jelling Man. Unsigned, water-colour drawing by J. Kornerup, about 1861, in the archives of Section I of the National Museum.



Fig. 4. The Jelling Man. Kornerup's colour lithography in *Kongehoiene i Jellinge* (1875).



Figs. 5a-c. The Jelling Man. Drawing of the front and back side and a vertical section, made in 1977 by Thora Fisker.



Figs. 6a-b. The Jelling Man. Reconstruction of the colouring by Ingegerd Marxen 1978.

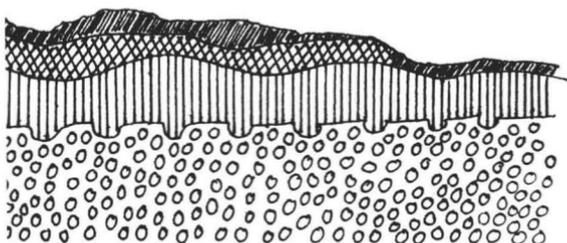


Fig. 7. The Jelling Man. Determined and drawn by Ingegerd Marxen. *Top, shaded layer:* dirt and old conservation substances; *cross-hatching:* the yellow colour; *vertical hatching:* the blue colour; *bottom layer:* wood.



Fig. 8. Haraldr Blacktooth's runestone at Jelling. The Christ face with its four triquetras. Painted with black water-colour and photographed 1974 by Erik Moltke.

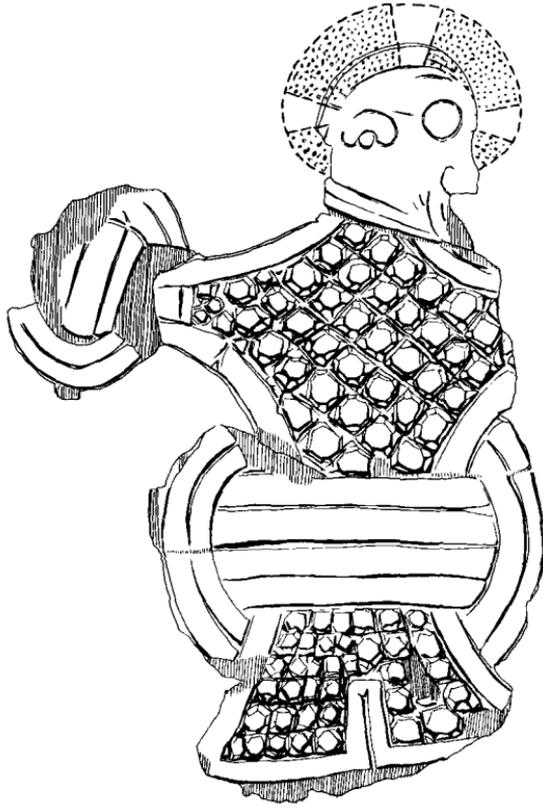


Fig. 9. The Jelling Man's "headgear" reconstructed.

or the following decade, i.e. immediately after Gormr the Old died and before Haraldr Blacktooth erected the great Jelling stone in honour of his parents.

First, a description of the *woodcarving* itself, the cuts and gouges illustrated in Thora Fisker's drawings in figs. 5a-c. Figures 1, 3, 4 and 5a here show one side — usually considered the front — of the Man, 15 cm high and cut from a piece of oak board only 4-5 mm thick. Both front and back were carved (and painted), so it was intended to be seen from both sides. That means it must have been set in some kind of *openwork*, a fact confirmed by the breaks visible on either side of the middle ring and by separate fragments. The manikin has a long beard and hair cropped at the nape of the neck ("pageboy" style); the trimmed edge goes in a broken line under the crown and leaves the kidney-shaped ear uncovered. As Kornerup's picture in 1875 (fig. 4) makes clear, both beard and hair were indicated by pointed leaf-shaped lamina, laid like fish-scales. Remnants of this surface treatment are now only visible in the beard. Along the top of the head (whittled down on the reverse, see below) there is a very narrow strip which was never painted; that suggests that the head was covered with something or other.

The fully-fashioned tunic, knee-length or perhaps "mini", appears to have had a side-split. At the top it ends in a rather high, *upstanding* collar — a notable feature — divided horizontally by a narrow groove. The garment itself has a smooth border, inside which it is divided up by lines cut diagonally; each of the small resultant parallelograms has then been carved to produce a flat round boss inside it. These bosses have persuaded people that the garment is a coat of chain mail: but the same kind of "pellet" ornament can be seen on the coats of the animals on the Bamberg and Cammin caskets and on the great beast on the London St Paul's stone (see the colour picture in *Skalk* nr. 5, 1974, 5), while on the Mammen axe such pellets are used for purely decorative purposes.

The Man has a broad belt round his middle, composed of four smooth bands, divided by grooves. The "pellets" that can be detected at the sides are traces of paint. The middle of the figure with its belt is flanked by two large arcs of a circle, each with a centre groove. The legs are lost.

On the other side (the back) we find the large arcs, the four-banded belt, the high collar and the split in the tunic. As mentioned, the crown has been whittled down on this side, almost to a wafer

at the forehead, but thicker towards the nape, in order to adjust it to fit whatever it was to be inserted into. The tunic is not cut into "bosses" as it is on the front, but at the bottom is cut in stripes that follow the left and right edges, and at the top is adorned by what, given the proportions, must be counted a large *triquetra*, a sacred symbol (well known from the great Jelling stone, cf. below), here set among ribbon-and-tendrill decoration. The figure has been snapped in two (and was perhaps found like that), and there is a more recent break at the neck — when this happened is not known, but it has been repaired in such a way that the head does not sit quite true.

It was in November 1976 that the "Colour Conservation" people received from Section I of the National Museum all the pieces of painted wood, 25 of them, from Gormr and Porwi's mound at Jelling. With publication in mind, they were to be cleaned, analysed and if possible given suitable conservation treatment.

A preliminary investigation showed that the wood was in very poor condition and fragile; this was especially true of the Jelling Man and there was doubt as to how much treatment it could safely stand. A meeting between members of Section I and the "Colour" experts came to the conclusion that conservation of the manikin should be postponed until there was a method available which would ensure preservation of both the colour remnants and the wood itself better than is possible at present. It was on the other hand found practicable to remove superficial dirt and any obscuring layers left by earlier attempts at conservation. At the same time it was decided that the opportunity should be taken to have the whole material measured and drawn by Thora Fisker of the Section for Colour Conservation of the National Museum.

While the time-consuming business of microscopic analysis of wood and colours, of cleaning, photographing and so on went on under the care of Ingegerd Marxen, co-author of this paper, the colour analysis was put in the hands of Dr. Ernst Ludwig Richter, of the Institut für Technologie der Malerei in Stuttgart, with whom we had previously had fruitful collaboration.

The process of measuring and drawing led to the division of the fragments into groups according to the carving. Some of the pieces corresponded closely to the Jelling Man and must have come from the same openwork construction. One of them is certainly a piece broken off from the Man himself, a conclusion supported by the course of the cutting and faint traces of colouring. The piece has been "stuck on" in the drawings made by Thora Fisker (figs. 5a-c, cf. figs. 3-4).

It seems that none of the other fragments can have come from the second human figure "of similar appearance" mentioned above.

If we compare the Jelling Man's present appearance (figs. 1-2) with the old watercolour (fig. 3) and the colour-picture Kornerup published in 1875 (fig. 4), it is evident, as Kornerup himself sadly noted (p. 268 above), that the figure has suffered greatly, the wood has shrivelled and the colours virtually disappeared. The wood is now well on the way to decomposition, will not stand much handling, and no longer behaves like wood, appearing rather as a hard but also porous material. There was a difficult job in prospect.

All the work was done under the microscope. A scalpel and distilled water were used for the surface cleaning. The object was not properly cleaned but dirt and earth were removed along with older conservation substances and glue from the fractures.

The microscopic hunt for colour remnants brought the blue to light — and that was a surprise for more than one reason! It appeared in many places all over the figure and *on both sides* as tiny traces in the wood-pores. And gradually it became clear that *the whole piece had a blue-painted ground* — compare the black ground on the largest of the openwork pieces as described in 1823 (p. 267 above). Through the microscope one could see how in a number of places other colours were disposed over the blue (fig. 7). It seems probable enough therefore that the blue, which is visible and meant to be visible, is the result of an underpainting and scraping technique, well known otherwise in the middle ages and the renaissance.

As mentioned, the *colour tests* were undertaken by Dr. Richter, who personally made the first investigations on a visit to Copenhagen; naturally the quantities were infinitesimal and obtained under the microscope. But the surprising outcome of these tests was that the colour that looked like blue under the microscope (cf. the anonymous water-colour, fig. 3) was *not* a blue pigment but some form of vegetable black, and this led us to send new specimens for test in Stuttgart. In her work on the other fragments Thora Fisker had discovered the little bit that fitted exactly on the manikin's arm, so we were also interested to discover what the colours on this piece were like. Once more the same result: black pigment of organic origin. But how could it appear as blue? We shall get there in a moment. But at the same time it was shown that the "new" piece was not painted like the rest with a black (or blue) ground (perhaps because that was reserved for the figure itself?).

The colours found are: red ochre, black of vegetable origin,

chalk (potassium carbonate), and orpiment. The reader may already have guessed what the blue comes from.

Ochre is the commonest of coloured earths, varying from quite a light yellow to a dark red-brown. It consists of a mixture of varying quantities of clay, potassium carbonate and hydrated oxides of iron, sometimes with manganese oxide too. It is found over most of the world, including Denmark. Red ochre is obtained by burning yellow ochre.

The black is a man-made pigment, known since antiquity. It is variously obtained, e.g. from grapeskins, nutshells, cork and many other kinds of organic matter. Heated in a sealed chamber they produce pretty pure carbon which is also soluble in acid. The colour can vary from a lighter hue to dead black, but a high carbon content gives a handsome blue-black colour, though not the blue found on the Jelling Man.

Chalk is a natural white mineral, consisting of carbonate of lime with small quantities of silicic acid, iron oxide, and clay. It is found in vast quantities in the Danish chalk cliffs. It has always been used as a colouring agent, covering well in aqueous solutions but not at all in oils. It is on the other hand often used as a filler with other colours, and on the manikin it is found with the black — *and it is this mixture that has resulted in the blue colour*. This blue is especially attractive when surrounded and set off by other colours — as is precisely the case on the Jelling Man where yellow ochre, red ochre and orpiment are also found.

Orpiment (auripigment; lemon yellow) is found native in yellow masses, leafy or stemmy in shape. One way of formation is by sublimation (evaporation) in volcanic regions. The mineral was used as a colour in paint in ancient Egypt, and it is known from the murals of Pompeii and Herculaneum. The Romans called the colour *auripigmentum*, gold pigment, doubtless because in a coarse crushed state the mineral appears as small gold-gleaming grains. As the trisulphide of arsenic (it is also called Yellow Arsenic), orpiment is extremely poisonous, and early works on painting advise against its use. Nevertheless people continued to use it down to the nineteenth century, largely because there was no satisfactory substitute among the other known yellow pigments. In a glutinous or oil base it has very good covering properties, but it is not particularly fast, paling rather quickly in sunlight.

The older chemical investigations of the vehicle, oil or tempera, mentioned above, have to be taken at face value, since there is no way now of analysing it.

There will always be some uncertainty in colour restoration, not least when the remnants are so few as in this case, even though we have the anonymous water-colour and the colours preserved on the big fragment to go by. It is uncertain for instance whether the incised lines were picked out in black. The little round bosses were certainly black, on the other hand, and we can be similarly confident of the painted circles in the four-banded belt, partly because of the faint vestiges of them now and partly because of Kornerup's picture published in 1875. A trace of a single circle in the big arc on either side of the figure apparently indicates that these too were decorated with rows of roundels. Restoration must be counted least assured on the back of the figure, where there is so little left of any traces of colour that to some extent it has been necessary to follow the analogy of the front.

The Jelling Man in "Who's Who": pagan or Christian?

In *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 7 (1974), 205, Erik Moltke maintained that the manikin represented either Christ or at least a Christian person, and the same thing was said in *Runerne i Danmark* (1976), 174-6. What was the evidence, and has anything new cropped up? The answer to the second question is "Yes".

To understand our wooden manikin one must start with the Christ on the Jelling stone (fig. 8). One of Haraldr's announcements on that stone is that he "made the Danes Christian". He emphasizes that statement by portraying *Christ* on the stone — easily recognised by his cruciform halo — and he is opposed by his contrary, the "great beast" on the adjacent face. The attribute or mark of this animal is the symbol of evil, the snake that winds itself around it. In the same way Christ's attribute is the *circle* — symbol of the omnipotent and universal?

But the portrayal of Christ is not the only thing that is Christian on the Jelling stone. On either side of his head and on either side of his legs is the triple-lobed ornament called triquetra, a sacred symbol interpreted as representing *the Trinity*. This symbol led an interesting life before ending up on the Jelling stone. It appears in mosaic in the floors of early Christian churches and on the most sacred of the objects used in Christian rites. It was then carried northward and people in Scandinavia adopted it, before the Viking Age, purely for decorative purposes. About A.D. 800, when Christianity was already beginning to raise its head here and there in Denmark, it was recognised as a sacred — and consequently a

powerful — symbol, and in the period when Christianity and paganism fought their fiercest fight — “A curse on him who puts a cross on this stone” is what it says in one heathen inscription (Saleby, cf. H. Jungner and E. Svärdström, *Västergötlands runinskrifter*, 1940-70, I 108-17) — i.e. in the latter half of the tenth century and the opening years of the eleventh — the triquetra was used side by side with pagan signs by men who were not totally sure which was the mightier, Christ or Óðinn: these opportunists hedged their bets — look at the Mammen axe, and the runestones with masks and crosses, and so on. We cannot call such a use of sacred symbols exactly Christian — it is magic. And magic is in essence a heathen affair.

But on the Christian Jelling stone there can be no doubt of the triquetra’s Christian significance, linked so intimately as it is to Christ’s own person. Moreover the four triquetra figures around Christ are not the only ones on the stone: there is a large repetition of the symbol at two corners, and the first line of the inscription is flanked by two smaller carvings of it. The whole stone is woven round with these sacred signs.

The distinctive features of the Christ on the Jelling stone are the nimbus with its cross, the large ring round the middle of the figure, and the four flanking triquetras.

If we return to the little Jelling Man, we find a large *ring* around his waist and a large *triquetra* on his back. But he has nothing on his head. Did he have a halo? That is about the only headgear there was room for. Look at the shaving off of the crown on the one side and the unpainted edge on the other: you could not mount a helmet there, or a cap or a mitre — the top edge is so narrow that you would be splitting hairs indeed if you tried to find room for a hat there of any kind — and if you did, it would certainly be pitched on an extraordinary line. But for a *halo*, going from the right-angled notch above the nose to the corresponding notch under the hair trimmed at the nape, the narrow edge fits perfectly — like a glove, we would say, if we were not describing a head.

But — for there is a big BUT — if the figure had a glory, would one not expect it to have been carved in one piece with the head? Yes, says Niels E. Saxtorph of the National Museum, who knows all about helmets and armour — *unless it was made of metal*. And this explains not only the unpainted edge but also the whittling away on the other side of the bald crown.

Yes, but — always another “but” — can we expect to find Christian grave-goods with Gormr and Porwi? One can answer

with a question: That Haraldr who made the Danes Christian and who erected a Christian runestone in memory of his parents, could he not also deposit good Christian objects alongside his dead father and mother in order to ease their entry to the heavenly mansions? Could he really avoid doing so?

There are however one or two differences between the manikin and the runestone's Christ. The former has a beard, Christ on the stone has not (unless it was painted on), and the wooden figure is in profile, not full-front as on the stone. The explanation of this is to be found in that lost smaller figure of "similar appearance". The manikin was part of a piece of openwork containing one or more narrative scenes, similar to those we know from painted and woven tapestries with pagan or Christian pictures. Could this now solitary man, fairhaired but bald on top all the same, perhaps have figured in that scene where Jesus said to Mary Magdalene: *Noli me tangere!*?

STYLE AND AUTHORIAL PRESENCE IN SKALDIC MYTHOLOGICAL POETRY¹

By MARGARET CLUNIES ROSS

I *The double focus of mythological poetry*

SKALDIC poetry whose main subject is Scandinavian myths and legends has a property in common with most other early skaldic verse: it is occasional poetry. Part of its *raison d'être* is directly attributable to the magnificent gift from the poet's patron which provoked a poetic counter-gift, or to a desire on the poet's part to compliment and so flatter his patron by describing some of the latter's splendid possessions. Unlike much skaldic praise-poetry, whose chief subject is the fame and exploits of the poet's patron, to whom the poem itself is addressed, the mythological verse has a double purpose and hence a double focus. The skald draws attention to his relationship with his patron in a series of artful references to the gift or occasion which has elicited the poem but, between times, devotes himself to a richly allusive recounting of a well-known myth. This double focus of skaldic mythological verse on the patron and his gift on the one hand and on the mythic narrative itself on the other has determined some of the skalds' characteristic means of expression in these *drápur* and influenced the way in which they project their own *personae* into their poems.

Several more or less complete skaldic mythological poems are extant, together with a number of fragments.² They date from the very earliest *dróttkvætt* strophes we know, the work of the ninth-century Norwegian skald Bragi Boddason, to an eleventh-century poem in praise of Haraldr harðráði by the Icelander Illugi Bryndælaskáld (*Skjald B*, I 354), who, using the *hjástælt* or "appended" style, aligns the king's exploits with those of the legendary Sigurðr. The mythological verse is frequently but not invariably linked to a pictorial subject, which the poet is enjoined by his patron to reproduce in verse. Thus, in the case of the mythological poems whose circumstances of composition we know, the verse is clearly occasional and courtly and the habit of composing extempore is indicated by certain fragments preserved in the kings' sagas. King Óláfr Haraldsson is supposed to have urged his skald Þorfinnr munnr to compose a verse on the subject of Sigurðr killing Fáfnir which was represented on a wall-hanging that hung before them.³

An amusing episode of similar type in *Orkneyinga þáttur* is told of Jarl Rognvaldr kali who challenged Oddr inn lítli Glúmsson to compose a verse on a scene depicted on a wall-hanging without using any of the words he himself had already incorporated in his own verse on the same subject.⁴ Unlike most of the court poetry in this genre, however, the mythological verse composed at the court of Jarl Hákon Sigurðarson does not seem to have been provoked by a particular ornate object in the patron's gift or in the courtly environment, but rather by the general political situation which caused the jarl's skalds to compare Hákon's actions to those of the gods.

There are four long mythological *drápur* in the *dróttkvætt* measure which have been preserved in manuscripts of Snorri's *Edda* either in whole or in part. These are the *Ragnarsdrápa* of Bragi Boddason, the *Haustlǫng* of Þjóðólfr of Hvin, the *Húsdrápa* of Úlfr Uggason and Eilífr Goðrúnarson's *Pórsdrápa*.⁵ These works are the result of much more deliberate and prolonged composition than the sort of extempore activity described in *Orkneyinga þáttur*. Indeed, the title of one of them, *Haustlǫng* or "Autumn Long", seems to allude to the length of time the skald spent on his *drápa*. Another, perhaps parodic reference to the amount of poetic effort demanded by such poems is to be found in chapter 78 of *Egils saga*, where the poet Einarr skálaglamm is described as visiting Egill in Iceland not long after he had received an ornate shield as a reward for composing *Vellekla* in honour of Jarl Hákon.⁶ He left this shield as a present for Egill, who was not at home. Egill's angry reaction to his present is too complex to analyse fully here, but a component in it may well have been the obligation to labour hard on a *drápa* as ornate as the shield that Einarr had given him. The saga-writer ascribes two shield-*drápur* to Egill, though in each case only the first strophe is recorded, in *Möðruvallabók* alone.

Of the four mythological *drápur* extant, three are closely linked to pictorial subjects. The two earliest examples, *Ragnarsdrápa* and *Haustlǫng*, are of Norwegian provenance, the former datable to the second or third quarter of the ninth century⁷ and the latter to the very end of that century. Both are shield-poems in which Bragi and Þjóðólfr describe scenes from myths and legends painted on the surface of ornate shields presented to them as gifts from their patrons. The names of those patrons and elaborate reference to the shields themselves are incorporated in the poems' refrains or *stef*, thereby keeping the patron and his gift in the forefront of the

audience's mind. Bragi mentions a patron named Ragnarr, whom Snorri Sturluson equated with the famous Viking leader Ragnarr loðbrók,⁸ in strophes 7 and 12 of his *drápa*, while Þjóðólfr names a certain Þorleifr as the donor of his painted shield. Úlfr Uggason's *Húsdrápa*, datable to c. 980, was composed under somewhat different circumstances. According to chapter 29 of *Laxdæla saga*,⁹ Óláfr pái had a magnificent timber hall built at Hjarðarholt and there were woodcarvings of mythological scenes carved on the wainscoting and the ceiling. The hall's completion coincided with a wedding feast held for Óláfr's daughter Þuríðr and Úlfr Uggason was one of the wedding guests. Presumably as a return gift for being invited and in hope of some reward, Úlfr recited *Húsdrápa* to celebrate both Óláfr and the hall, and names his patron at least once (1/2) in the strophes we know. Apart from fragments of mythological poems quoted in *Snorra Edda*, whose contexts are unknown,¹⁰ the only exception to the close overt connection between a mythological *drápa* and a named patron is *Þórsdrápa*. Although the poem's *stef* appears to have been preserved, it does not mention a patron and the *drápa* as a whole gives no indication of a link with a particular occasion. This is the more striking as the continuous citation of the work in manuscripts R, T and W of the *Edda* suggests that we are in possession of a substantial portion of the poem and not merely a fragment. An examination of the effect that mythological *drápur* are likely to have had upon their putative audiences may help us to understand *Þórsdrápa*'s apparently anomalous position, particularly if it is considered in the context of the literary use of mythological allusion in the works of Eilífr's contemporaries in the late tenth century.

The double focus of the earliest Norse court poetry upon encomium and the celebration of myths and legends should come as no surprise to the reader of the Old English *Bēowulf*, a poem which most scholars would date to a period before the probable appearance of *dróttkvætt* verse some time in the ninth century.¹¹ The *Bēowulf*-poet uses a technique of oblique association between Bēowulf the Geat and Sigemund the legendary dragon-slayer in order to glorify the hero's killing of Grendel.¹² The habit of oblique association is to be found on several levels in the poem and is chiefly detectable in the various digressions, like the Finnesburg or Ingeld stories, which bring a heroic perspective to bear upon the narrative in the poem's foreground. In most cases, the digressions are depicted as taking place further back in the past than the events in which Bēowulf himself participates, though sometimes they

project into the future. Especially, but not exclusively in the latter case, the purpose of the *Bēowulf*-poet's implicit comparison between the literary foreground and its legendary background goes beyond encomium to a presentation of the irony of events, in which future action is seen to reverse and frustrate the intentions of the present.¹³ The juxtaposition of the poet's description in ll. 81-5 of the effort and expense Hrōðgār lavished on the building of Heorot with his dark allusion to the hall's destruction by fire, the result of deadly enmity between Danes and *Heaðobeardan*, seems to indicate that the poet's audience might have been expected to savour what we call dramatic irony. Other Old English poems with heroic subject-matter, like *Dēor* and *Widsið*, also show a habit of mind that compares a given literary predicament with comparable circumstances of the Germanic legendary past.

Early Norse literature is not lacking in evidence to suggest that poets, and so presumably their audiences, were in the habit of drawing parallels between contemporary situations and those of legendary figures. The most convincing early parallel between a personal, contemporary situation and a legendary one in Norse literature is found in the *lausavísur* ascribed to Torf-Einarr Rognvaldsson, Jarl of the Orkneys in the last decade of the ninth century.¹⁴ Einarr's literary presentation of his own situation as the illegitimate youngest son of Jarl Rognvaldr of Mœrr shows by its close verbal echoes of *Hamðismál* that he is aware that his life is a parody of the relationship between the legendary bastard brother Erpr and his siblings Hamðir and Sörli. Whereas the sons of Jónakr rashly kill Erpr and are subsequently unable to carry out vengeance on Jormunrekkr, the bastard Einarr is the only one of Rognvaldr's four sons to avenge their father's death.¹⁵

It is probable that the praise of princes by means of an indirect association between their achievements and the deeds of super-human figures was a special form of a general Germanic habit of literary comparison between the events and persons of the poet's own age or the recent past and the age of heroic legend. Such comparisons gave scope for either praise or blame and could sometimes be straightforwardly complimentary, sometimes intended to draw attention to a situational irony, in which a personal predicament found new meaning in the context of an old legend. Skaldic mythological poetry, with its eye half on the poet's patron and half on the myths themselves, may have developed into a kind of courtly panegyric in response to both the political events of

ninth-century Norway and the new literary climate at the courts of Norwegian jarls and aspiring kings. That new literary climate, it has long been suspected, may owe something to the influence of foreign literature,¹⁶ but its dynamic force must have been of native origin. The composer of the earliest skaldic verse we know, Bragi Boddason, felt free to draw on the same kind of legendary subject-matter that appears in poetry composed in the common Germanic verse-form, like the Old English *Bēowulf* and *Dēor* and the Eddic *Hamðismál*. Thus we may infer that, with respect to their subject-matter, the early skalds developed themes and modes of presentation that were already available from the common Germanic poetic stock-in-trade.

Nevertheless, the skald's double focus on his mythical or legendary subject-matter and on his patron is much sharper and more insistent than anything we find in, for example, *Bēowulf*, where the narrative does not direct attention to the poet's audience. Even in *Dēor*, where it is possible that the poet intended to draw his audience's attention to an individual *scop*'s present predicament (ll. 35-42), there is no attempt to include a named individual patron in the poem itself, though we learn the name of the *scop*'s rival and the tribe, the *Heodeningas*, for whom he composed. The prominence given to the skald's patron in the early mythological *drápur* reflects both the material wealth of court life in ninth-century Norway through the careful linking of the patron and his gift and the skald's desire to aggrandize his patron by the presentation of a poem of thanks for an ornate shield.

It is probable that *drápur* like Bragi's and Þjóðólfr's, which link their patrons with the world of gods and heroes, if only by pure association, had a similar general purpose to dynastic poems like Þjóðólfr's *Ynglingatal*, which links the Vestfold dynasty with the Swedish *Ynglingar* and so with the gods. Perhaps the same kind of political situation acted as a spur to the development both of dynastic verse, in which there was an overt connection between a particular Norwegian princely line and the gods, and of *drápur* with mythical or legendary subject-matter, in which the connection between ruler and superhuman figure was more diffuse. The desire to promote the divine connections of Norwegian princely families was probably at its sharpest in times of keenest rivalry between competing dynasties, as seems to have been the case in the period immediately before the ascendancy of Haraldr hárfagri. It is no accident that the *Háleygjatal* of Eyvindr skáldaspillir, with its echoes of *Ynglingatal*, was composed to celebrate the end of a

period of political and religious turbulence at the end of the tenth century, nor is it coincidental that, during the reign of Jarl Hákon Sigurðarson, in whose honour *Háleygjatal* was composed, both dynastic verse and mythological poetry with a political dimension flourished together.

Just as it seems possible that ninth-century skalds created a new genre, the mythological poems with encomiastic focus, out of old materials, so it is plausible that the traditional painted shields of the Germanic peoples were the basis for the development of a rich, pictorial representation of myths and legends on the splendid artefacts that Bragi and Þjóðólfr describe in their *drápur*. Most scholars who have considered the phenomenon of the painted shield in early Scandinavia, have opted for the view that these shields probably represent a survival of ancient Indo-European religious rituals in which votive shields, inscribed with scenes from significant myths, played some part in the worship of the gods or in funerary rites.¹⁷ Anne Holtsmark added the hypothesis that the subjects of the shield-poems were actually cult-dramas, which the painters and the skalds had seen enacted.¹⁸ As our knowledge of pre-Christian religious ritual in Scandinavia is meagre, we cannot either prove or disprove these views, but an analysis of the literary presentation of the myths in *Haustlǫng*, coupled with the observation that Bragi's *Ragnarsdrápa* does not recount the exploits of gods, may suggest that we are dealing with a literary genre that developed as courtly panegyric at some remove from religious ritual. If the early skaldic shield-poems were indeed the scripts for religious dramas, as Holtsmark's theory suggests, it is strange that no information about the ritual use to which these shield-poems were put, other than the purpose of praising the skalds' patrons, has come down with the texts. Moreover, the fact that these early shield-*drápur* are so firmly placed in the secular context of court life by their own internal evidence and by their clearly established *raison d'être* as the reciprocation of princely gifts, makes it unlikely that this kind of skaldic verse, at least, belonged to the liturgy of ninth-century Norwegian religion.

We know that many of the early Germanic peoples were accustomed to paint and decorate their shields. Tacitus mentions that the *Germani* painted them: "scuta lectissimis coloribus distinguunt."¹⁹ In Chapter 43, ll. 18-19 of *Germania* he also observed that the *Harii*, one of the eastern tribes, had black shields. The Sutton Hoo shield is ornamented but there is no indication that the leather which overlaid the shield-board had ever been painted.²⁰

In *Haraldskvæði* we are told that Haraldr hárfagri's men carried red shields while Kjetvi's force had light-coloured (*hvíttra*) ones. The Old High German shield-*heiti staimbort* suggests a painted wooden surface.²¹ However, apart from Bragi's and Þjóðólfr's *drápur*, there is no evidence to suggest that the decoration of a shield with figural subjects was an ancient custom in Scandinavia. The pictorial evolution of the Gotland stones, too, indicates that there was a relatively slow development of truly figural art.²² It is possible that the extension of figural art from a funerary or commemorative context, such as we seem to see in the Gotland stones and the Oseberg tapestry strips, took place during the course of the ninth century in the establishments of men of rank who were eager to emulate foreign decorative and figural arts. The archaeological evidence from trading posts like Kaupang in Vestfold and finds of foreign valuables from other parts of Norway that date from the first part of the ninth century clearly show both a taste for material luxuries and an early appreciation of the uses to which such objects had been put by their previous owners.²³

Most of the skaldic verses that describe pictorial representations of myths or legends are said to reflect shields, wall-hangings or carved wall panels in great halls. Such objects are likely to have been in the immediate vicinity of the poet's patron as the poet described them. The perlocutionary effect of these skaldic encomia, half-directed at the object itself, half at the owner or giver, is remarkably similar to the double focus of the *ekphrasis* or elaborate description of objects which was a fashionable poetic genre in Carolingian and post-Carolingian court circles. The double purpose of *ekphrasis* would not have been difficult for a visiting Norwegian to have appreciated, even if his knowledge of Latin was poor. The *In honorem Hludowici* of Ermoldus Nigellus, for example, combines praise of the Emperor Ludwig with a description of paintings on the walls of the Emperor's palace at Ingelheim and in the neighbouring basilica of St Alban. The paintings on the palace walls presented a series of historical subjects ranging from material taken from Orosius to representations of the Carolingian Emperors themselves.²⁴

II *The skalds' authorial presence*

Bragi and Þjóðólfr achieve a similar interweaving of fields of reference in the *stef* of their *drápur*. Bragi's refrain, *Ræs gofumk reiðar mána/ Ragnarr ok fjöld sagna*,²⁵ links Ragnarr, his lumi-

nous gift and the multitude of stories it has provided for the poet. *Haustlong's stef* links the same three concepts, praise of Porleifr, praise of the magnificently painted shield the poet has received and an acknowledgement that the significance of the shield goes beyond its splendour as a work of the painter's art and resides in its ability to evoke important, even terrifying stories.²⁶ The authorial *persona* that Bragi and Þjóðólfr project into their *drápur* allows them to maintain the oblique association between praise of their patrons and a celebration of myth. Although the skald intrudes in the first person, he does so in the guise of the poet-as-reporter, who purports to set down exactly what he sees in a picture which has been executed by an artist working in a different medium.²⁷ There are some similarities between the authorial "I" in the skaldic shield-poems and the depersonalised "I" of other early Germanic literature, in which the poet's "authenticating voice" validates the ways in which it understands the events it relates and indicates how it wishes the audience to understand them.²⁸ But there were also significant differences between the older Germanic authorial presence and the skalds' *personae*, even in these very early *drápur*, which are attributable to their double focus. This oblique perspective on the superhuman world is not maintained in the later mythological poems and with its abandonment comes a change in authorial *persona*. Úlfr Uggason mentions Óláfr pái by name in *Húsdrápa* but it is not in order to associate him directly with his magnificent hall, nor does the refrain *hlaut innan svá minnum*²⁹ directly connect those *minni* with Óláfr. Rather, the chief emotional force of the poet's personal intrusion into *Húsdrápa* derives from his sustained images for poetic creativity in the form of a release of the mead of poetry as *gjof Grímnis* from the poet's mouth. Even though Úlfr's poetry-kennings are conventional, they constitute a sustained development of the metaphor of poetic composition as the outpouring of regurgitated liquid which has considerable emotional force,³⁰ and they direct attention away from Óláfr and his splendid hall to the poet's own creative powers of composition. No longer does the skald thank his patron for a gift, whose magnificence he describes in verse; rather, Úlfr's gift comes from Óðinn and this enables him to make a gift of a poem to Óláfr in his turn. We find here a quite radical difference in authorial perspective from that of Bragi and Þjóðólfr and it depends on Úlfr's manipulation of the imagery of the poetic liquid. This has the effect of reducing the importance of the poet's overt relationship with Óláfr and projecting the image of a poet

dependent on Óðinn's patronage and not that of an earthly ruler. The poem is directly inspired by Óðinn's gift and not by the object of the poem's *ekphrasis*. In fact, once the imagery of a poem as Óðinn's gift and other allusions to the myth of how he obtained the mead of poetry became commonplace in skaldic verse, their use would have made a sustained double focus such as we find in *Ragnarsdrápa* and *Haustlǫng* difficult to maintain, and it is significant that neither Bragi nor Þjóðólfr draws on the imagery associated with the myth of the mead of poetry in their shield-*drápur*.³¹

The change in authorial perspective in *Húsdrápa* should not, however, cause us to overlook the probable political point Úlfr was making when he composed a mythological poem in the old style for Óláfr pái. In the past, as far as we know, such poems had been offered to Norwegian rulers and, by composing a mythological *drápa* for an Iclander, Úlfr doubtless implied that Óláfr was as powerfully connected as his Norwegian predecessors. Certainly, the author of *Laxdæla saga* was at pains to make the same point when he described Óláfr's royal connections in Ireland and his reception there (ch. 21). In the same period of the late tenth century, too, court poets were able to compose encomia using mythological allusion in a way which would not have been possible without the technique of oblique allusiveness developed in the early skaldic shield-*drápur*. Most of these tenth-century mythological poems were composed for the jarls of Hlaðir, Sigurðr and especially Hákon, who were upholders of the old faith in Norway at a time when the descendants of Haraldr hárfagri were backing Christianity.³² The earliest of these poems, Kormakr Qgmundarson's verses in honour of Jarl Sigurðr (*Skjald B*, I 69-70), is composed in the *hjástælt* style which, as Snorri Sturluson observed,³³ involved the placing of well-known, almost aphoristic mythological allusions beside lines that described the exploits of earthly rulers. This juxtaposition is effected without direct authorial comment, but the inference is that there is a non-specific parallel to be drawn between the sphere of the ruler's activity and that of the supernatural or legendary world.³⁴ Although the main focus of poetry in the *hjástælt* style has shifted to the ruler and rests only momentarily on the divine world, it depends like the early shield-poems on a literary habit of oblique comparison.

The court poets of Hákon's reign transformed a habit of oblique literary comparison into a direct and extended metaphorical mode whose object was to show Hákon as the gods' descendant, who, in

ruling Norway, furthers the divine interests and so promotes the fertility of the earth. In Hallfreðr Óttarsson's *Hákonardrápa*, moreover, there is an implicit equation of Hákon's and the gods' sphere of activity. He represents Hákon as taking over from Óðinn as husband to Jörð, whom her divine lord had made available to him.³⁵ Hallfreðr's kennings explicitly equate the land of Norway, which Hákon has won in battle, with the mythical anthropomorphic figure of Jörð. Such a mythical apotheosis has a serious religious purpose (cf. Frank, 1978, 64-6) though, as Ström argues, there must have been a shrewd, politically justificatory side to Hallfreðr's comparison of Hákon to the morally dubious Óðinn. Moreover, the comparison between Óðinn and Hákon as virile lovers of Jörð was probably the more effective as Hákon appears to have had something of a reputation for the number of his affairs with women, a characteristic which later historians were quick to interpret as a sign of his moral decay.³⁶

Hallfreðr's literary technique in *Hákonardrápa* shows a relationship with the *hjástælt* style and also with poems like *Vellekla*, where there is a thoroughgoing equation of Hákon's activities with those of divinities that often implicates every grammatical element in a strophe. In *Hákonardrápa*, by contrast, Hallfreðr's kennings for Hákon do not in themselves invite an equation between the jarl and Óðinn. The force of the mythological comparison resides in his kennings for the earth, which imply an equivalence of status and a common interest between Óðinn and his terrestrial counterpart. This equivalence is also brought out by the *double entendre* of Hallfreðr's verbs which have both sexual and political connotations.

In his analysis of the ideological message of Einarr skálaglamm's *Vellekla*, Ström stresses the theme of Hákon's restoration of the heathen cults in Norway, which establishes "the positive relation between the gods and the people of the land, which is a prerequisite for the blossoming of that land. This effective relationship carries the inherent implication that the prince's deeds are god-given and god-guided." He contrasts the "charismatic overtones" of *Vellekla* with the boldly concrete, metaphorical presentation of the godlike Hákon in Hallfreðr's poem. Without wishing to quarrel with Ström's general analysis of the difference in the ideological message of the two skalds' encomia, I think it is worth pointing out that in the matter of literary technique Einarr's equation of Hákon with the divine world is more direct than Hallfreðr's. In strophe 15, which Ström recognises as a key verse in *Vellekla*, Einarr's kennings

suggest an equation between Hákon and Þórr (*Skjald B*, I 119). He tells how the jarl has won control over the whole of Norway in battles that ranged over land and sea. His choice of words here effectively equates Hákon's ridding Norway of his enemies with Þórr's ridding Miðgarðr of giants. Hákon is *Hlórríði geira garðs*, "the Hlórríði (Þórr) of the fence of spears (i.e. shields)", who carries the "wolf of slaughter" (the sword) over "the path of giants", *veg jǫtna*, the Norwegian mountains, and over the sea. Here, by his choice of kennings both for Hákon and the land of Norway, Einarr draws the jarl into Þórr's sphere of activity as protector of the world of gods and men from the incursions of giants, and suggests an equation between the ruler's and the god's roles. Earlier in the strophe, he states that Hákon has allowed *Einriða monnum* "the men of Einriði" (a Þórr-*heiti*) to uphold the temple lands and shrines of the gods. Turville-Petre (1976, 61) has suggested that we understand *Einriða menn* as an appellation akin to *Kristsmenn* or *Freysgyðlingar*. If so, Einarr seems to be commending Hákon for allowing those who practise the cult of Þórr to continue their interrupted worship of the god, and, later in the strophe, implies that Hákon's own role as restorer of order in Norway is rather like Þórr's role as a giant-killer.

There is a similarity between Einarr's literary technique in the *Vellekla* and Eilífr Goðrúnarson's choice of kennings in his *Þórsdrápa* which may give us some idea of the authorial intention and point of view in the latter poem. Although *Þórsdrápa* shows no overt connection with either a particular patron or a specific occasion, we must entertain the possibility that it was composed for Jarl Hákon. *Skáldatal* includes Eilífr as one of his court poets and a single *helmingr* of Eilífr's which Snorri preserves in *Skáldskaparmál*³⁷ suggests, by the probable *ofljóst: of kon mæran* (1.2), that its recipient is likely to have been Jarl Hákon (cf. Frank 1978, 96). Several scholars have noticed the idiosyncrasy of Eilífr's kennings in *Þórsdrápa*, especially his giant-kennings and some of his Þórr-kennings.³⁸ Lie observed that some of the Þórr-kennings show a reductive tendency to domicile Þórr and his companion Þjalfi in the human world rather than to emphasise their divine qualities. He points to the kenning *vikingar Gauta setrs* (8/2-3) as an example of this tendency. Yet one obvious reason for Eilífr's apparent lowering of Þórr's status must have been the necessity for devising circumlocutions that were appropriate to Þjalfi as well as Þórr. In strophes 15-19, by contrast, where Eilífr is describing Þórr's single combat with Geirrøðr, we detect a clear change in his

choice of kenning-types for the god. Here he favours kennings that refer to Þórr's kinship or friendship with other deities,³⁹ a common type of god-kenning which he had been unable to utilize when relating sections of his narrative in which both Þórr and Þjalfi took part.

Although the myth of Þórr's encounter with Geirrøðr and his daughters concerns the confrontation of cosmic powers, there is considerable internal evidence that Eilífr was often concerned to localize his poem in the contemporary Norwegian world. Should this be read as the sceptical diminution of the gods' status by a skald who no longer believed in the old religion but who, as Lie hypothesises (1976, cols. 397-400), was perhaps composing for a patron who still retained his faith? Or should we read this poem as a politicised myth and see *Þórsdrápa* as the long-term development of the possibilities of political commentary which were always present in skaldic mythological poetry? At such a remove delicate questions of authorial intention are perhaps impossible to settle, and the remarks that follow suggest a reading based on a comparison of the literary techniques of Eilífr's contemporaries coupled with an internal stylistic analysis.

The struggle between Þórr and a turbulent mythical river named Vimur in some sources⁴⁰ is localized in Norway in *Þórsdrápa*. Several of Eilífr's river-kennings incorporate the names of actual Norwegian rivers like Feðja and Mørn⁴¹ in such a way that a Norwegian audience would immediately place Þórr's taming of this unruly female force of nature in their own country. We know from the *Hákonardrápa* of Hallfreðr and also from Eyvindr skálda-spillir's *Háleygjatal* that the image of Hákon, the gods' earthly representative, as the lover, indeed the enforcer, of the land of Norway conceived as an anthropomorphic female figure was a powerful political conceit at the time Eilífr was composing *Þórsdrápa*. Is it not possible then that he intended his audience to attach the same politically oriented interpretation to the myth of Þórr's conquest of Vimur, with its strong connotations of sexual enforcement?⁴² This possibility becomes more plausible when we consider the nature of Eilífr's giant-kennings.

In several places in the *drápa*, but most frequently in strophes 11 to 13a, which form a link between the struggle with Vimur and that which takes place at Geirrøðr's hall, the giant-kennings draw a comparison between Þórr's giant opponents and identifiable contemporary tribes or nations, several of which are the names of Norwegian regional groups. Þórr and Þjalfi battle with "the

Hǫrðar of the mountain-side" (*við barða Hǫrða*, 11/3-4) and elsewhere overcome "the Rogalanders of the Lister (district in Southern Norway) of the falcon's lair" (*Lista látr val-Rygir*, probably to be understood by tmesis as *val-látr-Lista-Rygir*, 20/5-6). This type of giant-kenning is not unique to *Pórsdrápa* (cf. *Kenningar*, 88, b), but occurs there in greater than usual numbers. Accordingly, Eilífr may have intended his audience to pick up allusions to Hákon's conquests and political opponents in his giant-kennings. When in 12/6 he chose the base-word *Danir* for the giant-kenning *flóðrifs Danir*, "Danes of the river-reef", he may have been alluding to Hákon's most significant victory at the naval battle of Hjørungavágr, in which he freed Norway from Danish political domination.⁴³ Eilífr's choice of *Hǫrðar* (11/3) and (*val-*)*Rygir* (20/6) as base-words for giant-kennings may similarly reflect a political bias against more southerly Norwegian *fylker* felt by Hákon and his supporters whose base was in Trøndelag.

There is an indubitably grotesque and comic element in *Pórsdrápa* which Lie has suggested might alert us to Eilífr's religious scepticism expressed through the literary medium of parody. This possibility remains open, but, in the context of the fine political poetry of Eilífr's age which frequently used mythical allusion for the purposes of political propaganda, we might also consider that Eilífr could have been doing the same thing, though in an even more thorough-going way. In employing the literary resources of the comic and grotesque mode in *Pórsdrápa*, he was probably developing some of the potentialities of skaldic mythological poetry which had earlier been explored by Bragi and Þjóðólfr, and it is to the stylistic characteristics of their *drápur* that I now turn.

III Stylistic characteristics of skaldic mythological poetry

I have already indicated that the *persona* of poet-as-reporter which Bragi and Þjóðólfr use is not exactly similar to the depersonalised "I" of Germanic poetry in the traditional verse-form. Indeed, their shield-poets' claims to re-énliven some other artist's creation should probably be seen as a native modesty disclaimer. Although *Ragnarsdrápa* and *Haustlǫng* contain vivid pictorial vignettes, their greatest achievement lies in the economical communication of the psychological motivation of heroic or divine action. This concern for the inner nature of action, "the sense that action belongs to someone",⁴⁴ again reminds one of Old English

poetry, especially *Bēowulf*, yet, though they treat old subjects, these skalds speak with a new voice and a new, individual sensibility. They do not authenticate received opinion about heroic ethics and speak with the voice of traditional wisdom imparting collective knowledge. Instead, they set up a tension between expected patterns of heroic and divine behaviour and their subjects' inner motivation, which is often seen to be unheroic or even immoral. With the sharpened focus of the kenning, they are able to play upon the incongruities of this tension in a way that was not taken up by the *Bēowulf*-poet. In *Bēowulf* we are aware of the possibilities for good or ill in the heroic temper, as when the poet draws our attention to the contrasting pair *Bēowulf* and *Heremōd* (ll. 1700-24), but he never suggests a real ambivalence of attitude towards figures who, in Germanic legend, were generally regarded as heroic.

One modern theory which has been developed to account for the new sensibility apparent in skaldic shield-poetry has been Hallvard Lie's hypothesis that the *dróttkvætt* style grew out of the skalds' desire to imitate in a linguistic medium what Viking Age artists had achieved in a pictorial one.⁴⁵ I have already cast doubt on this mimetic theory by suggesting that the skalds' claims to reproduce speaking pictures should not be taken at face value. But the theory also suggests that the characteristics of the *dróttkvætt* style are those of "unnatur", understood as a term of art criticism. Viking Age art has often been judged to be "unnatural" because of its annihilation of spatial relationships and its removal of objects from their natural context in order to place them in a newly created "unnatural" milieu of the artist's devising.⁴⁶ There is some validity in this pictorial analogy when these undoubted characteristics of Viking Age non-figural art are compared, say, to the broken, intertwined clauses and phrases of skaldic syntax. Yet it is this aspect of the *dróttkvætt* style which is less developed in early skaldic poetry, while the kenning appears a mature and subtle instrument of literary expression. It is the kenning which is the special means by which *Bragi* and *Þjóðólfr* conveyed their sense of the inner nature of heroic action, and the analogy of "unnatural" Viking Age art with respect to the kenning seems to be at best superficial and perhaps also misleading.

The analogy breaks down at the most vital point of comparison, between skaldic language and the pictorial depiction of Scandinavian myths. I have already suggested that figural art may have received an impetus from abroad in ninth-century Norway, though

there were undoubtedly native traditions of narrative art in Scandinavia which are to be seen in the Oseberg tapestries and the Gotland picture stones. When we look at the figural and narrative art of early Scandinavia, rather than at the relatively abstract, non-figural kind for which Scandinavian artists of the Viking Age are justly famous, we must feel sceptical of Lie's theory. Is this rather simple, unsubtle narrative art likely to have inspired Bragi and Þjóðólfr, assuming for the moment that we need a theory to explain the "origin" of *dróttkvætt* poetry, whose subject-matter and technique show many links with traditional Germanic heroic verse? The identification of Þórr fishing for the Miðgarðsormr from Hymir's boat on the Altuna stone depends, for example, on what has been called an aggregate of "diagnostic signs"⁴⁷ by which we are able to identify the subject of the picture. In this case the diagnostic signs are the hammer in the figure's hand and his foot sticking through the bottom of the boat. Similarly, the viewer can recognize the scene on the Ramsund rock, Södermanland, Sweden as representing Sigurðr at the moment when he begins to understand the speech of birds because the human figure sits sucking the thumb of a disproportionately large hand while some prominent birds perch on a neighbouring tree.⁴⁸ This sort of pictorial shorthand is like the skaldic kenning in that it relies upon the viewer to identify a distinctive characteristic of the subject which can belong to no other figure, and so proceed from the part to the whole. Just so, some skaldic kennings depend on a similar mental process, particularly those for deities which allude to their unique kinship or exploits for which they alone are famous. Bragi's *haussprengir Hrungrnis*, "skull-splitter of Hrungrnir" (*Ragnarsdrápa* 16/3), can refer to none other than Þórr. But this kind of kenning, even in the mythological poetry of the skalds, is by no means the most common, and the majority depend not only on the audience's knowledge of myths but on their ability to understand the skaldic metalanguage upon which the kenning-system is based.⁴⁹ There is no comparison between the generalized *langue* of this system and the "diagnostic signs" of early Scandinavian narrative art, for each sign is capable of being used only in the context of a particular myth and cannot, by its very uniqueness, be transposed to another subject.⁵⁰ The recurring motifs of warriors in ships and warriors being met by women carrying horns on the Gotland picture-stones presumably refer, not to specific myths, but to certain general beliefs about the nature of the after-life.

Bragi's and Þjóðólfr's *drápur* are distinguished by an informing,

individual but objectivized authorial presence which is perceptible through their exploitation of a variety of literary devices. Their exploitation of these techniques indicates that they intended strophes on particular subjects within their *drápur* to be perceived as artistic wholes transcending strophic boundaries. It has been argued that, in general, the medieval Scandinavian audience of skaldic verse responded to individual strophes as self-sufficient aesthetic entities (Frank, 1978, 10). This observation, which is supported by the fragmentary quotation of skaldic verse in the writings of medieval Icelanders, needs some qualification in the case of the mythological *drápur*, which are mostly cited in continuous quotation in manuscripts of *Snorra Edda*. This is true of Bragi's Jǫrmunrekkr- and Hildir-strophes, which are the only ones of his Snorri assigns to *Ragnarsdrápa*, of Þjóðólfr's *Haustlǫng*⁵¹ and of Eilífr's *Þórsdrápa*.

In *Ragnarsdrápa* and *Haustlǫng* each kenning constitutes a node of allusive meaning which is explored internally and then taken up again in congruent but changed imagery in a later *helmingr* or strophe. There is a density of meaning within individual kennings that comes about through the skalds' exploitation of descriptive terms like the epithet and verbal connectives⁵² which are often internally motivated by puns and other forms of word-play. These descriptive terms flesh out the basic kenning structure and form the implicit conveyance of the poet's attitude to his subject. The density of meaning that Bragi and Þjóðólfr achieve in individual kennings precludes the development of *nýgervingar*, whereby a whole poetic sentence maintains and develops a particular metaphor. Lie (1957, 65) noted that the skaldic figure of *nýgerving*, "new creation", was available for use in the earliest known skaldic verse, for it is deployed to striking effect in Þjóðólfr's *Ynglingatal*. Its lack of use in the early shield-poems must therefore have been a matter of conscious choice. Even in *Þórsdrápa* there is only one passage of sustained *nýgerving*, the *tour de force* of strophes 16 and 17. Geirrǫðr welcomes his divine guest by throwing a glowing iron bolt at him. The host's assault is represented in a series of kennings for food and drink and the metaphoric equation of weapon with food is extended verbally, so that Þórr "swallows" this titbit with the "mouth" of his hand. This passage is the only instance of *nýgervingar* carried through one or more strophes in the extant mythological verse.

The reasons for the skalds' preference for a series of nodular kennings in mythological poetry over the more diffuse effect of

nýgervingar probably lie partly with their subject-matter, which would still have had close links with the Eddic mode of narration, and partly in the greater scope the nodular kenning-type afforded for the subtle but impersonal conveyance of authorial point of view. By contrast, the *nýgerving* confronts the audience directly with a particular way of looking at a subject and places a metaphoric comparison in full view in a way that the pun or the ironical epithet does not. Lie argued that the absence of *nýgervingar* in early *dróttkvætt* poetry is explicable in terms of the non-naturalistic *billediktstil* which is incompatible with the organic character of metaphor. Yet it is not entirely accurate to say that the nodular kenning-type precludes metaphorization, for the operation of a *double entendre* depends upon a perception of the intersection of two spheres of interest generally considered to be disparate.

Some of the extensions to the nodular kenning that Bragi favours depend on what Lie has himself called “attributive *nýgervingar*”.⁵³ Bragi appends the phrase *hreingróit steini*, “brightly grown with paint”, to a kenning for his painted shield in 1/2-4. The phrase is tightly integrated into the kenning as a whole because it acts as an overt recognition of the choice of a leaf-image (*blað*) for the brightly painted shield. The lively, brilliant pictures on its surface endow the shield with life so that it is *gróit steini* just as the surface of the earth is covered with vegetation.⁵⁴ At the same time, we apprehend a pun on the word *steinn*, which may mean either “stone” or “paint, mineral colour”, that draws attention to the interplay of notions concerning growing things and those which, like stone, are themselves lifeless but capable of producing natural pigments by means of which the artist can imitate life. The *tvíkennt* determinant *iljar þjófs Prúðar*, “the footsoles of the thief of Prúðr”, alludes to the myth of Þórr’s combat with the giant Hrungrnir, whom Bragi implies stole the god’s daughter Prúðr. In their fight, Hrungrnir stood upon his stone shield. The pun on *steinn* has two functions; it draws attention to the equivalence of painted shield and green leaf and also makes sure the audience has understood the mythological reference to Hrungrnir’s stone shield.

The attributive *nýgerving*: *saums andvanar* of *Ragnarsdrápa* 5/5 works similarly to draw attention to the images of the kenning *siglur segls naglfara*, though in this case the kenning is so dense with potential meaning that scholars have been uncertain which metaphoric lead to follow. The base-word *siglur*, “masts”, equates either Jormunrekkr’s men or Hamðir and Sǫrli with the masts of ships standing together in a group. The nautical image is drawn

out by the determinant *segl*, “sail”, which is further qualified by the noun *naglfari*. This word is capable of double meaning, appearing in poetry as a ship-*heiti* and also as a sword-*heiti*. Its basic sense seems to be “moving object set with nails or rivets”.⁵⁵ *Segl* is the base-word of a shield-kenning, whichever sense of *naglfari* predominates, but there seems to be a fundamental shifting of focus in the kenning from armed warriors to a group of men likened to an assembly of ships’ masts. The phrase *saums andvanar*, “lacking a rivet”, tips the balance in favour of the nautical comparison, by reminding the audience that the referents of this kenning lack a fundamental quality of wooden ships, their construction by means of ship-nails, *saumar*. The fact that *saums andvanar* may also mean “lacking sewing”, hence lacking a literal sail, indicates even more precisely that the *segl* must be understood metaphorically as a shield.⁵⁶ Thus the connotations of *segl* and *naglfari*, insofar as they allude to armour and weapons, are overruled by the kenning’s extended element and the hearer is firmly returned to its referent, the warriors themselves. This type of kenning, which clarifies its field of reference by means of an attributive adjective or adjectival phrase, indicates that skalds were not troubled by inconsistent images within the kenning or, to put the matter slightly differently, that the primary links within the kenning were those of verbal rather than visual association.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the very form of Bragi’s warrior-kenning here, and others like it, indicates a checked tendency towards the composition of *nýgervingar*, in which the same visualized image is kept and developed over several lines of a skaldic poem.

One of the most brilliant aspects of Bragi’s and Þjóðólfr’s poetic technique is their ability to alternate between a dense and a limpid style, between, on the one hand, kennings charged with allusion and various forms of word-play⁵⁸ and, on the other, direct statements that focus the audience’s concentrated attention on agonistic encounters between superhumanly powerful beings. Bragi sometimes achieves a startling clarity of statement by the occasional use of the present tense in a narrative style that is largely couched in the preterite. Indeed, for the most part the early mythological poems draw attention to the fact that their actions took place in the far past.⁵⁹ Yet in *Ragnarsdrápa* 5/4 Hamðir and Sörli stand (*standa*) around the helpless Jormunrekkr. Bragi’s choice of the present tense here conveys the threat the brothers still constitute for the lord of the Goths, which he counters by ordering them to be stoned. That action is again expressed in the

present tense, *allir . . . launa Jónakrs sonum*, “all requite the sons of Jónakr” (6/8). At one point in *Haustlǫng* and one point only (11/5-8), the poem breaks out into direct speech and the present tense, as an angry god — presumably either Óðinn or Þórr — orders Loki to bring Iðunn back to Ásgarðr upon pain of dire consequence. This immediate style reminds one of the narrative mode of Eddic poetry, and it is possible that Þjóðólfr was here influenced by a poem on this subject in a non-skaldic verse-form which has not been preserved. The only other occurrence of the present tense in *Haustlǫng* is in strophe 7, where Loki, called “the burden of Sigyn’s arms”, is referred to in the relative clause *sás ǫll regin eygja . . . í bǫndum*, “the one whom all the gods survey in bonds”. Here the skald’s focus changes from the myth of Þjazi’s theft of Iðunn, which is an action that is over and gone, to the binding of Loki which is still in force. Þjóðólfr probably knew a story of how the gods punished Loki by binding him to a rock until he broke free at the time of Ragnarök, though whether he understood this punishment to follow Loki’s part in the murder of Baldr is not clear.⁶⁰

Directness and economy of statement are also achieved in *Haustlǫng* by Þjóðólfr’s use of *tnesis* in 10/3-4:

þá vas Ið með ǵotnum
unnr nýkomin sunnan.

(Then was Ið — among the giants
— unnr (var. -uðr), recently arrived from the south.)

The embedding of the phrase *með ǵotnum* between the split syllables of Iðunn’s name is a perfect reflection of the disruption caused to the divine world by her abduction and also a reflection of her forcible incorporation into the giant world. Eilífr achieves a similar economy of effect in a *tnesis* in *Þórsdrápa* 7/3-4 (here I depart slightly from the reading of *Skjald B*):

gatat maðr, njótr in neytri
njarð — ráð fyr sér — gjarðar.

(The man could not devise, user, a better,
of the strength— plan for himself —girdle.)

As in the previous example, the *tnesis* of *njarðgjarð* suggests division and fragmentation in the mythic action. Þórr is a *maðr* temporarily without a strategem in the face of Vimur’s threatening waters and pelting rocks (his only “plan” is to put up with them), even though he is normally the “user of the girdle of strength”. The *tnesis* indicates the precariousness of his position but leaves open, in the isolated phrase *ráð fyr sér*, the possibility of his divine invigoration through an access of *ásmegin*.

One reason why Bragi and Þjóðólfr are able to alternate between direct statement and complex, indirect kennings is simple: they do not turn every part of their verse-sentences into kennings but still keep some nominal elements non-periphrastic. Both skalds, for example, frequently use their protagonists' actual names or at least quite transparent *heiti*.⁶¹ Sometimes we find very simple periphrases denoting the kinship of gods and heroes.⁶² Nouns, which are often the direct or indirect object of a poetic sentence, are left as uncompounded simplices.⁶³ Such relatively uncomplicated stylistic traits are more apparent in *Haustlǫng* than in *Ragnarsdrápa*. In *Pórsdrápa*, on the other hand, this stylistic limpidity has been much reduced to the point where almost every nominal element in the poetic sentence has been replaced by a periphrasis, and the use of simple circumlocutions for the protagonists is rare.⁶⁴

Some of the verbal connectives within kennings in *Ragnarsdrápa* and *Haustlǫng* alert us to the skalds' awareness of an ironic discrepancy between appearance and reality in the myths they narrate. This is the case in two of Bragi's kennings for Hildir, *bæti-Þrúðr dreyrugra benja*, "healing-Þrúðr of bloody wounds" (9/2,4), and *hristi-Sif hringa hals*, "shaking-Sif of neck rings" (8/5-6). In each kenning the irony is pointed by the verbal elements *bæti-* and *hristi-*, aided in the second example by the base-word *Sif*. In both strophes 8 and 9 Bragi clearly establishes the duplicity and destructiveness of Hildir's behaviour,⁶⁵ yet his Hildir-kennings are superficially complimentary. *Bæti-Þrúðr dreyrugra benja* alludes to the nurturing role of women who tend the wounded on the battle-field, but, to those who know the full story of Hildir and the Hjaðningar, the verbal element *bæti-* draws their attention to Hildir's true purpose in tending the wounded and dying, to revive the opposing forces of her father and abductor in order that she might take pleasure in their everlasting battle over her!⁶⁶ The kenning *Sif hringa hals*, out of the context of the audience's knowledge of Hildir's deliberate incitement of her father and lover to fight over her, could be construed as the kind of complimentary kenning that refers to a woman as the wearer or possessor of jewellery (*Kenningar*, 96, h and *Edda*, 120). Our clue to the correct understanding of this kenning comes first from the verbal element *hristi-*, "shaking". Hildir is no decorous wearer of ornaments, but an aggressive brandisher of them. In the legend, I have argued elsewhere (1973, 90-2), the way in which she "shows the ring" to her father Högni probably amounted to an imputation of *ergi*, which spurred him on to vindicate his manliness by fighting Heðinn.

Once alerted by *hristi-*, Bragi's audience would have had no difficulty in appreciating the irony of his choice of the base-word *Sif* in this kenning. But for the context, *Sif* would be a blandly innocuous base-word of a woman-kenning (*Kenningar*, 96, g, α), but when applied to Hildr it becomes ironical. *Sif*, whose name was probably etymologically transparent to medieval Norwegians and Icelanders,⁶⁷ was Þórr's wife and, although our knowledge of her divine function is small, we may infer from her name that, like Þórr, she was concerned to safeguard the ties of kinship. She thus represents the very opposite of the divisiveness between kin that Hildr promotes.

Þjóðólfr uses both verbal connectives and allusive base-words to indicate his perspective on the subjects of *Haustlǫng*. His literary technique in 2/7-8 reminds one of Bragi's in the Hildr-strophes. The parenthetical statement *vasa byrgi-Týr bjarga/ bleyði vandr*, "the enclosing-Týr of mountains was not to be accused of cowardice", appears to evaluate Þjazi's behaviour in positive moral terms. As the statement is sandwiched between lines that describe how Þjazi in eagle form flew to where the gods Óðinn, Hœnir and Loki were cooking an ox in an earth-oven, the overt reference seems to be to the giant's readiness to seek out conflict with the deities. But the irony of the remark is clarified by the kenning *byrgi-Týr bjarga* which draws attention to Þjazi's real motive for interfering with the gods' meal, his desire to steal Iðunn from the Æsir. In 2/2 Þjóðólfr calls the giant *snótar ulfr*, "the 'wolf' of the woman", a clear reference to his predatory intentions upon Iðunn, and he follows it up with the kenning under discussion, which, apart from the verbal element *byrgi-*, might be construed as a common giant-kenning of the type that refers to giants as the inhabitants of rocks or mountains (*Kenningar*, 88, b, ε). But the implications of *byrgi-* point the way to our understanding of Þjazi's *bleyði* as referring to his designs on Iðunn, whom, we infer, he intends to enclose in a rocky fastness.⁶⁸

The image of Þjazi as one with the power to incarcerate Iðunn is taken up again in the second *helmingr* of strophe 9, in which Loki is forced to bring her to Þjazi's home *í garða grjót-Níðaðar*, "into the dwellings of stone-Níðuðr". Here, in a manner similar to Bragi's when he calls Hildr a Rán or a Sif, Þjóðólfr draws upon another myth, the story of how the tyrant Níðuðr captured and imprisoned Vǫlundr the smith, to comment on the subject of his *drápa*. By calling Þjazi a "rock-Níðuðr", Þjóðólfr provides a comparison not only between the two rapacious captors but

between their victims. Iðunn and Völundr both possessed valuable skills which their captors coveted; Iðunn was *mey . . . þás ellilyf ása . . . kunni*, “the maiden who had knowledge of the old-age medicine of the gods” (9/2-4), while Völundr was a master-smith who knew how to make precious artefacts from metals. Further, there is a sense in which a comparison between Þjazi and Níðuðr is proleptically ironical, for the climax of the Völundr-legend tells of the smith’s escape from his prison by means of a pair of wings and of his triumphant cry

‘Vel ec’, qvað Völundr, ‘verða ec á fitiom,
þeim er mic Níðaðar námo reccar.’ (*Völundarkviða* 29/1-4)
(‘It’s well for me’, said Völundr, ‘if I can take to my bird’s feet,
those that Níðuðr’s warriors took from me.’)

Iðunn, too, as *Haustlǫng*’s audience knew, escaped by means of a pair of wings, though they were Loki’s and not her own.

One of the most commonly used kinds of epithet in *Haustlǫng* is that which describes a supernatural figure’s abstract characteristics of temperament or ability rather than the concrete, visible qualities that define his appearance or behaviour at a given moment. Thus in strophe 16, as Þórr and Hrungrnir close in single combat, the giant is *solginn dolgr manna*, “the covetous enemy of mankind”, while the god is *vígligr*, “one who shows signs of fierceness, martial”. These adjectives cause us to ponder the essential characteristics of a being which make him act as he does, in much the same way as epithets in the oldest poetry of the Edda draw attention to the essential, often abstract qualities of gods or heroes.⁶⁹ In this respect there is a closer connection between *Haustlǫng* and *Húsdrápa* in their use of epithets than there is with *Ragnarsdrápa*, where the use of epithets is less conventional.⁷⁰ *Þórsdrápa* makes use of generalising epithets only in Þórr-kennings.⁷¹ The extant strophes of *Húsdrápa* have a large number of such epithets in kennings for deities. Heimdallr is *ráðgegninn frægr ragna reinvári*, “the famous land-guardian of the gods, beneficial in advice” (2/1-4) and *móðqflugr mǫgr átta mæðra ok einnar*, “the son of eight mothers and one, powerful of spirit” (2/5-8). Not only the gods but their opponents merit abstract epithets, which are by no means always pejorative. Þórr is *orðsæll*, “favoured with a good reputation” (4/4), while Miðgarðsormr is *qndótttr*, “frightening, awe-inspiring” (4/2); both Þórr (6/1) and the giantess who rides to Baldr’s funeral (11/1) are *fullqflug(r)*, “very powerful”. Similarly in *Haustlǫng* Þjazi is a being of power and wisdom as well as a threat to the world of the gods,

being *margspakr*, “very wise” (3/5), *ballastr*, “extremely powerful” (6/6) and *rammr*, “powerful” (7/5).

Þjóðólfr does not always offer a straightforward evaluation of divine behaviour when he applies particular epithets to his protagonists in *Haustlǫng*. In the strophes that present the myth of the theft of Iðunn, he chooses epithets which draw attention to the gods’ reputation for power, sagacity and resourcefulness. Ironically, these are qualities which they fail to display in their dealings with Þjazi, who exhibits them himself. In the second *helmingr* of strophe 1 Þjóðólfr states his subject to be the “dealings of three divinely-able (*týframra*) gods and Þjazi”. The ironic epithet *týframr* is in emphatic position, as the first word of the first line in the *helmingr*. The helplessness of Óðinn, Hœnir and Loki is also implicit in the adjective *vélsparir*, “sparing of crafty tricks” (4/7), which qualifies *varnendr goða*, “defenders of the gods”, to form a kind of *litotes*.⁷² These epithets point up the gods’ inability to counter Þjazi’s magical power to prevent their fire from cooking the ox and later to stop Loki from being carried away on the end of a pole with which he has struck at the giant eagle. The normally wily Loki is referred to here as *djúphugaðr hirði-Týr herfangs*, “the deep-thinking retaining-Týr of warspoils” (6/5,7-8). Þjóðólfr seems to indicate that, in his eagerness to retain the gods’ “warspoils”, the ox which the eagle has stolen, Loki has imprudently ignored the giant’s magical power to make those who lay hands on him stick fast. The ironic nature of this Loki-kenning is enhanced in strophes 7 and 8, in which we find a reference to another occasion on which Loki was out-smarted, when all the gods stare at him in bonds. In strophe 8 Þjóðólfr’s irony verges on the comic. He counterpoints Loki’s ridiculous dangling from the pole with the contextually inappropriate epithet *fróðugr*, “skilled, knowing” (8/1), while in the following line his calling Þjazi *fangsæll*, “fortunate in booty”, ironically echoes the Loki-kenning *djúphugaðr hirði-Týr herfangs* of strophe 6.

Some of the literary techniques of the earliest skalds indicate an attitude to their subject matter at variance with a straightforward celebration of the actions of divine or heroic beings. Even in those parts of their *drápur* which could be called panegyric, like Þjóðólfr’s strophes on Þórr’s fight with Hrungnir or Bragi’s verses on his struggle with Miðgarðsormr, the skalds delight in drawing attention to the ludicrous or grotesque aspects of these encounters. In this the *drápur* are comparable with Eddic poems like *Prymskviða* and *Hymiskviða*, the latter of which is clearly influenced by skaldic

technique. Poems like *Hárbarðsljóð* and *Lokasenna* reveal a satirical, iconoclastic view of the Norse gods, but in these poems the satire is put into the mouths of the deities themselves. The poet of *Völuspá*, who, it has recently been argued,⁷³ was heir to this satiric tradition, approaches most closely an individualistic presentation of myths in his close integration of several disparate myths into a single world-view. But in Bragi's *Ragnarsdrápa*, in *Haustlög* strophes 1-13 and in *Pórsdrápa*, the authorial perspective could be described as generally ironic, if not grotesque. Some non-skaldic early Germanic poetry, like *Bēowulf*, shows an authorial appreciation of the irony of events, as when society or individuals act in expectation of a secure future which the authorial voice suggests is uncertain, or when, as in *Hamðismál*, Hamðir and Sǫrli murder their half-brother Erpr, whom they later realise is indispensable to the execution of their duty of vengeance on Jǫrmunrekkr. Nowhere, however, in the poetry of the Edda nor in other early Germanic verse do we find the development of verbal irony coupled with a fully-fledged grotesque style which is present in skaldic heroic and mythological verse as early as Bragi's *Ragnarsdrápa*.⁷⁴ The major difference between the stance of the poet in non-skaldic verse and skaldic mythological poems is that in the former we find an "authenticating voice", in the latter we detect an authorial presence. That authorial presence is perceptible largely through the nodular kennings, dense with allusion, that Bragi and Þjóðólfr developed.

We can only speculate on the effects of their *drápur* on their patrons and on their courtly audience in general. We may perhaps infer that the detachment implicit in the ironist's point of view and his poem's sense of incongruity between appearance and reality appealed to a coterie audience in ninth- and tenth-century Norway who had turned from the aesthetic appreciation of absolute heroism to be found in early Eddic poetry like *Atlakviða* to a more guarded evaluation of both supreme bravery and more questionable motives, like jealousy or covetousness, which the skalds show moved their gods, giants and heroes to action. Besides "ironic", the other adjective that seems appropriate to the general description of the literary mode of skaldic mythological poetry is "grotesque". This term describes a primarily emotional effect of literature on its audience rather than the largely intellectual effect of irony. The grotesque, as its name implies, invites a pictorial comparison,⁷⁵ and is thus appropriate to a kind of mythological verse which has a strong connection with pictorial art. But the psychological effect

of the grotesque, with its inherently irresolvable presentation of an inharmonious mixture of the comic and the terrifying, enables Bragi, Þjóðólfr and Eilífr in their different ways to explore the human dimensions of the emotions that motivated superhuman encounters, to show gods like the trio faced with Þjazi, or Þórr confronting Vimur, or heroes like Jǫrmunrekkr or Hamðir and Sǫrli as less than perfect, as afraid, or lacking in strategem or acting against their own kin. If, as literary theorists have argued, the grotesque is both liberating and tension-producing at the same time, one might speculate that the skald's patrons would have been liberated by the powerful narration of the exploits of supernatural figures to whom they were encouraged to see themselves related, and disturbed by the revelation that all was not as heroic as it seemed, but sometimes ludicrous, cruel and terrifying. In this light, it is not surprising to find a poem like *Þórsdrápa* at the end of a skaldic tradition of composing heroic and mythological poetry in the grotesque mode.

¹ This article grew out of a seminar paper I presented at Oxford in Hilary Term, 1980, in a series entitled "Scaldic Poetry: Critical Discussion", organised by Ursula Dronke. My thanks are due to all those present who offered useful critical suggestions, especially to Daphne Davidson, Ursula Dronke, Peter Foote and Roberta Frank.

Works frequently cited are abbreviated as follows:

Ragnarsdrápa = *Rdr.*

Haustrǫng = *Hstl.*

Finnur Jónsson, *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning A*, I (1912) = *Skjald A*, I; *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning B*, I (1912) = *Skjald B*, I.

Finnur Jónsson, *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar* (1931) = *Edda*.

R. Meissner, *Die Kenningar der Skalden* (1921) = *Kenningar* (cited by section and subsection(s)).

All quotations from skaldic poetry, unless otherwise noted, are from *Skjald B*, I.

² For a convenient summary, see Hallvard Lie, 'Billedbeskrivende dikt', *Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for nordisk middelalder* (= *KLNM*) I (1956), cols. 542-5.

³ *Skjald B*, I 292 and O. A. Johnsen and Jón Helgason, *Den store saga om Olav den hellige* (1941), 690-1; in the *Legendary saga* the strophe is attributed to Þormóðr kolbrúnarskáld, O. A. Johnsen, *Olafs saga hins helga* (1922), ch. 58, p. 58.

⁴ Finnboi Guðmundsson, *Orkneyinga saga (Íslenzk Fornrit* (= *ÍF*) XXXIV, 1965), 202-3.

⁵ I follow the conventional numbering of strophes in *Skjald A*, I and *B*, I for *Rdr.* However, there is firm evidence only that strophes 3-12 belonged to this *drápa*, cf. *Edda*, 134 and 155. Snorri cites *Hstl* in chs. 26 and 31 of *Skáldskaparmál*, *Edda*, 104-5 and 111-13, text in *Skjald B*, I 14-18. Twelve strophes or half-strophes ascribed to Ulfr Uggason are generally conceded to belong to *Húsdrápa* as in *Skjald B*, I 128-30 but, unlike the other three mythological *drápur*, they are scattered throughout the text of *Skáldskaparmál* and do not appear as a continuous citation. The extant verses of *Þórsdrápa*, introduced by the sentence "Eptir þesi sǫgvi hefir ort Eilífr Gvðrvnars(ón) iÞorsdrápv", are cited in *Skáldskaparmál*, ch. 27, *Edda*, 107-10. Str. 21 appears in ch. 12, *Edda*, 95, and its function as a concluding *stef* is thus hypothetical though not unlikely in view of the existence of 10/7-8 in the main body of the poem.

⁶ Sigurður Nordal, *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar* (*ÍF* II, 1933), 271-2. Here we find the only description of ornamented shields in Old Icelandic literature, beyond what we learn from the shield-poems themselves: "hann (i.e. the shield) var skrifaðr fornsögum, en allt milli skriptanna váru lagðar yfir spengr af gulli, ok settr steinum." Doubtless on account of their perishable fabric, no archaeological record of these painted and ornamented shields survives.

⁷ On Bragi's *floruit* see E. O. G. Turville-Petre, *Scaldic Poetry* (1976), Introduction xxi-iii and references cited there.

⁸ *Edda*, 134 and 155. *Skáldatal* also names Ragnarr loðbrók as one of Bragi's patrons, see the Arnarnagðan edition *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar* III (1880-7), 251. It is possible on

chronological and geographical grounds that Bragi and Ragnarr loðbrók may have enjoyed such a relationship; see Alfred P. Smyth, *Scandinavian Kings in the British Isles 850-880* (1977), esp. chs. 1 and 2.

⁹ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Laxdæla saga* (ÍF V, 1934), 79-80.

¹⁰ These are the verses of Ólvir hnífa (*Skjald B*, I 6), Eysteinn Valdason (*Skjald B*, I 131) and Gamli Gnævaðarskáld (*Skjald B*, I 132), all on the subject of Þórr's fight with Miðgarðsormr.

¹¹ Although doubt remains, *Bēowulf* is commonly dated to the eighth century; cf. C. L. Wrenn (rev. W. F. Bolton), *Beowulf with the Finnesburg Fragment* (1973), 28, but see Nicholas Jacobs, 'Anglo-Danish Relations, Poetic Archaism and the Date of *Beowulf*', *Poetica* (Tokyo) (1978), 23-43.

¹² Fr. Klaeber, *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnesburg* (3rd ed., 1950), ll. 853-97. All line references to *Bēowulf* are to this edition.

¹³ For a distinction between the irony of events and other types of irony, see D. C. Muecke, *Irony* (The Critical Idiom 13, 1970), 66. Recently, some scepticism about whether what Muecke (49-51) calls verbal irony operates in Old English poetry has been expressed by scholars. cf. Daniel G. Calder (ed.), *Old English Poetry. Essays on Style* (1979), especially E. G. Stanley's article (67-90), and the reservations of T. A. Shippey, *Beowulf* (1978), 34-8.

¹⁴ Five *vísur* are ascribed to Einarrr in ch. 8 of *Orkneyinga saga*, four in *Flateyjarbók*, four in *MSS of Heimskringla* and three in *Fagrskinna*; cf. *Skjald A*, I 31-2, *B*, I 27-8.

¹⁵ For these parallels, see Magnus Olsen, 'Torv-Einar og Hamðismál', *Bidrag til nordisk filologi tillagnade Emil Olson* (1936), 123-30 and Ursula Dronke, *The Poetic Edda I* (1969), 214-17. Another literary parallel in Eddic poetry, though probably of later date, is *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*, str. 28-9, where Helgi compares Sigrún's behaviour to Hildir's in the *Hjáningavíg*. All citations of Eddic poetry are from G. Neckel (rev. H. Kuhn), *Edda, Die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern* (4th ed., 1962).

¹⁶ The Irish influence on the development of *dróttkvætt* has often been canvassed; for a summary, see Turville-Petre (1976), Introduction, xxiv-viii and his 'Um dróttkvæði og írskan kveðskap', *Skírnir* CXXVIII (1954), 31-55.

¹⁷ Greek evidence is adduced by Helmut Rosenfeld, 'Nordische Schilddichtung und mittelalterliche Wappendichtung', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 61 (1936), 232-69; a more plausible association between skaldic verse and mortuary rites by way of the *erfiðrápa* or memorial lay for princes has been proposed by Åke Ohlmarks, 'Till frágan om den fornnordiska skaldediktningens ursprung', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* (= ANF) LVII (1944), 178-207.

¹⁸ 'Myten om *Idun* og *Tjate* i Tjodolvs *Haustlǫng*', ANF LXIV (1949), 41-73. Some of her views had been anticipated in Bertha S. Phillpotts, *The Elder Edda and Ancient Scandinavian Drama* (1920).

¹⁹ R. Much (rev. H. Jankuhn and W. Lange), *Die Germania des Tacitus* (3rd ed., 1967), ch. 6, ll. 7-8.

²⁰ Cf. H. Maryon, 'The Sutton Hoo Shield', *Antiquity* XX (1964), 24-5; R. Bruce-Mitford, *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial* (1975-8), II 28-9.

²¹ On Germanic words cognate with *staim* in *staimbort* (*Hilibrandlied* 65) see R. Meissner, 'Staimbort chlodun', *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* XLVII (1903), 400-12.

²² See Sune Lindqvist, *Gotlands Bildsteine* (1941-2). More recently Ludwig Buisson has attempted to identify all the figural scenes on Ardre VIII with reference to early skaldic verse, especially *Ragnarsdrápa* and *Haustlǫng*, and other early Germanic poetry: *Der Bildstein Ardre VIII auf Gotland. Göttermythen, Heldensagen und Jenseitsglaube der Germanen im 8. Jahrhundert n. Chr.* (Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, phil.-hist. Kl., 3. Folge, 102, 1976).

²³ Cf. Charlotte Blindheim, 'Trade Problems in the Viking Age. Some Reflections on Insular Metalwork Found in Norwegian Graves of the Viking Age', in Thorsten Andersson and Karl Inge Sandred (ed.), *The Vikings. Proceedings of the Symposium of the Faculty of Arts of Uppsala University, June 6-9, 1977* (1978), 166-76.

²⁴ *In honorem Hludowici IV*, ll. 179-282, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Poetae Latini Aevi Carolini* (ed. E. Duemmler) II, 63-6 and, for a general appraisal of the poem's encomiastic function, Max Manitius, *Geschichte der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters* (1911-31), I 553. We know from the *Annales Regni Francorum* (in *Historia Regni Francorum Aevi Carolini* i, 144, ed. R. Rau, *Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters V*, 1955), that the Danish king Harald, together with his queen and a large following, visited the court of Louis the Pious at Ingelheim in 826 and that the king and queen were baptised in the church of St Alban. Reports of the paintings there could thus have reached Norway by word of mouth from Denmark, and there could even have been some Norwegians present in Harald's entourage.

²⁵ "Ragnarr gave me the moon of Rær's carriage (i.e. a shield) together with a multitude of stories", str. 7/3-4 and 12/3-4.

²⁶ The notion that the stories are "terrifying" depends upon an association of the *bifum* and *bifkleif* of *Hstl* 13/7-8 and 20/7-8 with the Icel. vb. *bifa* in the sense "to shake, tremble

(with fright)", as advocated by Holtsmark (1949), 40. Cf. also W's reading of 1/4, *raddkleif*, "voice-cliff", for the shield as a speaking picture (T has *naddkleif*, "spear-point cliff"). On these MSS see *Edda*, V-X.

²⁷ There are many instances of first person intrusion in these poems, e.g. *Rdr* 7/1-2; 12/1-2; 14/1-4; 1/1-4; *Hstl* 12/1; 13/5-6; 14/1 (impersonal).

²⁸ The term "authenticating voice" was coined by Stanley B. Greenfield apropos the *Beowulf*-poet's *persona* in his 'The Authenticating Voice in *Beowulf*', *Anglo-Saxon England* 5 (1976), 51-62. The poet-as-reporter appears in the opening lines of both *Beowulf* and *Hildebrandslied*, as well as in other OE poetry and in Þjóðólf's *Ynglingatal*.

²⁹ "Thus (the hall) was adorned inside with memorials", str. 6/8 and 9/4, *Skjald B*, I 129.

³⁰ The development of these images in *Húsdrápa* has been well analysed by Carol J. Clover, 'Skaldic Sensibility', *ANF* XCIII (1978), 70-1.

³¹ Gert Kreutzer, *Die Dichtungslehre der Skalden* (2nd ed., 1977), 112-17 has shown by means of tables how poetry-kennings with these fields of reference are most fully represented in the works of tenth-century skalds. As Kreutzer remarks (113), the small number of texts from the ninth century makes generalisation about the likely frequency of such poetry-kennings from that period impossible, but, since they are notably absent from *Hauslǫng* and *Ragnarsdrápa*, we may tentatively assert that their absence here is significant. In another place, the *lausavisa* assigned to Bragi by Snorri in *Skáldskaparmál* ch. 42, *Edda*, 121, he calls poetry *drykkja fjalla stillis* for which a prince had rewarded him with gold.

³² After I had written this article, I read Folke Ström's 'Poetry as an Instrument of Propaganda: Jarl Hákon and his Poets', *Speculum Norroenum: Norse Studies in Memory of Gabriel Turville-Petre* (1981), 440-58, which explores the political implications of mythological allusions in the works of Hákon's poets. In most particulars, Ström's analysis forms an excellent complement to my attempts to see these works in a stylistic tradition that stemmed from the techniques of the early shield-poets. Sigrún Davíðsdóttir, 'Old Norse Court Poetry, Some Notes on its Purpose, Transmission and Historical Value', *Gripla* III (1979), 186-203 discusses the political purpose of skaldic encomia, but does not mention the mythological verse.

³³ *Háttatal*, *Edda*, 222: "ok skal orðtak vera forn mini"

³⁴ In Illugi Bryndelaskáld's poem on King Haraldr harðráði using the *hjástælt* technique the first and last lines of each *helmingr* describe the deeds of Haraldr and the inner two allude to the exploits of the Niflungar, *Skjald B*, I 354.

³⁵ Str. 3/4 describes Jörð/Norway as *biðkvön Þriðja*, "Þriðja's (Óðinn's) waiting wife", *Skjald B*, I 147. Although *biðkvön* is a hapax legomenon, it is unlikely that its first element means "waiting" and thus "abandoned" as Finnur Jónsson advocated in *Lexicon poeticum* (2nd ed., 1916); Roberta Frank, *Old Norse Court Poetry: The Dróttkvætt Stanza* (Islandica XLII, 1978), 63 follows this interpretation. The implication of *bið-* is more likely to be "waiting" (for a lover), and so receptive to Hákon, or, if, as E. A. Kock held (*Notationes norroenae*, 1923-44, § 1955), *bið-* derives from *biðja*, *biðkvön* would have the more active sense of "woman or wife who importunes, makes advances"

³⁶ The womanizing allusion was suggested to me by Ursula Dronke. Hákon's biographers saw his fall at the hands of Óláfr Tryggvason as indirectly due to his liaisons with women, cf. Theodore M. Andersson, 'Ari's *konunga ævi* and the Earliest Accounts of Hákon Jarl's Death', *Opuscula* VI (Bibliotheca Arnarnagænaa XXXIII, 1979), 1-17. The enigmatic figure of Þorgerðr Hölgabrúðr suggests yet another dimension to Hákon's relations with female forces, in Þorgerðr's case one capable of producing a supernatural hailstorm to aid her protégé at the battle with the *Jómsvíkingar*.

³⁷ *Edda*, 93; *Skjald B*, I 139.

³⁸ See the remarks of Hallvard Lie in his article on *Þórsdrápa* in *KLNM* 20 (1976), cols. 397-400 and *Kenningar*, 88, a, b and b, ð.

³⁹ E.g. 15/2 *konr Jarðar*, "son of Jörð"; 15/6-7 *angrþjófr Óðins*, "Óðinn's sorrow-thief" (i.e. sorrow-remover); 17/4 *langvinr Þrøngvar*, "long-standing friend of Þrøng (Freyja)"; 17/7 *þrámóðnir Þrúðar*, "he who longs in his heart for Þrúðr"; 18/5 *fir gulli Ullar*, "the excellent step-father of Ullr"; 19/2 *gramr með dreyrgum hamri*, "the prince with the bloody hammer"; 19/5-6 *týr karms*, "god of the waggon".

⁴⁰ The river is named Vimur in one of the two *ljóðaháttur* strophes in Eddic measure that Snorri quotes in his prose version of the Þórr-Geirrðr myth, as well as in his own prose telling of the story; both citations are in *Edda*, 106. Vimur also appears in Ulfr Uggason's *Húsdrápa* 6/5-6 in the Þórr-kennung *Viðgymnir Vimrar vaðs*, cf. *Edda*, 96-7.

⁴¹ 6/8 *Fedju þau með stedja*, "(the rising waters) resounded against the anvil of Fedja"; 7/6-7 *Marnar snerriblód*, "the swirling blood of Mørn". *Mørn* appears in skaldic verse as both a river-*heiti* and a giantess-*heiti*. There are Modern Norwegian river-names derived from *mørn* in Telemark and Vest-Agder, cf. O. Rygh and K. Rygh, *Norske Elvenavne* (1904), 155 and Per Hovda, 'Til norske elvenavn', *Namn och Bygd* 59 (1971), 128. For *Fedja* and associated names see M. Olsen, 'Elvenavnene Føð, *Føð og ðnavnet Fedjar', *ANF* XXIII (1907), 90-7 and Hovda (1971), 134-5. I have profited from several discussions on Eilfr's river- and giant-kennings with Daphne Davidson of Somerville College, Oxford.

⁴² These connotations are more fully explored in my 'An Interpretation of the Myth of Þórr's Encounter with Geirröðr and his Daughters', *Speculum Norroenum: Norse Studies in Memory of Gabriel Turville-Petre* (1981), 370-91.

⁴³ The importance of Hákon's victory at Hjørungavágr as the stimulus for several of his court-poets' encomia was suggested by Finnur Jónsson, *Den norske og oldislandske Litteraturs Historie I* (2nd ed., 1920), 533-48. Ström (*Speculum Norroenum*, 1981) also acknowledges its importance, though he does not consider Eilífr as one of Hákon's political propagandists. The Þórr-kenning *brjótr berg-Dana*, "destroyer of rock-Danes", which occurs in *Hymiskviða 17/7* and *Haustlög 18/7-8*, suggests a general West Norse prejudice against Danes, but Eilífr's kenning here places Þórr's opponents on a skerry, so perhaps suggesting the site of Hákon's battle.

⁴⁴ Peter Clemons, 'Action in *Beowulf* and our Perception of It', in Calder (1979), 159.

⁴⁵ 'Natur' og 'unatur' i skaldekonsten (Avhandlingar utgitt av Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo, II. Hist.-Filos. Klasse, 1957, No. 1).

⁴⁶ Cf. Roger Hinks, *Carolingian Art* (1962), 80. A more balanced assessment of the interplay between naturalism and stylisation in early Viking Age art is to be found in David M. Wilson and Ole Klindt-Jensen, *Viking Art* (1966), esp. ch. 2.

⁴⁷ Richard Bernheimer, *The Nature of Representation* (1961), 186-7 and cf. Peter R. Schroeder, 'Stylistic Analogies between Old English Art and Poetry', *Viator* 5 (1974), 185-98.

⁴⁸ Both staves are reproduced in E. O. G. Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North* (1964), pls. no. 21 and 32. In another article, 'Skaldestil-studier', *Maal og Minne* (= *MM*) (1952), 40. Lie claims a parallel between the literary figure of synecdoche and lack of proportion in Viking Age art.

⁴⁹ For an exposition of the workings of the kenning-system see Bjarne Fidjestøl, 'Kenningsystemet. Forsøk på ein lingvistisk analyse', *MM* (1974), 5-50.

⁵⁰ Some of Buisson's (1976) more strained attempts to accommodate figural subjects on Ardre VIII to known myths illustrate this principle, e.g. his scene 5, of figures carrying what looks like an ox, which he interprets as the ox-roasting episode in which Þjazi encounters Óðinn, Hæmir and Loki. But here we need the diagnostic signs of ox plus Þjazi in eagle shape. Cf. Erik Moltke's critique of Buisson in 'Lidt om gotlandske billedsten, især om Ardre VIII', *Fortid og Nutid XXVIII* (1979-80), 77-83.

⁵¹ The two subjects of *Haustlög*, the myths of Þjazi's theft of Iðunn and Þórr's fight with Hrungrnir are quoted in separate chapters of *Skaldskaparmál*, 31 and 26.

⁵² *Kenningar*, in the heading of I, 40-1, to be found in the list of contents, p. ix, calls these "verbale Zwischenglieder"

⁵³ (1957), 94-5. Lie coins the phrase to describe extended elements in Hallfreðr's kennings in *Hákonardrápa*, but notes their applicability to Bragi's *saums andvanar*.

⁵⁴ Cf. *Völuspá's 4/7-8 þá var grund gróin grænom lauki*.

⁵⁵ See Hallvard Lie, 'Naglfar og Naglfari', *MM* (1954), 152-61.

⁵⁶ Reluctantly, I think one must doubt the ingenious suggestion of Ursula Dronke (1969), 213, that *saumr* here may allude to the chain-mail worn by Hamðir and Sörli as they stood over the maimed Jörmunrekkr, which was *saums andvanar* in the sense that it had no seam or join. There is no evidence from *Hamðismál* that the brothers were clad in chain-mail on this occasion and the probable function of clarification which comparable kennings indicate the phrase had for Bragi speaks against the presence of such a pun on *saumr*.

⁵⁷ Klaus von See, *Skaldendichtung* (1980), 34-5, has coined the definition "Metapher mit Rücklenkung" for the skaldic kenning, and points out that kennings of the type *siglur . . . saums andvanar* clarify the "rücklenkende Funktion" of the determinant. He cites Hallfreðr's warrior-kenning *þóðserkjar birki barklaust*, "the birch-trees of the battle-shirt, lacking bark" (*Oláfsdrápa 5/1-2*, *Skjald B*, I 149) as an example of the type, but equally apposite, and nearer in time to Bragi, is *Ynglingatal 1/6-7* (*Skjald B*, I 7), *sviðis geira vágr vindlaus*, "the windless wave of the spears of the ox", for the mead in a mead-cask. This example was brought to my attention by Peter Foote, who has helped me a great deal in clarifying my thoughts on Bragi's kenning. See also *Kenningar*, I, 38.

⁵⁸ Cf. the logically contradictory but allusively effective suggestion that Þjazi is an ancient being, though changed into a young eagle, in *Hstl 2/2-3 fló . . . snótar ulfr í gemlis ham gomlum*, "the 'wolf' of the woman (i.e. Iðunn) flew in the ancient shape of a one-year-old eagle (gemlir)". See also the word-play of 11/5 *þú skalt vétr, nema, vélum . . .*

⁵⁹ Cf. *Rdr 14/1* and *Hstl 6/2 -vas þat fyr lǫngu-*.

⁶⁰ The reference to Sigyn suggests he knew a form of the story like that described allusively in *Völuspá 35*; the use of the present tense indicates that he probably intended an allusion to Ragnarök, although Holtmark (1949), 26 disagrees.

⁶¹ Eg. *Ragnarsdrápa: 3/2 Jörmunrekkr; 5/5-6 Hamðir ok Sörli; 10/3 Hogni; 10/6 Heðinn; 10/7 Hildir; Haustlög: 1/8 Þjazi; 8/6 Loptir; 10/3-4 Iðunn; 11/8 Loki; 15/8 Hrungrnir; 19/8 Einriði.*

⁶² Eg. *Ragnarsdrápa: 3/6 Randvérs höfuðniða; 3/8 Erps of barmar; 6/2 Gjúka niða; 6/8 Jónakrs sonum; Haustlög: 3/7 Hænis vinr (also 7/7); ?4/2 fet-Melli; 5/2 Fárbauda mögr; 6/4 and 12/8 faðir Marnar; 8/5 Þórs of-rúni; 9/4 átrunnr Hymis; 12/3 hugreyandi Hænis; 14/6 Jarðar sunr; 14/7 Meila blóði; 15/1-2 Ullar mágr; 16/1 Baldrs of barmi; 19/5-6 Óðins burr.*

⁶³ Eg. *Ragnarsdrápa*: 3/5 *rósta varð í ranni*; 4/1-2 *Flaut of set . . . í golfi*; 4/4 *hendr sem fær of kendusk*; 4/5.8 *fell . . . blóði blandinn . . . at höfði*; 8/6 *en þöls of fylða*; 9/1.4 *Bauða sú til bleyði . . . men*; 9/5-6 *svá lét ev, þótt etti sem orrostu letti*; 10/3 *þá svall heipt í Högna*; 11/5 *allr gekk herr . . . Haustlóng*; 1/5-6 *sék . . . trigglaut of far*; 2/5 *settisk örn . . .*; 2/7-8 *vasa . . . bleyði vændr*; 2/8 *á seyði*; 3/7-8 *vasat Hænis vinr hönum hollr*; 3/8 *af fornum þolli*; 4/3 *af helgum skutli*; 5/3 *með þegnum*; 5/8 *þjórhlti fjóra*; 6/2-3 *svangr — vas þat fyr löngu — át af eikrótum*; 6/7-8 *meðal herða . . . ofan stöngu*; 16/2-4 *berg . . . hristusk björg ok brustu, brann upphiminn*; 17/2 *þönd ollu því*; 17/4 *vildu svá dísir*; 18/6 *fyr skörpum hamri*.

⁶⁴ Cf. 1/5-8; 2/1-2; 9/2-4; 9/8 and the *stef* 10/7-8 and 21/1-4; 19/2.

⁶⁵ Cf. 8/6 *en þöls of fylða*, "but filled with malice"; 9/1.4 *Bauða sú til bleyði . . . men*, "she did not offer the ring out of faint-heartedness" and 9/5-6 *svá lét ey, þótt etti sem orrostu letti*, "thus she continually acted — though she incited [the prince] — as if she were holding back the battle"

⁶⁶ For a fuller treatment of the Everlasting Battle motif, see my 'Hildir's Ring: A Problem in the *Ragnarsdrápa*', *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 6 (1973), 75-92. Two other Hildir-kennings which indubitably allude to her destructiveness make the ironic reference to this motif clear: 8/1-2 *öfþerris æða ósk-Rón*, "desirous-Rán of the complete desiccation of veins" and 11/3-4 *fengeyðandi fljóða fordæða*, "catch-destroying sorceress among women" The most recent work on the development of the Everlasting Battle motif in the Hildir-legend discounts the evidence of Bragi's strophes as "an obscure allusion" and prefers to see "the Hildir story . . . [as] an example of a Gaelic motif which spread to Scandinavia via Orkney", cf. Bo Almqvist, "Scandinavian and Celtic Folklore Contacts in the Earldom of Orkney", *Saga-Book of the Viking Society* XX, 1-2 (1978-9), 92-4.

⁶⁷ See J. Fritzner, *Ordbog over Det gamle norske Sprog* (1883-96), s.v. *sif, sifjaðr* ("related") and *sifjar* pl. ("affinity").

⁶⁸ Cf. Holtsmark (1949), 14 on the view that Þjazi probably had magic powers to open and close mountains. *Bleyði* not infrequently has sexual connotations, cf. Fritzner (1883-96), s.v. *bleyði, bleyðimaðr* and *bleyðiorð*, where it is often synonymous with *ergi*.

⁶⁹ Cf. *Atlakviða* 25/4 *Högna ins frænca*, "Hogni the brave"; 38/7 *bræðr sína berharða*, "her (i.e. Guðrún's) brothers, fierce as bears"; *Hamðismál* 24/1-2 *Hitt qvað þá Hamðir, inn hugomstóri*, "Hamðir then spoke, proud in valour"; 25/1-3 *Þá hraut við/inn reginkunngil baldr í brynio*, "then growled the god-descended king in his mail-coat"; *Völundarkviða* 25/3-4 *sendi hann kunnigril kono Niðaðar*, "he (Völundur) sent to the artful wife of Niðuðir"

⁷⁰ Even the celebrated *hrafnbláir . . . Erps of barmar* (*Rdr* 3/7-8), "Erpr's raven-black brothers" may refer as much to Hamðir's and Sþrli's membership of the Niflung family as to their dark colouring; cf. Dronke (1969), 208-9.

⁷¹ Þórr is *geðstrangr Þórr*, "Þórr strong of mind" (2/1-2); *njótr njarðgjarðar*, "user of the strength-girdle" (7/3-4); *þölkveitir bragðmildr Loka bræði vændr*, "destroyer of Loki's evil, liberal with sudden movements, widely known for his ability to fly into a rage" (4/5-7) and *itr gulli Ullar*, "the excellent stepfather of Ullr" (18/5).

⁷² V. Kiil, 'Tjodolvs *Haustróng*', *ANF* LXXIV (1959), 32 emends to **vellsparir* because he thinks it inappropriate that the gods should be called powerless.

⁷³ Ursula Dronke, 'Völuspá and Satiric Tradition', *Annali — Studi Nordici* XXII (1979), 57-86. Mrs. Dronke kindly allowed me to see this paper in typescript.

⁷⁴ On Bragi's irony in the Jörmunrekkr-strophes, see Dronke (1969), 204-14 and W. H. Vogt, 'Bragis Schild. Maler und Skalde', *Acta Philologica Scandinavica* V (1930-1), 1-28, esp. 20.

⁷⁵ For a history of the term "grotesque", see Philip Thomson, *The Grotesque* (The Critical Idiom 24, 1972); for an analysis of the characteristic effect of the grotesque style see ch. 5, 'Functions and Purposes of the Grotesque', and works cited there.

REVIEWS

NORGES INNSKRIFTER MED DE YNGRE RUNER. SJETTE BIND. FØRSTE HEFTE: BRYGGEN I BERGEN. Edited by ASLAK LIESTØL. *Norsk Historisk Kjeldeskrift-Institutt*. Oslo, 1980. viii+96 pp.

Final publication of the Bergen rune-finds has now begun. Excavations in the Bryggen area during the 1950's brought to light a vast number of runic inscriptions, more than 600, mostly scratched on pieces of wood, though bone and metal were also used. They date from the 12th century to the late 14th century. Aslak Liestøl has worked on these since their discovery, and published a preliminary survey in *Viking XXVII* (1964 for 1963), pp. 5-53, as well as summaries in English ('The runes of Bergen', *Minnesota history*, XL, no. 2 (1966), pp. 49-59) and in German ('Runeninschriften von der Bryggen in Bergen', *Zeitschrift für Archäologie des Mittelalters*, I (1973), pp. 129-39), and studies of individual inscriptions. Now, however, full scholarly publication of the complete corpus of inscriptions has begun.

This first fascicule contains forty-four inscriptions, as well as an index of forms and a bibliography. The inscriptions date from between the late 12th and late 14th centuries, except for one which could be 15th century; they are all on wood except for one on a gold ring and one on a strip of lead. They are almost all wholly or partly in Latin, and include secular love-poetry, quotations from various religious texts, various medicinal charms, invocations of apostles and other saints, and several inscriptions which must be interpreted as magical spells.

The presentation of each inscription is up to the high standards established for this series. A brief description of the object on which the inscription is found, together with any evidence for its date, is followed by a transcription and transliteration of the inscription, with any palæographic comments that may be necessary. The content of the inscription, and its language, is then fully discussed with great learning. Admirably clear photographs accompany these, and in a few instances where the photographs cannot adequately reproduce the inscription, drawings are also supplied. No indication of scale is given on the photographs, although the measurements of the object are given in its description. The dating of each object is sometimes made by association with neighbouring material, but more usually by reference to its position above or below a layer of burnt material associated with one of the dated city fires, in e.g. 1198, 1248, 1332, 1413, 1476 and 1527.

The most interesting of the inscriptions containing secular love-poetry is also the first in this fascicule, 603, no. X, Nordre Gullskoen, earlier than 1332. It contains memorial reconstructions of parts of two poems preserved in the *Carmina Burana*, *Amor habet superos* and *Axe Phebus aureo*, and shows quite a high standard of Latinity. There is only one other known instance of the poetry of the Vagantes in medieval Scandinavia: two strophes by the Archpoet quoted in AM. 622, 4^o, p. 12, written c. 1550. Apart from this, *amor vincit omnia* is cited on a rune-stave from the latter part of the 13th century, while another preserves part of a Latin couplet advocating moderation in life. One, beside quoting a formal Latin phrase of praise for the beloved, informs us in Norse that *alinn var ek*; similarly, another quotes *Roma caput mundi* on one side, while informing us in Norse on the other that *út var*

ek í gær. Various other texts are so brief or so obscure that they cannot be identified, though here Aslak Liestøl may have failed to identify 610, no. XVII, Nordre Bugården, as a quotation from the *Magnificat*: read (more probably) *fæsitmici for fecit mi(c)hi*, *Quia fecit mihi magna* (Vulg. Luc. i, 49). If this is correct, then this inscription should be associated with the many other inscriptions which quote devotional or liturgical texts. Of these, two quote the *Pater noster*, and one of these also contains a list of ten names of men. Ten inscriptions contain the *Ave Maria*, complete in one, quoted in the others; one also contains one, or two, names of men. There is also one inscription which contains part of a *Kyrie*, one which quotes the beginning of Psalm 109 (110), one which quotes a *Maria*-antiphon, and a cross-inscription including most of the I.N.R.I.-formula. Parallels to these inscriptions elsewhere in the West Norse area are also discussed.

Several of the inscriptions are religious invocations but clearly intended for medicinal use. These include one for use in childbirth, one for a fever, and one for blindness which invokes Tobias as well as individuals from the Book of Daniel. Further, several other inscriptions simply consist of invocations of saints. Apart from one which may invoke Mary and St. Ólaf, two invoke the four evangelists, one of these also with Jesus and Mary.

Both medicinal and invocatory inscriptions merge smoothly into a class of twelve magical inscriptions. Several of these contain the Hebrew acronym *agla* (i.e. *atta gibbor leolam adonai*, 'Thou art great for ever, Lord'), and references to the notorious palindrome *sator arepo tenet opera rotas*, which if set out in a square can be read forwards and backwards both horizontally and vertically. *Agla* occurs in four inscriptions, *sator arepo* in two. Several other inscriptions contain unintelligible rune-sequences, and at least in two instances, close parallels can be drawn with (presumably magical) Anglo-Saxon texts. These are on several occasions combined with invocations of Christ, Mary and other saints, including the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus.

In these inscriptions it is possible to observe the partial development of a convention for the representation of Latin in runes; much information can also be derived from them on the contemporary standards and pronunciation of Latin, and the ranges of use to which it was commonly put. It is particularly interesting to see the conventions of rune-magic extended and translated into the learned Christian magic of the High Middle Ages. Lastly, the inscriptions give invaluable direct evidence for the literary milieu in a major Western Scandinavian centre.

The standard of printing and presentation is high, and no misprints or other errors were noted which would be likely to mislead the informed user, other than a garbled reference to an article by Magnús Már Lárusson, p. vii, col. 2, 11. 10-11 from below: the title should read *Mariukirkja og Valþjófsstaðarhurðin*. Otherwise Aslak Liestøl and the printers must be congratulated on a fine piece of work. We must all hope that he will have the health and opportunity to complete the work which he has begun so splendidly.

PAUL BIBIRE

SNORRI STURLUSON. By MARLENE CIKLAMINI. *Twayne's World Authors Series 493*. Twayne Publishers, a division of G. K. Hall & Co. Boston, 1978. 188 pp.

Snorri Sturluson is the only medieval Icelandic author about whom we have sufficient biographical information and by whom a sufficient range of writings

survive for it to be possible to write a comprehensive book about the author and his *œuvre*. There have, however, been remarkably few attempts to write such a book (Sigurður Nordal, *Snorri Sturluson*, 1920 (reprint 1973); F. Paasche, *Snorre Sturlason og Sturlungerne*, 1922; Gunnar Benediktsson, *Snorri skáld í Reykholti*, 1957; of these the first remains the best). The reason is probably the immense difficulty of demonstrating a connection between the life of this turbulent and rather less than admirable political figure and the writings attributed to him which are so marked for their breadth of vision, sympathy, sense of humour, and delicate style. Snorri is not the only great author of whom this can be said (he has been compared to Francis Bacon), but no one who has written about him has succeeded in reconciling satisfactorily the picture of the man given by contemporary historical accounts of him with that which emerges from his works. Most have assumed, like Sigurður Nordal, who seems to have been dissatisfied with the explanation, that the writings were a compensation for the life: that Snorri sought to express in books the ideals he failed to live up to in reality.

The problem is not made easier by the sneaking suspicion that Snorri may not in fact be the author, or even the compiler, of the works attributed to him. The evidence for his authorship both of the *Prose Edda* and of *Heimskringla* is less than complete; moreover the nature of 'authorship' in the Middle Ages was different from what it is in modern books, and the degree to which a medieval 'author' can be assumed to be expressing himself in his works is difficult to assess. In Snorri's case it is easier to imagine the man we know from *Sturlunga saga* as the author of *Egils saga*, the hero of which has certain character-traits comparable to Snorri's, but there is no satisfactory evidence for this attribution, though it is held by many modern scholars. It is perhaps a good thing that we know nothing at all of the author of *Njáls saga*.

These questions have not occupied Professor Cıklamini a great deal, although her first chapter is entitled 'Snorri, Poet and Chieftain: An Ambivalent and Elusive Portrait'. The biographical sketch in this chapter does not even give a clear picture of the events of his life, and is marred by reference to popular rather than standard scholarly editions of primary sources, and for instance the quotation of information from the sixteenth-century *Oddverja Annáll* as if it were a medieval text. The attribution of the *Prose Edda* and *Heimskringla* to Snorri is accepted as being beyond doubt with only the barest mention of part of the evidence; the question of *Egils saga* gets half a page of discussion and the attribution to Snorri is tentatively accepted, but there is no further discussion of this work anywhere in the book. Neither this chapter nor anything else in the book makes any new contribution to the understanding of the relationship between Snorri the man and his writings.

Professor Cıklamini's volume is no. 493 in 'Twayne's world authors series', and is evidently intended for a general, not a specialist audience. Nevertheless there is only a short chapter (ch. 2) on 'Snorri's Literary Heritage', which will give unlearned readers a rather inadequate picture of the literary and historical background to Snorri's works. This chapter includes a brief, unconvincing, and inadequately documented attempt to refute the views of G. Turville-Petre on the influence of ecclesiastical writings on saga literature and an assertion of the importance of native traditions (i.e. apparently oral sagas) for the development of Snorri's style and attitude to history — an attitude summed up in the rather naive statement (p. 41) that 'Snorri was committed to historical truth'.

Chapter 3 is devoted to the *Prose Edda*, though only *Gylfaginning* is discussed in any detail; the prologue is hardly mentioned at all, and *Háttatal* is dismissed briefly,

being described as a composition that 'lacks intrinsic interest'. The account ignores several important questions, such as which of the different manuscript versions is closest to the original, and whether the received texts contain interpolations. The mixture of Christian and heathen elements in *Gylfaginning* is hardly noticed and Snorri's attitude to his mythological material is not made clear.

The remaining seven chapters (page 64 to the end of the book) contain discussions of the contents and themes of *Heimskringla* saga by saga, though *Ynglinga saga* is unaccountably omitted (there is also no proper treatment of Snorri's separate *Óláfs saga helga*; the fact that it was first written as an independent work is only mentioned in passing). These chapters demonstrate how Snorri has imposed his own interpretation and view of history on events that did not inherently have such meaning. On the other hand they contain no proper discussion of the relation between *Heimskringla*, its sources, and the historical reality they relate to other than occasional comments on the 'ahistoricity' of individual events. They consist mainly of paraphrase of Snorri's narrative interspersed with comments on the structure and themes of the individual sagas in *Heimskringla* of a rather subjective and often unconvincing kind. In her preface, Professor Cikalmini complains that 'studies devoted to Snorri's work have had a utilitarian rather than an esthetic objective', meaning that they have been too much concerned with source hunting and the historical value of *Heimskringla*, though she mentions some exceptions, 'works by Sigurður Nordal, Hallvard Lie, and Siegfried Beyschlag, whose investigations are distinguished by a wider and inspiring purview.' It is debatable whether a work like Professor Cikalmini's, which avowedly confines itself to an esthetic objective, can be said to have a wider 'purview' than works of traditional philological enquiry, and it is certainly not more inspiring. It is hardly possible moreover even just to reach reliable esthetic judgements on a work like *Heimskringla* without taking into account its relationship to its sources and to historical truth, and without considering it against the background of contemporary literary and historical theory. In her preface Professor Cikalmini states: 'Snorri's preoccupation with moral questions links him to the intellectual milieu of medieval Europe.' Yet there is no discussion of such links in her chapters on *Heimskringla*, nor any attempt to justify the assertion (p. 64) that Snorri made 'a bold experiment in incorporating historical matter of epic tradition into a work with exacting standards of historical truthfulness'. It is in many places unclear whether her interpretative comments relate to the actual historical events described in *Heimskringla*, or whether they are supposed to reflect Snorri's understanding of those events, or whether, as seems most often the case, they merely represent Professor Cikalmini's response to Snorri's narrative which she seems to read as if it were a novel. Her method illustrates the danger of the undisciplined application of a superficial acquaintance with structuralist theory and the abandonment of the traditional discipline of philology without which literary criticism, however sensitive, becomes a mere succession of ill-informed subjective statements that contribute little to the understanding of works of literature.

That it is possible to write about Snorri interestingly and sensitively while still maintaining proper scholarly standards is demonstrated by another recent book, *Snorri, átta alda minning*, published by the Sögufélag in 1979. This also is addressed to a popular audience, albeit a fairly well-informed Icelandic one (some of the papers in the book were originally read on Icelandic radio), but it contains scholarly and readable surveys by various people of most of the important aspects of Snorri's life and work, including besides other essays a re-examination of his life and

supposed betrayal of his country by Gunnar Karlsson, a skilful presentation of the arguments for attributing the *Prose Edda* and *Heimskringla* to him by Ólafur Halldórsson, a good review of the literary qualities of *Heimskringla* by Bjarni Guðnason, and improbably, but remarkably successfully, an essay on Snorri's physical appearance by Helgi Þorláksson. This book also does not offer much that is new about Snorri, but it gives a balanced and readable account of what is known about him and scholarly but broadly based opinions on the many puzzling questions about him, as well as convincing assessments of the qualities of the man and his work from various points of view. It is only a pity for English-speaking readers that it is in Icelandic. I am not sure whether the moral is that books on big subjects should be written by groups of scholars rather than by individuals, or whether it is that the Icelanders are the best at writing about their own literature; but I would have no hesitation in recommending this book to the non-specialist reader, while I cannot recommend Professor Ciklamini's.

ANTHONY FAULKES

FYRKAT, EN JYSK VIKINGEBORG. I. BORGEN OG BEBYGGELSEN. By OLAF OLSEN and HOLGER SCHMIDT, with contributions by HILMAR ØDUM and HANS HELBÆK. *Nordiske fortidsminder, serie B — in quarto, bind 3. I kommission hos Herm. H. J. Lyng og Søn*. København, 1977. 242+[41] pp.

FYRKAT, EN JYSK VIKINGEBORG. II. OLDSAGERNE OG GRAVPLADSEN. By ELSE ROESDAHL, with contributions by ELSE ØSTERGÅRD and PETER WAGNER. *Nordiske fortidsminder, serie B — in quarto, bind 4. I kommission hos Herm. H. J. Lyng og Søn*. København, 1977. 233 pp.

Ever since the excavation and publication in 1948 of *Trelleborg* by Poul Nørlund, controversy has raged around the Danish Viking age camps, four of which are known: *Trelleborg*, *Aggersborg*, *Nonnebakken* and *Fyrkat*. The present publication is the first full-scale archaeological work to be devoted to a single camp since *Trelleborg*, and it has done nothing to lessen the controversy, indeed it may be said to have both nurtured and extended it. The four camps are each circular, laid out with great geometric precision with encircling ditch and timber-laced rampart. The interiors are divided into four quarters by two roads which span the diameters of the camps and cross at right angles. Each quarter contains four (in *Aggersborg*, twelve) symmetrically arranged buildings of the so-called 'Trelleborg type' (outlined by curved long walls, the interior divided into three by transverse partitions). There are also a handful of smaller, rectangular buildings in more random positions, but in spite of this the overall impression of the camps is one of 'military precision'. It was this overall impression that led Nørlund to call *Trelleborg* a 'fort' and to suggest that it and the other sites were erected as barracks to house the armies of Svend Forkbeard before their attacks on England at the turn of the 10th century. Other scholars followed this line, but more have (recently) questioned it. What evidence is there that the sites were forts, let alone barracks? Can they be attributed to the reign of Svend Forkbeard? How long were they occupied? A review is not the place to pose all the questions or to pursue all the arguments; suffice it to say that such arguments and questions form the core of the discussion which is a large part of the present publication. These two volumes on *Fyrkat* are devoted to the camp and settlement (I) and the small finds and cemetery (II). In the first volume Olaf Olsen

and Holger Schmidt trace the history of excavations on the site (begun by C. G. Schultz who died in 1958); the technique of excavation pursued by his successor, Olaf Olsen; the construction of the rampart; the buildings; and the function of the camp. The second volume describes the finds from the cemetery beside the camp and those from within the camp itself. Else Roesdahl, the author of volume II, attempts to define the function of Fyrkat on the basis of the small finds, founding her thesis largely on the distribution of different types of finds (whetstones, iron slag, crucibles, etc.) within the individual buildings. Interestingly, the authors of the two volumes come to different conclusions. Olaf Olsen tends towards the 'fort' and 'barrack' theory and Svend Forkbeard (although he does say 'we must, all the same, avoid associating the forts too rigidly with Svend Forkbeard and the raids on England'). Else Roesdahl associates Fyrkat and the other camps with Harald Bluetooth rather than Svend, and suggests that they were strong points built by the king as centres of authority and could have served as places from which to control the local population, as refuges, as centres for the collection of taxes and for the administration of law in the area, among other things. Both authors agree that Fyrkat and the rest were strongholds, on other points they agree to differ. Here we have the stuff of continuing controversy; these authors will shortly publish the camp of Aggersborg — will their conclusions there be the same? We await that publication in the hope that there, too, differences of opinion will be allowed to flourish. *Fyrkat* also contains much important evidence and discussion on dating, on the reconstruction of the buildings, and (in Hans Helbæk's contribution) on the grain (particularly rye) discovered in the camp. All aspects are dealt with thoroughly and are of prime importance in any attempt at understanding Denmark in the Viking age. Both volumes are excellently produced, clearly and lavishly illustrated and with long and detailed English summaries. They contain much invaluable information and make lively reading. No-one interested in the Vikings, or in the processes of modern archaeological scholarship, should miss them.

HELEN CLARKE

VIKING AGE YORK AND THE NORTH. Edited by R. A. HALL. *Research report no 27. The Council for British Archaeology*. London, 1978. iv+73 pp.

This book is made up of papers read at the Fourth York Archaeological Weekend held in the November of 1976, supplemented by several papers on environmental and industrial aspects of Anglo-Scandinavian York revealed through recent excavations. It comprises work by authors whose approaches are historical, art historical, numismatic or archaeological and is therefore an example of the interdisciplinary method of research which today seems to offer the best method of elucidating the obscurities of the early medieval period in England, here specifically the role of York and the North in their Anglo-Scandinavian phase. Historical method is represented by P. H. Sawyer and A. P. Smyth, the former with a succinct and penetrating survey of 'Sources for the history of Viking Northumbria' in which he elaborates, but does not expand, his earlier thesis that only a small number of Scandinavians settled in Yorkshire in the 9th century. Sawyer's view that density of Scandinavian place-names does not necessarily imply density of Scandinavian colonists is rapidly gaining acceptance, and it is useful to have the point underlined once again, in a publication which may have a wider circulation among readers of

other disciplines. A. P. Smyth's attempt to establish an exact chronology for the history of Scandinavian York A.D. 865-956 draws largely on his earlier work, *Scandinavian York and Dublin I* (1975) and should be read in conjunction with M. Dolley's contribution on the coinage of York (pp. 26-31) where the discerning reader may spot not a few contradictions. The most original contributions in this series of papers are inevitably made by archaeologists and their colleagues in the natural sciences. Recent excavations have produced a wealth of evidence for the environment, topography and economy of Anglo-Scandinavian York so that it is at last becoming possible both to draw a map of the urban settlement with some confidence and to relate it to its hinterland (surrounding vegetation, agricultural production, river and land communications, etc.). More graphically, the environmentalists have drawn a 'picture of a town composed of rotting wooden buildings with earth floors covered by decaying vegetation, surrounded by streets and yards filled by pits and middens of even fouler organic waste'. And among all this filth people were making and using the high quality gold, bronze, pewter, jet and amber jewellery, the sophisticated bone and antler combs, the woodwork, the leather and the stone carvings illustrated here. The contrast is astonishing. A somewhat sweeter breath of air blows from Gauber High Pasture, Ribbleshead, where the first Viking age farmstead in England has been discovered and excavated. This group of three rectangular masonry buildings (one dwelling and two outbuildings) appears to be of the type of isolated farmstead known from Viking age Norway and up to now not well documented in the British Isles. Excavations in York and Lincoln (not unfortunately included within the terms of reference of this publication) during the past decade have begun to illuminate the obscurity of urban life in Viking age England; it is to be hoped that other excavations of the Ribbleshead type will do as much for the equally obscure rural life of the Vikings in England.

HELEN CLARKE

SANCTA BIRGITTA REVELACIONES BOOK I WITH MAGISTER MATHIAS' PROLOGUE. Edited by CARL-GUSTAF UNDHAGEN. *Samlingar utgivna av Svenska Fornskrifts-sällskapet, ser. 2. Latinska skrifter, band VII:1. Almqvist & Wiksell. Uppsala, 1978. xxxii+511 pp.*

Nearly thirty years ago a modern edition was projected of the *Revelations* of St. Birgitta of Sweden. Since then, series 2 of the *Samlingar* has given us five volumes of *Revelations*-material (the *Reuelaciones extrauagantes*, edited by Lennart Hollman, Books V and VII, edited by Birger Bergh, and the *Sermo angelicus* and *Regula salvatoris*, edited by Sten Eklund). None, however, can rival the present work in fullness and importance.

The work consists of a critical edition, from sixty-nine manuscripts, of Book I of the *Revelations*, together with an earlier work in defence of the saint by Mathias of Linköping. This earlier work occurs fittingly, in the edition, at the head of the text: the first editors of the whole work so presented it, as a prologue to Book I and to the whole work (p. 38). Undhagen devotes a section of his introduction (pp. 38-50) to this prologue, but otherwise he avoids speculating about any form which Book I might have had prior to that in the earliest redactions: and rightly so, because very little is known about the book before that time. He has much more to say (pp. 1-37) about the labours of those first editors, which have left such fascinating and

perplexing traces in the many manuscript copies, and early printings, of the work. In particular, he shows how the earliest edition was subject, on four later occasions, to major revision. This splendidly lucid account of the principal stages through which the text passed on its way to the authoritative 1492 printing by Ghotan of Lübeck is supplemented by a full description of many of the manuscripts used (pp. 50-224). Among the many important matters here raised, I would draw attention to the following: (1) a fascinating account of scribal adaptation and revision. Scribes of the γ and δ traditions seem most regularly to have tampered with their received texts (pp. 56 and n. 42, 61, 85-92, 138). At the same time, we see other scribes only too well aware of the difficulties their practices were making for the reader who wanted the authoritative text of the first editor (pp. 101-2); (2) the suggestive detail that several manuscripts — hC1, and possibly Ay, from Undhagen's list — were composed in two stages, viz. Books I-IV and Books V-VIII (pp. 77 and n. 118, 132-3, 148-9, 175-6, 180: to this list we ought also, probably, to add Merton College Oxford 215, though Undhagen's cursory note of this manuscript, pp. 193-4, fails to observe irregularities of quiring and rubrication in it, at the end of Book IV and the beginning of Book V, which would justify such a conclusion). Lastly, the edition has a very detailed commentary; a glossary and other indices (pp. 442-511), the latter including an index of proper names which cross-references the names *Birgitta*, *Christus* and *Maria* as thoroughly as did the editors of the Ghotan printing (pp. 475-7); and an extensive bibliography (pp. xi-xxx).

In all important respects, then, the work represents an impressive contribution to that ongoing tradition of Birgittine textual scholarship, to which the labours of earlier editors bear such eloquent witness. Undhagen very properly acknowledges debts to earlier writings in the tradition (pp. v-vi), and describes some manuscripts in greater detail than others because of the relevance of this fuller commentary to '[future] editions of other books of Birgitta's *Revelations*' (p. 96). Reference to traditions of Birgittine scholarship, however, confronts writer and reader with a probably insoluble problem. Sometimes it seems as if Undhagen is presupposing total familiarity with the traditions as the condition of reading his book. An early footnote (p. 4, n. 23) warns us of the need to have read 'at least some of the considerable literature on Birgitta' and refers us to the writings of *thirty-three* scholars! The commentary presents its material in too compressed a form for easy use: Undhagen's abbreviations are not all explained in his bibliography (on p. xxxii of which he sends us to other works for their elucidation); reference to the *Revelations* by book and chapter alone denies the reader information unless he also has access to a printed edition. The interpretation of the apparatus is similarly difficult. In printing the text, Undhagen chose MS. Balliol Oxford 225 (O) as the sole representative of the ϵ group of manuscripts, a group including all but one of the English manuscripts of the Latin, and therefore of special interest for British readers of the *Revelations*; as a consequence, the apparatus presents, as errors of O, errors peculiar to it (e.g. p. 293, l. 5) and common to ϵ (e.g. pp. 246, l. 30, and 335, l. 77). For that matter, the apparatus sometimes records a misleading unanimity of readings. Thus at p. 428, l. 106, the β_2 error probably was *immunde*, as recorded in the apparatus, but at least three β_2 manuscripts, I, L and F^a of Undhagen's list, share the correct reading *in mundo* with the listed β_2 manuscript m, and are not so recorded in the apparatus. Yet if Undhagen has sometimes been too chary of space, at others he has been positively prodigal with it. In the glossary, for instance, the entry for *succrescere*, a word which has already received attention in the commentary on p. 346, l. 22, is glossed by three Latin, five English and three Swedish equivalents

(p. 471). Similarly, the footnotes contain much unnecessary cross-referencing and repetition of detail.

Though these criticisms bear, in the main, on the methods of the work, there are also faults to find with its substance. Most importantly, Undhagen has failed to take account of two manuscripts containing Book I, viz Magdalen College Oxford 77 (Books I.i-II.xix) and Trinity College Cambridge 0.7.29 (Book I. i-li). Their omission is the more startling in a work which lays such claim to comprehensiveness, and whose publication was delayed for ten years so that nine newly-discovered manuscripts could be taken into account. Had Undhagen known of these manuscripts, he would have found that the first belongs to ϵ by virtue of a shared error at p. 436, l. 60. An error shared with at least two β_1 manuscripts at p. 379, l. 28 — they are A and V from his list, though he does not record A's reading in the apparatus — probably links the Trinity manuscript with β_1 .

Surprising, too, is Undhagen's occasional neglect of the secondary sources he has culled so thoroughly. When he writes that the earliest redaction of the whole text, by Alphonse of Jaen, had '31 or 32 ch[apters]' in Book VII (p. 17), he has overlooked the many references to that book, in Alphonse's testimony in the saint's canonization process, which clearly show that for Alphonse, and so, presumably, in his redaction, Book VII had thirty-two chapters (see *Acta et processus canonizationis Beate Birgitte*, ed. I. Collijn (1924-31), pp. 373, 375, 384-6). Again, an edition of selected revelations to the popes of the time, called the *tractatus*, and probably the work of Alphonse, was in circulation by 30th January, 1380, as Undhagen shows (p. 23 and n. 93). He seems not to have noticed that Alphonse had not published the work at the time of his testimony, 16th September, 1379, for at that time he refers to the revelations incorporated in the *tractatus* only as single revelations and not as a composite work (see *Acta et processus*, ed. Collijn, p. 372).

It would not do, though, to end this review with disagreement. Undhagen's important work has added very considerably to the serious study of the *Revelations*, and deserves to reach as wide an audience as possible.

ROGER ELLIS

GRIPLA II Editor: JÓNAS KRISTJÁNSSON. *Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, rit 16. Stofnun Árna Magnússonar*. Reykjavík, 1977. 213 pp.

GRIPLA III. Editor: JÓNAS KRISTJÁNSSON. *Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, rit 18. Stofnun Árna Magnússonar*. Reykjavík, 1979. 249 pp.

The scholar in Old Norse studies may feel there are already enough journals in that field, but it is both natural and right that *Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi*, being one of the major centres of research, should have its own journal, reflecting and reporting on work currently being done there. As the field covered at *Árnastofnun* could best be described as Icelandic studies in general, the range of *Gripla* is wide, and some of the articles may seem esoteric to the foreign scholar interested mainly in medieval Norse studies. Thus, volume II contains two descriptive studies of Modern Icelandic, one by Jón Friðjónsson on the accusative and infinitive construction, and one by Janez Orešnik's 'Modern Icelandic u-umlaut from the descriptive point of view', while volume III contains a historical investigation by Halldór Halldórsson into the origins of the post-medieval word

brúsi meaning 'jug'. Volume III also contains several articles more immediately relevant to the study of the history and literature of post-medieval Iceland.

Naturally, there is also plenty to interest the Old Norse scholar in *Gripla*. Each of the volumes reviewed has at least one article which makes an important contribution to the study of Old Norse literature. In volume II this is Sverrir Tómasson's 'Hvenær var Tristrams sögu snúð?' The article is an example of the current emphasis in Old Norse scholarship on examining the preservation of a text as well as the text itself. Sverrir Tómasson discusses the famous 'preface' to *Tristrams saga* as it is written in the two 17th century paper manuscripts which preserve it (and not as it is usually known from Eugen Kölbing's slightly archaised form printed in his edition of the saga), in order to answer two questions: (1) Can the passage really be called a 'preface'? And (2) is the passage a reliable source for literary history? He examines such passages of authorial comment in various medieval texts, including other *riddarasögur*, and finds that they fall into two main types. One is the preface, or exordium, which usually contains recognizable rhetorical devices, such as the modesty topos, and accounts for the contents of the following work. The type of information given in the *Tristrams saga* passage, when and by whom the translation was made, and who commissioned it, is usually found in the other type of passage, which should be called a title, or a colophon if it occurs at the end of the text. Many of these titles and colophons occur only in certain manuscripts of the text, and the information in them should not be trusted without supporting evidence. While historical evidence gives independent support for the fact that *riddarasögur* were translated at the 13th century Norwegian court, Sverrir Tómasson shows that the 'preface' to *Tristrams saga* does not go back to this time, but is an imitation of 16th century book-titles. Nevertheless, it is probably based on information in the medieval text, since it is unlikely that the scribe would have invented the name of brother Robert. Sverrir Tómasson's conclusion is that, although *Tristrams saga* was translated at the court of Hákon Hákonarson, the saga-text we have from the paper manuscripts is probably not representative of that translation. It is to be hoped that more scholars will pay close attention to the preservation of medieval texts, as Sverrir Tómasson has done, and investigate the differences between manuscripts from different periods. Unfortunately, the provocative title of this article leads to a slightly disappointing conclusion. We are assured that *Tristrams saga* was translated in 1226 by brother Robert, which we already knew. Being told that the text of *Tristrams saga* we have is actually a later version, is frustrating until we are also told how it differs from that of brother Robert.

The major article in *Gripla* III is Guðni Kolbeinsson's and Jónas Kristjánsson's 'Gerðir Gíslasögu'. Again, we are given a careful, well-documented textual analysis which establishes the longer S-redaction of *Gíslasaga*, represented by paper copies of a lost vellum, as closer to the original than the shorter redactions in AM 445 c I 4to and AM 556 a 4to. Their conclusions fall in line with the current view among scholars that it was easier to shorten a saga than to lengthen it with interpolations, and that a longer version is usually closer to the original.

Gíslasaga is something of a *leitmotiv* in *Gripla* III, which contains three other articles on it. Alan J. Berger and Hermann Pálsson support the conclusion that the longer text of the saga is the most reliable, the former by a 'moral' interpretation of the texts, and the latter by an examination of the two short speeches attributed to Vésteinn. Finn Hansen examines a case of inappropriate punctuation in the *Íslenzk fornrit* edition of the saga, and corrects it with reference to Old Icelandic

syntax. Like these three articles, most of the contributions to *Gripla* III are notes, concentrating on one or two points. A more comprehensive piece on 'Old Norse Court Poetry' by Sigrún Davíðsdóttir is too general to be illuminating. Examining the 'more fundamental questions of purpose, transmission and historical value' of court poetry should be done in the context of a longer and more detailed study, and preferably with reference to primary sources. Her study is based on secondary sources, and extensive but general comparisons with court poetry in a variety of countries and periods.

One of the more useful functions of *Gripla* will obviously be to continue publishing mini-editions. In the volumes reviewed, these are Davíð Erlingsson's edition and discussion of *Callinius saga* and *Callinius rímur* in *Gripla* II, Anthony Faulkes's reconstruction of the prologue of the *Snorra Edda*, and Sveinbjörn Rafnsson's edition of Jón Halldórsson's retelling of the first part of *Heiðarvíga saga* in *Gripla* III.

Although some of the articles printed in *Gripla* can only be interesting to a localized Icelandic audience, or to foreign scholars with an exhaustive specialist knowledge of Icelandic studies, the journal must still be intended for foreign scholars with a more general interest in Icelandic studies, particularly medieval literature, as well. It is therefore surprising to find an inconsistent policy of providing English summaries. Most of the Icelandic articles in volume II have summaries. In *Gripla* III there are some, but they peter out halfway through, and are lacking for just those articles which might be of most interest to the student of medieval literature who is not an Icelandic specialist. Hermann Pálsson's articles on *Gíslasaga* and the disguise-motif in *Hallfreðar saga* may have been thought too short for a resumé, but surely Guðni Kolbeinsson's and Jónas Kristjánsson's major study of the redactions of *Gíslasaga* deserves an English summary?

Gripla is handsomely produced with clear legible type. The journal is all the more useful in that each volume contains an index to the manuscripts cited, and a first-line index, as well as a general index. This could be profitably adopted by other journals. Misprints are few, although it is frustrating to find a footnote (5) on page 25 of *Gripla* III which should be on page 26.

JUDITH JESCH

VORZEITKUNDE. MÜNDLICHES ERZÄHLEN UND ÜBERLIEFERN IM MITTELALTERLICHEN SKANDINAVIEN NACH DEM ZEUGNIS VON FORNALDARSAGA UND EDDISCHER DICHTUNG. By PETER BUCHHOLZ. *Skandinavistische Studien. Beiträge zur Sprache, Literatur und Kultur der nordischen Länder, Band 13.* Karl Wachholtz Verlag, Neumünster, 1980. 204 pp.

This slim volume has a bibliography of 'sekundärliteratur' comprising 741 works. This list provides a useful reference tool for all who are interested, not only in *fornaldarsögur*, but in comparative mythology, medieval epic literature in a variety of languages, Scandinavian folklore and general folklore theory. It is particularly useful as an introduction to work being done in German in these fields. Buchholz's 463 footnotes with frequent references to the items in the bibliography show that the list is long not only because of his desire for completeness, but because these works are the collective foundation of his study. The reviewer who is not as widely read feels less than qualified to judge the course of his argument. Partly for this

reason, this review will concentrate on the theoretical ramifications of this argument rather than its details.

The questions to be answered in Buchholz's work are presented in the first paragraph: 'In welchen Formen vollzogen sich Erzählen und Überliefern im mittelalterlichen Skandinavien? Wie sah die wikingerzeitliche und mittelalterliche skandinavische Gesellschaft Vergangenheit und Tradition?' (p. 9). It is an ambitious project for 121 pages. If the result seems superficial, it is not surprising, as his comparative method encompasses material from a fairly wide range of time and space, going beyond northern Europe to nineteenth-century Chinese novels, Siberian beliefs and Georgian mythological sagas. This approach can be defended. Buchholz is investigating certain cultural activities (oral tradition, world view) which have left no direct record. Thus, medieval Norse literature, which may be, at best, an imperfect reflection of these cultural activities, cannot by itself provide the necessary insights. It must be balanced by comparative material, which, although far from medieval Scandinavia in time and space, at least has the virtue of being a direct record of the cultural activities in question. However, such a method must be used with care, and it is especially important to have the right approach to the problem. Thus, while Buchholz's first goal seems a proper one, if a bit ambitious, the second one suggests doubts immediately. Can 'wikingerzeitlich' and 'mittelalterlich' be coupled together without further ado, without at least an explanation of the extent to which Old Norse literature reflects Viking Age conditions? What exactly does he mean by 'skandinavische Gesellschaft' when his sources are almost exclusively West Norse? Buchholz clearly has ethnological interests (we note that he wrote a dissertation on 'Schamanistische Züge in der altisländische Überlieferung'), and the present work also has a bias toward extracting ethnological information from literary texts. His training, however, is as a philologist, and his 'Quellengrundlagen' for this study are '... die sogenannten Fornaldarsögur . . . die Edda und ausgewähltes, teils mittelalterliches, teils rezentes Vergleichsmaterial' (p. 9). There is an old tradition of obtaining various types of historical information from literary texts, and there is no reason why it should not be done. But it should be done on the basis of a more thorough investigation of the literary texts than Buchholz has done. Within the limits of his 'Quellengrundlagen', Buchholz seems to have picked and chosen his examples with not enough regard to their place and function in the text, their relationship (possibly by direct derivation) to other texts, and other such 'philological' problems. Of course he is not ignorant of such problems. In a section on 'Der Schatzhüter im Grabhügel' (pp. 105-9), the main example is a long quotation from 'der späten Hrómundar s. Gripssonar'. But he does not consider the value or nature of the information about 'wikingerzeitliche und mittelalterliche skandinavische Gesellschaft' provided by a seventeenth-century saga based on *rímur* possibly based on a lost *fornaldarsaga* of Hrómundr Gripsson. It might not make any difference to his conclusions, but it should be discussed.

Buchholz's choice of 'Quellengrundlagen' might also have benefited from some further thought on medieval Norse literature as a whole. He sometimes quotes from *Íslendingasögur* and *konungasögur* as 'Vergleichsmaterial', but selectively, and only when they reinforce whatever point he is making (e.g. p. 138, n. 181 and p. 139, n. 201). Thus, he seems to have acknowledged, without really discussing it, that *Íslendingasögur* and *konungasögur*, although in many ways different from *fornaldarsögur*, nevertheless have quite a lot in common with them, especially in certain motifs. (Something like *Færeyinga saga* also overlaps with the *fornaldarsögur*). Why then, is Buchholz's study officially concerned with only *fornaldarsögur*

and Eddaic poetry? At the same time, his selection of *fornaldarsögur* seems arbitrary, without any real theoretical analysis of the term or explanation of the selection. He presents a historical account of how the term has been used, and what alternatives have been proposed for it. Then, without really presenting his own ideas, he comes up with the definition of 'Fornaldarsaga als isländischer, mittelalterlicher Form skandinavischer Heldensage' (p. 19). This is clearly true of *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, or *Völsunga saga*, but we have to assume Buchholz also meant it to include such as *Adonias saga* and *Álaflekks saga* which head his bibliography. In footnote 38 (p. 126), he writes: 'Mit Schier rechne ich auch die Abenteuer- oder Märchensagas zu den Fas'. Kurt Schier (*Sagaliteratur*, 1970, p. 72) makes a distinction between 'die jüngere *Fornaldarsögur*' and 'die *Märchensagas*', although this distinction is 'fließend'. Many of Schier's 'Märchensagas' appear in Buchholz's bibliography of texts cited. The question is, why Buchholz treats such an amorphous group of sagas together, while formally excluding from his sources the *konungasögur* and *Íslendingasögur* which also contain the motifs he is interested in?

Anyone who has tried to work with genre classification in saga-literature soon discovers that the more she tries to classify sagas into their respective genres, the more she becomes aware of the similarities between them, in both style and content. Having acknowledged these similarities, however, it is important to delineate the dissimilarities which characterize both individual sagas and particular genres. Of course it is difficult, if not impossible, to make watertight categories, but the attempt to do so teaches us a lot about the literature we are trying to classify. Buchholz seems to have stopped at the stage of discovering the similarities, which are then universals, at least in the culture in question, and therefore reflect some cultural realities: the importance of eloquence in an oral society, the crystallization of tales around a person, place or thing, shamanistic qualities of the hero, grave-robbing, and the like. But his wide-ranging 'Vergleichsmaterial' shows that many of these are genuine universals, with counterparts in other cultures. This can be a thrilling discovery. Personally, I find it more interesting to distil these universals, and go back to the literary corpus to find out what is time- and culture-specific to it, in the contents of the individual texts, and in the structure of the literature as a whole. This will not only lead us to an understanding of literature as an expression of the society in which it arose. It can also lead us to the answers to the questions Buchholz is asking about narration, tradition and the past, in the view of the medieval Scandinavians. He is right that it is important to tackle the problem of the oral 'literature' that existed before the medieval Norse literature we know from Icelandic manuscripts. It is important if only because it must have had some influence on the later literature, and we want to know what this influence was, on which sections of the later literature did it act, and to what extent. In such a project, the methodologies of folklore and philology could profitably be combined, and the knowledge of someone as widely-read as Buchholz would be a good foundation. Although I have disagreed with his approach to the problem, I approve of his aims. Among all the scholars busy with the minutiae of textual problems, there is certainly room for one like Buchholz, who lifts our gazes from the ground to the larger vistas which are the real reasons for studying the humanities.

ÍVENS SAGA. Edited by FOSTER W. BLAISDELL. *Editiones Arnarnagnæanæ, series B, vol. 18. C. A. Reitzels Boghandel A/S. Copenhagen, 1979. clvi+235 pp.*

STRENGLEIKAR AN OLD NORSE TRANSLATION OF TWENTY-ONE OLD FRENCH LAIS. Edited by ROBERT COOK and MATTIAS TVEITANE. *Norrøne tekster, nr. 3. Norsk Historisk Kjeldeskrift-Institutt. Oslo, 1979. xxxviii+292 pp.*

In 1972 Jónas Kristjánsson read a paper at a colloquium in Liège, in which he called for new editions of Old Norse 'romantic' literary texts, including those originally translated from foreign sources ('Text editions of the Romantic sagas', *Les relations littéraires franco-scandinaves au moyen-âge*, Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de L'Université de Liège, fascicule CCVIII, 1975). At the time, he mentioned both works at present under review, then in preparation, commending such admirable projects. In defining the purpose and optimum format for the desired editions, Jónas provoked some discussion. He himself considers (p. 276) that 'the edition of a text unaccompanied by wider research, apart from description of manuscripts, is like a skeleton without flesh.' In the event, Blaisdell has produced just such a 'fleshless' edition of *Ívens saga*, as vol. 18 in Series B of *Editiones Arnarnagnæanæ*. It comprises, besides details of the paper copies, complete descriptions of the three main manuscripts (Holm 6, 4to, vellum, early 15th century; AM 489, 4to, vellum, c. 1450; and Holm 46, fol., paper, 1690), the three being printed in full on split pages; exhaustive comment on the orthography and language of all the manuscripts; and, at the end, an English translation of the two vellum manuscripts (with variants from Holm 46, fol.) whose (p. 150) 'intent is to provide a close control of the unnormalized text, especially for those who may not be too familiar with [the] orthography,' and which 'consequently makes *no* pretence at any literary merit.' There is a bibliography so select as to deserve the epithet exclusive; but, apart from a note of W. Foerster's edition of Chrétien's *Yvain (Le Chevalier au Lion) (Der Löwenritter. Christian von Troyes sämtliche erhaltene Werke, vol. 2 (1887; reprint 1965))*, next to no reference to the French original or its relationship to the Old Norse version is made. However, as skeletons go, this one appears robust, and well-proportioned; though, of course, dry.

Lönnroth, also at Liège in 1972, proposed (p. 287), 'normalized editions [of the Old Norse romances] . . . with a parallel translation . . . plus an introduction dealing primarily with the literary and historical problems of the text'; he suggested collaboration between Old Norse and Romance scholars in such work. Halvorsen applauded these principles as well as those of Jónas; but thought (p. 287) 'the literary notes . . . should be published independently,' since 'it seldom happens that a good text editor is also necessarily a good literary historian.' Tveitane and Cook have in their *Strengleikar* aimed to avoid pitfalls and achieve the best of both worlds by combining talents. In this case, the textual apparatus has already been covered in Tveitane's *Om språkform og forelegg i Strengleikar* (1973) and his introductory chapter to the 1972 facsimile edition of *Elis saga, Strengleikar and other texts*; so although there is a brief description of De la Gardie, 4-7 and AM. 666 b, 4to, the manuscripts — once forming a single codex, written in south-western Norway c. 1270 — from which the text is taken, readers are referred to the above works and Meissner's *Die Strengleikar* (1902) for detailed discussion of all physical, orthographical and linguistic points. The new edition offers an unnormalized text; an English translation on (almost!) facing pages (p. xxxiii) 'intended as a reliable reflection of the Norse texts for those whose command of the Old Norse is slight', 'favoring accuracy above elegance' though 'an attempt is also made to reproduce the alliterative patterns of the original'; and a 'General introduction' as well as

particular introductions and notes to the individual lays, informative and rich in bibliographical references relevant to both the Old Norse and Old French texts. The main 'Bibliography' is select; basic for the French side, more detailed for the Old Norse; and up-to-date. The projected structure of the book was undermined by the appearance in 1976 of P. M. O'Hara Tobin's edition, *Lais anonymes des XII^e et XIII^e siècles*, including the traceable Old French lays not taken from 'Marie de France' which appear as Old Norse *Strengleikar*. The Romance scholar Poul Skårup of Aarhus had originally prepared these French texts for print in collaboration with Tveitane & Cook, but by 1979 it was felt that their publication in the volume would now be *de trop* (p. xxxii). This is a pity, because the book would have been more complete had the anonymous French poems and indeed 'Marie's' lays, formed part of it: as it is, readers must rely on the editors' choice of important details from the French originals, for comparison with the Old Norse. The value of both the editions of *Ívens saga* and *Strengleikar* would have been enhanced by the marginal addition in appropriate places even of the page- and/or line-numbers to the standard editions cited, of the corresponding French texts — enhanced, that is, for anyone with comparative interests. Where both editions, as well as the Liège colloquium, fail in incisiveness and agreement, is in a definition not only of the exact areas properly to be covered by such editions, but also of the readership catered for by them. Blaisdell says (p. xiii): 'there is a twofold need for a new edition [of *Ívens saga*]: the saga represents an important item in medieval European Arthurian literature, and the existing editions are outdated'; Tveitane (p. xxxi) that: 'it is instructive . . . to compare the Old Norse *Strengleikar* with their Old French originals (or, from the point of view of Romance scholars, the other way around);' and ('Preface') 'the only previous edition . . . has been out of print and unobtainable for a long time.' Both Blaisdell and Tveitane thus suggest that they are offering the Norse versions to medievalists as well as Old Norse scholars: of recent years it has become apparent that Old Norse works of this kind preserve useful information about the manuscript-traditions of the French texts as well as illuminating the development of literary taste in the North, and it is clear that the material is therefore of interest to both Norse and Romance scholars. Blaisdell nonetheless has evidently decided that his volume is not the place for the minute 'scholarly examination of the work itself, its historical and literary significance, its roots in the author's times and links with European culture' recommended by Jónas Kristjánsson (p. 275) as essential components of editions intended for such general use; and Tveitane and Cook, in opting to provide this kind of examination, have on the other hand represented only by reference to other works the 'complete textual apparatus' regarded by Jónas as equally indispensable within one volume. Blaisdell has seen the usefulness of a translation into English as the better alternative to a normalized text, since it fulfils most of the functions of the latter whilst also catering for scholars and students unable to read Old Norse; his English makes no claim to represent the *style* of his original, which in any case varies between manuscripts and is on the whole more 'penny plain' than 'twopence coloured'. Cook's translation is likewise useful as a check on the unnormalized Old Norse text; but he has in addition set himself the harder task of reflecting his original reliably, and the author or authors of *Strengleikar* happened to produce a highly artistic prose, embellished by the most sonorous and mellifluous ornaments of a language rich in alliterative diction. Often Cook succeeds well in rendering this decorative style accurately and happily, as e.g. (p. 120) *með þessum hætti snæriz huggan hans i harm. Gleðe hans i grat. leicr hans i mislican. ast hans i angr sæmd hans i sorg. atgerð hans til enskis. afl hans i*

vmát. Sialfr hann i sottar kvöl ok kvein: (p. 121) 'in this fashion his comfort turned to care, his gladness into groans, his play into displeasure, his love into longing, his dignity into dejection, his accomplishments to emptiness, his power into puniness, his very self into the tortures and trials of sickness'; but sometimes in aiming for alliteration, he lights upon egregiously contrived English phrases which scarcely echo the graceful cadences of his original, e.g. (p. 130) *eigi i ollvm heiminnv fanz hennar maki at fegrð ok friðleic:* (p. 131) 'in all the world there was no match for her in prettiness and pulchritude' (perhaps rather: 'nowhere in the wide world was there to be found her peer for fairness and fineness'); and the overall harmony is occasionally marred by the anomalous appearance of too modern-sounding an idiom, where another translation might have been used without archaism — (p. 122) *sjónhverfing* becomes (p. 123) 'optical illusion' when 'vision' or 'marvel' would fit a medieval context better; (p. 238) *blöðgáðozc oll reckiuklæden hennar af blöðras hans,* is (p. 239) 'all her bedlinen was stained with blood from his hemorrhage', when 'stained with the streaming of his blood' seems as accurate and more appropriate. In the case of *Strengleikar*, it would appear better, if aiming at a readership with no knowledge of Norse, to represent faithfully the general elegance of the style, with proper attention to linguistic structure, than to retain alliteration at the expense of harmony, or correctness without fitness. *Sed de gustibus non est disputandum*, and Cook claims accuracy not polish for his work. Unfortunately, the accuracy is not absolutely consistent: *pell*, ('costly stuff') is usually rendered just as 'cloth', so that an infelicity like (p. 58) *fort pell*, (p. 59) 'old cloth', arises in the context of a marriage-bed. Likewise *silfr klæde* (p. 238) in the evocative *J þeirre borg varo hus ok hallir ok turnar sva skinannde sem silfr klæde vére* does not mean (p. 239) 'In this city were houses and halls and towers shining as though they were silver garments', but '. . . as though (they were) cloth of silver' (the edited French text has *tute d'argent* merely; 'Yonec' line 363, *Les Lais de Marie de France*, ed. Jean Rychner, 1966). However, these details stand out dark only by virtue of the clarity of their environment, one of whose excellent features is the English version provided of the parts missing from *Strengleikar*, taken from the French — including *Leikaralioð*, evidently excised from the Old Norse manuscript as being too naughty for gentle ears or eyes. The reconstruction of the texts of those lays preserved in the fragment AM 666b, 4to is particularly admirable, though would be more useful if the layout of the English version, (supplemented from the French text,) corresponded line for line with the Old Norse fragments. Again, because of the editors' habitual thoroughness in noting interesting points of comparison between the Old French originals and the Old Norse versions, an instance of remissness in *Grelent* (p. 285) is striking: *ric ast* is there rendered 'fine love', though *ricr* is most often translated by 'splendid'. From the translation, the medievalist might expect to find *fyn amors* in the French, a specialized phrase for which the Old Norse would be of particular interest; but he has to go to l. 79 of the Old French text to discover *loiax druerie*, or l. 90 for *buen amors* (ed. P. M. O'Hara Tobin, 1976): there is no remark in the notes. Likewise in Blaisdell's *Ívens saga*, where reference is not in general specifically made to Chrétien's *Chevalier au Lion*, there are matters of interest to both Old Norse and French scholars which would benefit even from brief remarks. On p. 31 (B): *hallar veggir uoru allir steindir med barotum steinum huerskonar litum ok brendu gulli lagt*, translated (p. 165) 'the walls of the hall were all stained with wavy (?) stains (set with wavy stones?) of every kind of color and laid with pure gold,' is not an easily understood passage in the Old Norse. Nor is it, in fact, in the French: the lines (ed. T. B. W. Reid, 1942, after Foerster 1887) (ll. 964-7): *Remest*

dedanz la sale anclos / Qui tote estoit celee a clos / Dorez, et peintes les meisieres / De beune oeuvre e de colors chieres, contain apparently the first recorded occurrence of the word *celee* (ms. H: *cielee*; P: *chelee*; F/G: *celee*), found otherwise at l. 4302 of the Anglo-Norman *Alexander* and l. 2709 of *Horn*; in *Ívens saga* translated by Old Norse *barotum*, a strange word, which Blaisdell takes to derive from *bára*, 'a wave'. The French word *celee* is much discussed, and deduced to mean 'with carved or panelled ceiling' — probably from *cælum*, late Latin 'vaulted ceiling'. The Old Norse translation would surely be of interest to those puzzled by the French, and *vice-versa*. Evidently Lönnroth's plan of co-operation on volumes like these between Old French and Old Norse scholars is desirable. As it is, editors like Blaisdell understandably refuse to step beyond the boundaries of their special sphere of competence into the field of Romance Scholarship; thus leaving their work unfinished, according to Jónas (p. 275): 'the task of scholarship is no more than half done by the making of a good edition; the production of 'a good text'. Yet another obligation is to provide a scholarly explanation of the work itself, its historical and philological significance; . . . to examine its literary significance, discover its roots in the author's times, its links with European culture.' Yet editors like Tveitane & Cook risk, in their desire to meet such an obligation, a degree of simplification which may be injudicious if their edition is aimed at students and other innocents. Page xvi carries the unsupported remark, 'Apart from the *Strengleikar* collection, each of the translated works mentioned above [i.e. *Tristrams saga*, *Elis saga*, *Ívens saga* and *Mottuls saga*, p. xv] is the work of one single French author, and apparently in each case one single person (e.g. bróðir Robert) is responsible for the Old Norse translation.' This is the exception to the editors' general rule of extreme caution in expressing opinions; but it is rather a controversial statement to set before the inexperienced as fact. And yet, in a 'General introduction' intended to cover basic ground for readers perhaps deeply learned in one culture but quite ignorant of another, it may be hard to avoid such statements. In conclusion: the editing and retranslating of the 'translated' Romantic sagas is a task of particular difficulty, involving special hazards and problems. Blaisdell, and Tveitane & Cook, tackle the assignment courageously: the former offers an upstanding polished and useful skeleton whose flesh must alas be sought elsewhere; the latter, something of the sea-urchin type: colourful and attractive when approached aright, but potentially treacherous: whose skeleton is to be found (at least partially) outside its body. Both editions are most welcome for the convenient texts, translations, and notes they bring, of these important works; let us hope they are the harbingers of further, more collaborative, volumes covering similar material.

MAUREEN THOMAS

SKALDENDICHTUNG. EINE EINFÜHRUNG. By KLAUS VON SEE. *Artemis Verlag*. München and Zürich, 1980. 108 pp.

The author's stated intention is not to offer an introduction to skaldic poetry in the shape of a summary history or a survey of varieties of skaldic metre (already accessible to German readers in his *Germanische Verskunst*, 1967), but rather to address himself to certain fundamental questions concerning the aesthetics of the poetry and the position of the skald. He considers, for instance, the stylistic differences between Eddaic and skaldic poetry, speculates on why skaldic poetry is strophic and normally attributed to named poets and questions the theory of schools of skalds. The book's twelve chapters also cover such topics as the *skáldasögur*, the

transmission of skaldic poetry and the history of skaldic scholarship (with particular emphasis on the rival approaches of Finnur Jónsson and E. A. Kock).

Von See's method is to illustrate the skalds' art by means of selected verses (accompanied by fairly close German translations) and saga episodes concerning skalds, and to fertilize his comments on these by reference to other Old Norse verse and prose as well as to a wide range of literature, from Ancient Greek and Old Irish to Goethe and modern Icelandic verse, and to literary criticism from Snorri to Borges. There are frequent comparisons between skalds and Provençal troubadours, which are generally illuminating, only occasionally rather forced (as on p. 52). It is from this broad aesthetic and literary-historical perspective that the book primarily derives its value; secondly perhaps from its lucidity of style.

The opening chapter well exemplifies the author's method and the freshness of his approach. It is concerned not with a typical skaldic incident but with a unique one, not with Bragi or Egill or Snorri but with a 'skald amongst troubadours' — Rognvaldr jarl kali at the court of Ermengarde of Narbonne. Using this episode from *Orkneyinga saga* as a framework, von See explains some characteristically skaldic devices in a verse by Rognvaldr, and touches on the problems of authenticity raised by verse quotations in the sagas. He goes on to summarise the metrical features of *dróttkvætt*, and to examine a verse by Rognvaldr's skald Armóðr, both in the light of troubadour poetry.

Von See's individualistic approach makes the book pleasurable and stimulating reading, but it also makes for some incompleteness and incoherence. In so slim a book one could not object to the lack of completeness in reviewing scholarly opinion (for example on the etymology of *drápa* or *skáld* or the origins of the kenning), but the meagre treatment of important aspects of skaldic composition seems to me more serious. For instance, concerning content there is virtually no mention of seafaring descriptions and little indication of the kind of descriptive and lyric motifs which typically make up battle verses, *níðvísur* or panegyrics, whilst concerning style there is little attention to skaldic vocabulary apart from kennings and only incidental glances at the distinctive qualities of major poets such as Sigvatr or Egill. As for the slight incoherence I find in the book, the subject-matter seems at times curiously interleaved in a way perhaps not well suited to an introductory work. Thus chapter IX, containing mythical and socio-political material on the rôle of the skald, might usefully have been combined with chapter VII, on the etymology of *skáld*, but instead is interrupted by chapter VIII, on skaldic panegyric. Similarly, there are two stabs at introducing the *hrynhent* metre (pp. 80 and 84) and the Christianization of the skaldic encomium (chapters VIII and X).

Essential references are included in the main text, and these are supplemented by a seven-page bibliographical appendix which is well selected and full but not over-loaded.

DIANA EDWARDS

THE EUROPEAN MEDIEVAL BALLAD. A SYMPOSIUM. Edited by OTTO HOLZAPFEL in collaboration with JULIA MCGREW and IØRN PIØ. *Proceedings of the Second International Symposium organized by the Centre for the Study of Vernacular Literature in the Middle Ages. Held at Odense University on 21-23 November, 1977. Odense University Press. Odense, 1978. 123 pp.*

At the First Odense International Symposium in 1976 Dr. Iørn Piø appealed for a new approach in Scandinavian ballad-studies, centering in a consideration of the

manuscripts in which the earliest ballad-texts survive so as to establish the relationship between copyist, text and readership¹; he also emphasized the lack of ballads from the Middle Ages, implying that those who devote their attention to hypothetical medieval ballads are chasing a will-o'-the-wisp when they ought to be looking at extant texts in their historical context, relating them to the post-medieval society that recorded and perpetuated them. His paper, with its plea for the removal of the incrustations of romantic prejudice that have long obscured the topic, was a landmark in Scandinavian ballad-studies. The tenacity of these incrustations can be measured, however, in the Proceedings of the Second Odense International Symposium, of which Dr. Piø is co-editor, but to which he is not a contributor. The very title seems to proclaim a viewpoint: not, as one might expect, 'The medieval European ballad', which might imply that some European ballads are medieval and some are not, but instead, *The European medieval ballad*, with its suggestion that all ballads are medieval, and that some are European and others are not. The apprehension with which one thus approaches the volume seems about to be confirmed by its opening paper, which doggedly asserts that Scandinavian ballads are medieval, all the best people have said so, and we should look for the origins of ballad-metre in skaldic verse.

The situation turns out to be not quite as desperate as these first impressions may suggest; the contributors in fact fall into two categories: on the one hand, there are those who accept the phrase 'medieval ballads' as an inevitable lexical collocation having no necessary reference to the Middle Ages (perhaps as a quasi-English equivalent of Grundtvig's unexceptionable term 'gamle Folkeviser'), and who therefore treat it as referring to ballads in general; on the other hand, there are those who interpret their brief more scrupulously and investigate the evidence for the existence in the Middle Ages of ballads as we know them from later tradition.

In the first category there are some useful and informative surveys of ballads in languages that are not widely known (Slovenian and Finnish, for example), and a paper on Breton ballads is of special interest for its account of a recently recorded song that seems to elucidate a notoriously problematic early Welsh poem. The paper on Faroese heroic ballads profits from being restricted to a narrow aspect of the subject, though the suggestion of an English influence seems not very firmly based. The Hungarian contribution ascribes a primary importance to France as a centre from which ballads spread to the rest of Europe; since the supporting evidence for this is in a study published by the author in 1967, to which there is frequent cross-reference, the theory cannot be evaluated on the basis of the present paper: the theory is intrinsically plausible, but is not proved here.

The contributions in the second category are the better part of the symposium: in spite of the predictable nature of the conclusions (it appears that no certain example of a traditional ballad has survived anywhere in Europe from before the sixteenth century, and most were recorded much later), a survey of the evidence need not be a barren exercise. Vésteinn Ólason's study of the Icelandic evidence is an exemplary piece of scrupulous scholarship, and could profitably have served for some of the other contributors as a model of how to set about the task. Metzner's paper on the Cursed Dancers, like the Hungarian contribution, is based on a more extensive study published some years ago, and is indeed largely an attempt to summarize and publicize it, so here too final judgement must depend on the evidence presented in the earlier study. On the basis of the present paper one can only say that Metzner's theory (that the story of the Dancers of Kølbig points to the existence of eleventh-century dramatic dances in which the participants acted

out themes from Germanic heroic legend) is fascinating but not convincingly presented. He argues that the list of names of dancers in an early Latin account is arithmetically correct only if we assume that Gerlev played the role of Theoderic, but this seems to overlook the essential word *ceteri* (i.e. the Latin account states that the leader was Gerleuus and that there were also twelve *others*, whose names are then listed, beginning with Theodericus, a name well-evidenced in use outside heroic legend); moreover, Metzner's attempt to analyze the Song of Canute in the Ely Chronicle as alliterative verse collapses through his evident unfamiliarity with alliterative metre and the incidence of speech-stress.

The papers of W. Edson Richmond and David Buchan are the most penetrating and critical in the collection, and each has a number of sharp things to say on the subject of long-standing but groundless assumptions about ballads: their implication seems to be that we are hardly in a position to make conjectures about hypothetical medieval ballads when we have not yet looked carefully at the ballads recorded over the past three hundred years. Thus Richmond reminds us that the process of oral transmission has been alleged with equal confidence, but with no evidence, both to enhance and to debase ballads, but that in any case less than half the texts in Child can be shown to have circulated in oral tradition; many ballads that have circulated in oral tradition did so as recited poems, not as songs (this applies to Norway as well as Britain and the U.S.A.); and the refrain, regarded by many as a distinguishing feature of the genre, appears in only a third of Child's texts, while in modern British and Scandinavian oral tradition the refrain may often be omitted in an unpredictable and haphazard manner. Buchan makes a number of similar points to demonstrate that ballad-commentators have often been liable to make imprecise and unjustifiable generalizations. These two papers mount a well-informed attack on entrenched positions, and one only regrets that Iørn Piø did not take the opportunity to develop the ideas he had outlined in the previous symposium, for this would have made the whole collection more balanced and better representative of current trends in ballad-research. The conclusion of the whole collection can be inferred without difficulty (it is hinted at in Holzapfel's final summing-up, but might have been spelt out more clearly): there is abundant evidence for the circulation of various kinds of oral narrative in the Middle Ages, including songs and dance-songs, but that any of these varied types resembled any of the varied types of ballad recovered from oral tradition since the sixteenth century cannot be proved, however much later traditional ballads may perpetuate medieval themes or stories. In the past it was tacitly assumed that the traditional ballad is an unchanging entity (hence the confidence that medieval narrative folk-songs must have been identical with those recorded in post-medieval times); the value of this assumption can only be tested by looking at the kind of developments that have taken place during the period in which ballads have been recorded, and this symposium shows that those ballad-scholars who are doing this are least likely to talk about 'medieval ballads'.

P. J. FRANKIS

¹ See *Oral tradition, literary tradition. A symposium*, ed. Hans Bekker-Nielsen, Peter Foote, Andreas Haarder and Hans Frede Nielsen (1977), pp. 69-82. I am here partly paraphrasing a review of this book in *Notes and queries*, 27 (1980), 286-7.

DIE LITERATUR DES NORDENS. By GERD WOLFGANG WEBER. Offprint from NEUES HANDBUCH DER LITERATURWISSENSCHAFT. BAND 8: EUROPÄISCHES SPÄT-MITTELALTER. Edited by WILLI ERZGRÄBER. *Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft Athenaion*. Wiesbaden. [1978], pp. 487-518.

Although apparently issued separately, this is an extract from a comprehensive history of world-literature under the general editorship of Klaus von See (whose book on skaldic poetry is reviewed on pages 321-2); the whole work is to consist of 25 volumes, of which volume 8 (edited by Erzgräber) is on late medieval Europe, and to this volume Professor G. W. Weber has contributed the chapter on Scandinavian literature.

Broadly speaking, there are two possible ways of tackling such an undertaking: one is to aim for maximum comprehensiveness, resulting in an annotated book-list (which, of course, can be very useful); the other is to select a small number of representative works and deal with them at greater length, so as to give something of the distinctive qualities and flavour of the period and milieu covered. Professor Weber has chosen the second method, and the result is a fair, balanced and readable survey. The chapter is illustrated with photographs of murals from Scandinavian churches and of pictures from manuscripts, which help to convey something of the civilization concerned, and will make an even stronger impact when seen beside similar material in chapters dealing with other parts of Europe. The chapter is admirable as an invitation to further study which I take to be its purpose.

P. J. FRANKIS

SCANDINAVIAN SETTLEMENT NAMES IN THE EAST MIDLANDS. By GILLIAN FELLOWS JENSEN. *Navnestudier udgivet af Institut for Navneforskning*, 16. I kommission hos *Akademisk forlag*. Copenhagen, 1978. xxiv+406 pp.

Scandinavian settlement names in the East Midlands is the third of Gillian Fellows Jensen's volumes in the *Navnestudier*-series published by the Institut for Navneforskning in Copenhagen. *Scandinavian personal names in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire* appeared in 1968, and this was followed in 1972 by *Scandinavian settlement names in Yorkshire*. Dr. Fellows Jensen has followed the pattern of study which she established in 1972, to complement the works on the East Midlands by Cameron and Cox, with a detailed discussion of the Scandinavian and Scandinavianized place-names of the area, in the light of recent British and Scandinavian toponymic and historical research. In the preface to this new work Dr. Fellows Jensen states that 'constant revision of earlier views seems to be the rule of the day' and she has considerably modified her theories both as regards the etymological interpretation of the place-name material and their historical application. In particular, she has developed a 'topographical' approach to place-name etymology as expounded by her in two articles in the mid-70's: 'English place-names such as Doddington and Donnington', *Sydsvenska Ortnamnssällskapets årsskrift* (1974), 26-65; 'Personal name or appellative? A new look at some Danelaw place-names', *Onoma* XIX, 3 (1976 for 1975), 445-58.

As noted, the arrangement of the material in *Scandinavian settlement names in the East Midlands* follows very closely that of the volume for Yorkshire. The

introductory material at the beginning of each chapter repeats the wording of the earlier work, with the inclusion of selected sentences revealing recent developments and with the substitution of the East Midlands names and statistics for the Yorkshire counterparts. The recent volume has an equally splendid array of distribution maps, and probably more analyses in tabular form showing the different name-types and their frequencies in the various divisions and counties of the East Midlands. A change in terminology is introduced with the use of 'specific' and 'generic' for 'first' and 'second element'. Dr. Fellows Jensen argues that the new terms more adequately describe the function of the elements concerned, and can be applied to the so-called 'inversion compounds' of Celtic origin in which the normal order of elements is reversed. The label 'Scandinavian settlement names' includes hybrid names and English names which have been subjected to Scandinavian linguistic influence. The eight chapter division is preserved; an introductory chapter is followed by an analysis of place-names in *bý* and *þorp* in chapters 2 and 3; and the remaining Scandinavian names are discussed in chapter 4; chapter 5 deals with names containing Old English *tūn* and Scandinavian specific; chapter 6 with Scandinavian and hybrid names; and the last two chapters are devoted to a discussion of the distribution of settlements with Scandinavian and Scandinavianized names and to a study of the possible age of the names and the settlements they denote. Each of the first six chapters, which present place-name material, begins with a discussion of the relevant 'generic' and an analysis of the 'specific', followed by a treatment of the individual names. These are arranged in alphabetical order in their present day spellings or, in the case of lost names, in their Domesday Book forms. An original feature of the East Midland volume is the inclusion of a separate discussion, with appendix, of names first recorded between 1150 and 1500. There is also some rearrangement of material within the chapters — more attention has been given to the Domesday Book representation of the elements in chapters 2 and 3; and the several categories of evidence for dating the names are divided into two groups of 'linguistic' and 'non-linguistic'.

Dr. Fellows Jensen's change in her interpretative approach is far more distinctive than her formal alterations in presentation. The book's preference for a derivation from an appellative rather than from a personal name is probably its most significant feature. This may be seen as the product of the recent revival among Scandinavian scholars of the approach to place-name interpretation which was adopted in the 1930's by Zachrisson. According to these principles, more English place-names should be derived from topographical terms and appellatives and fewer from personal names. Dr. Fellows Jensen first applied these ideas to the interpretation of English and Scandinavian place-names in the two earlier articles mentioned above, and now finds only 131 or 39% of the East Midland *býs* which certainly contain a Scandinavian or English personal name. A singular *ing* derivation, for example, is suggested for Skillington, Beltisloe, rather than Ekwall's tribal name **scillingas*. The replacement in the etymologies of a personal name by an appellative is more typical. The Lincolnshire coastal name Skegness is derived from the Scandinavian appellative *skegg*, 'beard', rather than the Scandinavian personal name *Skeggi*, as suggested by Ekwall. The word has the sense of 'something jutting out', referring to the headland which is also recorded in the second element, *nes*; the same appellative is found in the two Nottinghamshire Skegbys. The Old English appellative *rand*, 'border' (Old Icelandic *ronð*, Danish *rand*, 'ridge') with reference to the village site on the edge of a ridge, is given as a more likely etymology for the lost vill of Ranby in Lincolnshire than the personal-name *Randi*.

The small streams which rise to the north and south of Bigby in Lincolnshire lead Dr. Fellows Jensen away from the personal name *Bekki* to the genitive plural of the Scandinavian appellative *bekkr* for the etymology of this name. An appellative is particularly preferred if the previously suggested personal name is not common in Scandinavia, or not recorded independently in England, or if the situation favours a topographical explanation.

Generally, Dr. Fellows Jensen gives a masterly, fresh and open-minded approach to etymologies. The aim is as much, to quote from her article in *Onoma*, 'to plead for greater comprehensiveness in the interpretation of place-names', as it is to provide a whole-hearted attempt to redress the balance in English place-name studies in favour of a topographical explanation after Zachrisson's extreme viewpoint. The desire to search for topographical derivations does not drastically alter the established picture of the meaning of Scandinavian place-names in this country. In the last sentence of the book, Dr. Fellows Jensen describes the characteristic Danelaw place-name as still 'consisting of a personal name plus a habitative generic such as *tūn*, *bý*, or *þorp*'. Some weaknesses in her argument may be suggested. The topographical etymology hinges on a rejection of the accepted view in English place-name scholarship that a place-name which is in genitival composition is more likely to contain a personal name than any other first element. On page 7 Dr. Fellows Jensen argues that 'the mere fact that a place-name is in a genitival compound in D[omesday] B[ook] can in itself tell us nothing about the nature of the specific', that genitival inflexions could be lost before a name was recorded in Domesday Book, and that 'there do not seem to be any hard-and-fast rules for composition in place-names morphological variation makes it inadvisable to attempt to determine the nature of the specific on the basis of the mode of composition'. Again, on p. 27: 'I have tended to prefer an appellative, even in genitival compositions, whereas older scholars have preferred a personal-name'. This refusal to accept the evidence of the genitival ending may be exaggerated: Tengstrand's reaction of 1940 in *A contribution to the study of genitival composition in Old English place-names*, (1940) is still valid today — that Zachrisson's views are only correct on 'the assumption that the genitive singular of descriptive words played an enormous part in Old English place-name formation'. Moreover, no reference is made to the correlation, which the author has previously referred to in 'Personal name or appellative? A new look at some Danelaw place-names', between asyntactic formation (zero or *-e-* formation) with compound personal names and genitival with simplex. There are also some inconsistencies. Although, on p. 7, she rejects the evidence of mode of composition, she does not hesitate to draw on the lack of such formal criteria in support of an appellative derivation. In discussing Barkwith, she argues that the Scandinavian personal-name *Barkr* is a formally satisfactory explanation, but that the 'complete absence of any trace of gen[itive] ending' makes it perhaps more likely that the first element is the appellative Old Icelandic *þorkr*, 'bark'. Many of the names are derived from appellatives which are found in Scandinavian names. Why draw a parallel with the Continent when none seems to be obvious? The author admits on p. 27, 'Even if the minimum figure of 40 pct. of the *býs* containing pers[onal] n[ame]s is accepted, this is still four times as large as the figure for *býs* in Denmark containing pers[onal] n[ame]s.'

The importance of the volume as a discussion of the significance of the place-names is two-fold. Dr. Fellows Jensen has both applied earlier methods and consolidated new interpretative techniques. Thus she extends to the East Midlands

the methods perfected by Cameron in *Scandinavian settlement in the territory of the Five Boroughs: the place-name evidence*, (1965), and applied to Yorkshire in 1972 by the author herself, of relating place-names to the drift geology of a region. She gives on pp. 306-28 a detailed examination of the relationship between settlement, topography and drift geology only after prefacing this on p. 301 with a reference to the now recognized inadequacies of small scale geological maps when used in isolation. Her conclusions are substantially the same as those of the Yorkshire survey of 1972 which confirmed Cameron's 3-tier chronology of hybrid, *bý*, and *þorp* names, but with a distinct modification of these theories. The summary on p. 368 begins: 'Seen against the background of recent studies which have suggested that the Vikings must have arrived in an England that had already been extensively settled and brought under cultivation by the English and whose parochial and administrative boundaries were largely of pre-Viking and possibly pre-English origin, the Scandinavian settlement names in England are capable of a more sophisticated interpretation than that offered in my study of the Yorkshire names.' The significance of such studies for place-name research is that the *býs* and *þorps* are now seen as stages in the detachment of small units of settlement from old estate centres, rather than secondary and tertiary colonisation involving occupation of the best available land. The ideas of Dr. Fellows Jensen, and those of scholars writing in the last decade (which are fully reviewed in this volume) indicate a revolution in thinking about the Scandinavian settlement of this country. We have come very far from the arguments of 1962, when Peter Sawyer in *The age of the Vikings* (1st ed., 1962) described the settlement in terms of an expansion and extension by descendants of the Viking military leaders.

A. M. J. PERROTT

BOOKS RECEIVED: The Society has also received the following: *Medieval narrative. A symposium*, ed. Hans Bekker-Nielsen, Peter Foote, Andreas Haarder and Preben Meulengracht Sørensen. Odense University Press. Odense, 1979; Peter Foote, *Gabriel Turville-Petre, 1908-1978*. From the *Proceedings of the British Academy*, London, volume LXIV (1978). Oxford, 1980; Paul Johnstone, *The sea-craft of prehistory*, prepared for publication by Seán McGrail. Routledge & Kegan Paul. London and Henley, 1980; *Karlamagnús saga. The saga of Charlemagne and his heroes. Volume three [parts V-X]*, trans. Constance B. Hieatt. Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies. Toronto, 1980; G. J. Marcus, *The conquest of the North Atlantic*. The Boydell Press. Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1980; John Morrison, *The ship. Long ships and round ships. Warfare and trade in the Mediterranean, 300 BC-500 AD*. Her Majesty's Stationery Office. London, 1980.