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THE LAY OF ATTLA

By URSULA DRONKE

(Presidential address, 8 March, 1963)

THE text of *Atlakviða* presents uncommon difficulties. Some stanzas are defective, or marred by disjointed phrasing. Some lines are repeated ineptly, others seem to belong to different poems altogether, while others again are so unusual in their wording that, even though we can translate them, they remain cryptic. There are, besides, such vivid changes in metre and diction that critics have seen the poem as a patchwork by as many as four authors.¹ Yet despite all textual obstacles, the sequence of events is clear, the structure solid, and, within that structure, the poem has remarkable subtleties. Most of those who have examined the poem closely have been concerned to trace the joins and patches of different poets or different stages of the legend. I should like to explore the opposite approach, to trace the coherences in the poem's structure and the nature of its subtleties, to see whether it is possible to discern from this a single poet at work.

The poem is ordered in three great acts, and each act is given its own climax: each moves from doubt to certainty, from concealment to revelation. Atli's messenger comes straight to Gunnarr's court, "to hearth-encircling benches and delicious ale". And there is drinking, but it is not gay. Drink usually loosens men's tongues, but here there is a tense silence of suspicion, a sense of ill-omen — *vreiði sáz þeir Húna* — broken by the cold voice of the messenger, the foreigner, uttering Atli's invitation. The inducements he offers acquire a specious warmth: exotic gifts of harness and horses, of multiple wealth, are fulsomely poured out in prospect to persuade the Burgundians of the cordiality of Atli's message. Atli

¹ J. Becker, 'Die Atli-lieder der Edda', *PBB* XXXIII (1908), 205; see also G. Neckel, *Beiträge zur Eddaforschung* (1908), 169 ff.; R. C. Boer, *Die Edda* (1922), II, especially 299 ff.

wastes no words on affection or kinship — he tempts others by what tempts himself. Gunnarr does not reply at once. With deliberation — *høfði vatt Gunnarr* — he turns his eyes from the messenger to Høgni his brother and asks what he would advise, noting laconically an absurdity in the invitation: why does Atli offer wealth to the wealthiest men in the world, owners of the Niflung hoard? And with leisurely pride he enumerates his own riches, as fine an inventory as Atli's. The decision is in balance: the Burgundians despise Atli's offer; is there any reason why they should accept? Høgni provides the reason. He has seen a wolf's hair twisted in the ring their sister has sent them: "The way is wolfish if we ride on this journey." The invitation is no longer an invitation but a challenge. Now that danger is certain, Gunnarr cannot refuse. And it is their sister's warning, her officious fears, that have made them accept. The tension, the sense of ill-omen, that were momentarily dispelled by the lavish invitation and Gunnarr's easy irony, have returned: the Huns are to be feared. Gunnarr decides promptly — "as a king should" — and orders the cups to be filled again, turns the taciturn drinking that greeted the coming of the messenger into a reckless celebration of their fatal going, the drinking of their own funeral ale. Savagely Gunnarr prophesies:

"The wolf will rule
with its old, grey packs
the inheritance of the Niflungar,
if Gunnarr is lost.
The dark-furred bears
will bite with wrangling teeth,
bring sport to the troop of curs,
if Gunnarr does not come back."²

² I read, line 3, *gránferðir*. I have preferred to relate *þref*-, line 6, to Mod. Icel. *þrefa* 'to wrangle', OE *þræfi* 'quarrelsomeness', rather than to *þrifa* 'to grasp', since this gives a closer parallel to *vigtönn*, *Hilditönn*. In *greystóði* line 7, I have preferred to interpret *grey*- literally (cf. *úlfr*, *birnir*) even though *stóð* is elsewhere in Olcel used only of horses.

With this cryptic vision, the first act ends. The pace changes to the verbal slowness of stanza 12, the lacrymose farewell of Gunnarr's people. Then, with the relief of speed, as if glad to turn from tears to movement, Gunnarr and Hogni gallop across mountain and forest, whipping their horses — *vannstyggva* — through the green plains of Hunmark.

The second act opens as they see Atli's towering shield-girt fortress. Guðrún, desperate, meets them as they enter and orders them out of the hall, to save their lives. She castigates their folly: why come so defenceless into danger? — and breaks into a flood of hate against the Huns, whom she longs to see subjugated. Gently, resignedly, in contrast to her wildness, Gunnarr tells her that it is too late for such hopes — *Seinat er mí, systir, at samna Niflungom*. They set him in fetters — he makes no resistance — while Hogni fights and slaughters before he is held. They offer Gunnarr his life if he will give them his treasure, and he bargains: first he must know that Hogni is dead, see, as proof, the heart cut from his breast. The Huns do not question his demand: no doubt they assume that he would be ashamed to betray his secret while his brave brother lived, for, after all, Gunnarr did not struggle when they seized him. But first, as if they suspected him of duplicity, they bring him the heart of a cowardly menial, which trembles on the platter it lies on. Gunnarr brushes it aside — that is not his brother's heart. When they cut out Hogni's heart, he laughs at the pain, mocking all their tyranny. When they bring this heart to Gunnarr, he recognises it lovingly as it lies unflinching on the platter: "It trembled not even so much when it lay in his breast."

Now Gunnarr's moment has come. He has reserved for himself the final joy of cheating the Huns. Now he is the only one who knows the secret of the treasure, and he will never reveal it. He has teased the Huns, made them play into his hands, let them capture him so that he shall

not die before his brother and be denied the last word, made them kill Hǫgni so that he could be sure of the secret: with almost fanatical jealousy he distrusts even his brother whose bravery, he knows, is boundless. And he asks for such a cruel death for him to bring him an unforgettable heroic glory equal to his own, and Hǫgni does not disappoint him. Gunnarr has fashioned his own fate and Hǫgni's with the vision and pride of an artist.

He is drawn out to his death on the heath, chained, in a chariot, ceremonially, and as Atli and his men ride out with him, there is a glimpse of Guðrún, fighting back her tears in a hall filled with the uproar of the departure, uttering a curse upon Atli: may all the oaths he swore to Gunnarr at his marriage recoil upon his head. Gunnarr is set down in the snake-pit by the Huns and, scorning death as much as his brother did, savagely — *heiptmóðr* — strikes melody from his harp to while away the time until the serpents' work is done. "So must a prince guard his gold from men": the poet makes it clear by his choice of synonym for 'prince' — *hringdrifi* 'scatterer of rings' — that Gunnarr does not care for gold for its own sake, but he will let no one force from him what it is his joy to give away.

Atli returns, and the courtyard rings with the sound of weapons and hooves. The third act opens as Guðrún advances with wifely reverence to offer a golden cup to her lord and invite him to the feast. As if to dignify the occasion, she clothes her statement in ornate terms, offering him 'young beasts despatched to Hades', *gnadda niflfarna*.³ As the feast begins she speeds with ghastly diligence to ply the Huns with drink and delicate meats, crushing back her revulsion — *naudug*. When they are fed and pale with drunkenness,⁴ she tells them in terms of

³ Compare Clytemnestra's fulsome reception of Agamemnon, *Agamemnon*, lines 895 ff.

⁴ I have preferred to interpret *neffolom* as 'to the men pale with drunkenness', since this is contextually most obvious and apt; cf. Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales* A 3120: *The Millere, that for dronken was al pale . . .*; A 4150: *Ful pale he was for dronken, and nat reed*; also *ibid.* H 20, 30, 55. Professor Jón Helgason (in

horrible plainness what she had told them before in terms they could not understand: the food Atli is chewing and digesting and sharing with his nobles is the flesh of his own sons. The words that spring to her lips — 'corpse-bleeding', 'new-slain meat' — recall the fact that she herself had the preparing of the dishes. After this horror uttered with hate against Atli, she falls into a tone almost of feeling for him, for the tender pride he took in the boys, whom he can never again fondle on his lap and watch as they grow up to be men. In her perception of his feelings one can discern her own. The Huns cover their heads with their cloaks⁵ and break into groaning and weeping at her words, but Guðrún's eyes are dry. Like her brothers as they leave their weeping court, she flings herself into action again, scattering gold, emptying the sacred treasure-chambers of the temples for the servants to scramble for — buying them from their masters with a funeral bounty, for what need have those who are about to die of gold? Atli is so drunk and trusting in his drunkenness that he is easy to murder. Even as she kills him and the blood soaks into the bedding, the poet gives a glimpse of the gentler life they once led, when they used to embrace tenderly before their courtiers. She has the whole place at her mercy and sets it alight — hall, temples and outbuildings — killing only those who murdered her brothers, loosing the dogs as if to show her scorn of the Huns, and rousing the servants who have no part in her justice. She has mastered the Huns as ruthlessly as her brother, like him sacrificing her own flesh to the perfection of revenge.

I would distinguish three stages in the history of a book which I only obtained after this article was written: *Tvæð Kviður Fornar* (1962), 170) takes *nauðug* to mean that Guðrún is forced by Atli to serve the Huns, and compares *Gisla Saga* ch. 37. This interpretation conflicts with the warm welcome Guðrún gives to Atli and his men as they return from the murder. That she is *nauðug* is not observed by Atli (see below p. 20). In support of the sense 'pale with drunkenness' for *neffðlom* Helgason cites Egill's line, *ól gerir [Qlvi] nú fólvan* (*Egils Saga* ch. 44).

⁵ I have preferred the interpretation 'clamour under the rich cloaks' for *gnýr und guðvefom*, since a reference to rich wall-hangings (a rare use of *guðvefr* in any case) would have little point at this moment.

Atlakviða: (1) the long period after Attila's death in which stories about him and the killing of the Burgundian king develop, with the accretion of variant motifs and motivations, through the telling of the tale by numerous different poets and reciters, who adjust and invent as their taste or memory direct; (2) the shaping of the story by a Norse poet (or poets) into a poem with the design I have outlined above; and (3) the imperfect preservation of this poem through the faulty memory of one or more reciters. Since the design of the poem, as I have outlined it, does not depend upon the interpretation of any obscure or corrupt passages, I am not concerned here with stage 3. I should like to consider primarily stage 2.

It is assumed by some editors that lines have been lost before the capture of Gunnarr (stanza 18), describing a fuller fight by both Gunnarr and Hogni.⁶ In that case, the motivation I suggested above, that Gunnarr deliberately does not resist capture, is the result of an accident of preservation and is not part of the poet's design. Certainly in the *Nibelungenlied*, *Þiðrekssaga* and *Atlamál*, Gunnarr fights and is overborne either by Dietrich, or by force of numbers. But the authors of these works are greatly preoccupied with battles; the poet of *Atlakviða* is not. His Burgundian princes come, not merely without escort, like Hamðir and Sörli, but even, it would seem, without armour.⁷ Gunnarr's mild words to Guðrún, "It has grown too late to summon the Niflungar", show that he places no hope in fighting as a means of defeating the Huns. This is not a poem of battles, but of individual audacity against the massive and featureless tyranny of the Huns. The confused fighting and ill-motivated cruelties of the other versions of the story are distilled to

⁶ S. Bugge, *Norræn Fornkvæði* (1867), 431; B. Sijmons and H. Gering, *Die Lieder der Edda*, Kommentar II (1931), 351; Helgason, *op. cit.* 155. For a different view see R. C. Boer, *ed. cit.* 297 f.

⁷ It may indeed have been *Hamðismál* that suggested to the poet of *Atlakviða* the unaccompanied heroic journey of the Burgundians. The link between the two poems seems close. In *Hamðismál* also a woman speaks to the two brothers in the hall before hostilities begin. Might it even have been the influence of *Hamðismál* that made Gunnarr and Hogni brothers in Norse tradition?

clarity in the planned action of *Atlakviða*. Only Hǫgni, with a warrior's simplicity, defends himself instinctively with his sword. Gunnarr and Guðrún fight with their wits — outrageously, because the odds are terrible. They conceal their purposes — *dyliendr* —, Gunnarr by his seeming compliance with the Huns, when he asks for Hǫgni's heart, Guðrún by her seeming complacency when she goes out to offer Atli wine on his homecoming from her brother's murder — 'to render a lord his due', *at reifa giöld rǫgnis*.⁸ There is a double edge to the poet's words: beneath the surface duty to her husband she performs a deeper duty to her brother, presenting the compensation due to him, lives for a life, *gnadda niðfarna*, under the guise of a service to her husband. The duplicity of the Burgundians is their answer to Atli's own duplicity; Guðrún's false welcome is a parody of his own invitation to her brothers. With supreme economy, the poet makes action reflect action. Gunnarr's refusal to fight the Huns has such richness of consequence for the theme of the poem that I am convinced it is part of the poet's design.

It is sometimes doubted whether the episode in which Gunnarr demands and obtains the heart of Hǫgni is part of the "original" *Atlakviða*.⁹ We must then imagine what might have taken the place of this episode in the original poem. There might have been no connection between the death of Hǫgni and the guarding of the secret of the hoard: both brothers might have been tortured to death, refusing to tell their secret. Or the Huns might have brought Gunnarr Hǫgni's heart, or one which they say is Hǫgni's, in order to frighten him into revealing the secret. Neither of these alternatives would provide a narrative tension comparable to the episode in *Atlakviða*. Nor is the existence of either of these alternatives discernible from other sources. The *Nibelungenlied* contains an

⁸ I take the phrase *at reifa giöld* to mean 'to declare, present, in full the payment due' (to or for a lord), with a play perhaps on the legal phrase *reifa mál* 'to present a final summary of a case'.

⁹ Neckel, *op. cit.* 155; Boer, *ed. cit.* 300.

episode similar to that in *Atlakviða*.¹⁰ When both Gunther and Hagen are captured and kept in separate cells, Kriemhilt demands the secret of the treasure from Hagen. He refuses: he has sworn that as long as any of his liege-lords lives he will never reveal the secret to another. Kriemhilt promptly brings Gunther's head. Involuntarily Hagen has brought about his death and in wrath and grief he declares that the secret will die with him. This is essentially the same motif as in *Atlakviða*, but in *Atlakviða* the motif has greater complexity because there are in fact two motifs interlaced: one, in which a man demands the head of the only other person besides himself who knows a secret, so that he himself may die knowing that the secret dies with him, and another, in which a tyrant orders his man to kill an innocent person and bring back some internal part of the victim as proof of the deed.¹¹ The kindly servant (for instance, the huntsman in the story of Snowwhite) cannot bring himself to commit the murder and substitutes the parts of a slaughtered beast to take to his villainous lord. (This is the form of motif to which *Atlamál* reverts.) For the purposes of the story of guarding the Niflung treasure (a theme that is central only to *Atlakviða*) the first motif would be quite adequate. In this, attention is focused on the one who demands the death of the other, for the climax of the story is his own death. In the second motif, the climax is the deception of the one who orders the murder, and the escape of the victim. In *Atlakviða* the second motif is imposed upon the first in such a way that its purpose is wholly reversed: Gunnarr cannot be deceived, the victim cannot escape. The transformation of the traditional motif makes the action inexorable.

The importation, from *stjúpmæðrasögur*, of the second motif is designed to give Högni greater praise: a head is

¹⁰ K. Bartsch and H. de Boor, *Das Nibelungenlied*, lines 2367-2374.

¹¹ See C. von Sydow, 'Nibelungendiktingen och sägnen om *An bheoir lochlannach*', in *Studier tillägnade E. A. Kock* (1934), 377-384.

easily recognised by a dozen features irrelevant to the character of the possessor, but a heart, traditionally the seat of courage, will, in this grotesque fantasy, reflect, even when disembodied, the courage of its owner. Greater fantasy, greater heroism, greater suspense before the divulgence of Gunnarr's purposes, all spring from this second motif. Has the poet of *Atlakviða* inherited this complex of motifs from the traditions of his story or did he impose the second motif upon the first? I see no way whatever of deciding the matter, but in the light of the whole organisation of the poem, we can at least conceive the complexity of the episode to be of his own devising. The scene is one of stylised trickery, a grotesque play far removed from reality and wholly unlike the wild realism of Guðrún serving dainties at her feast or loosing the dogs before she burns the hall. The scene need not on that account be the work of a different poet. There is a refinement in the handling of the episode that has its echo elsewhere in the poem. The excision of the cowardly heart of Hialli is stated with plain rapidity: *scáro þeir hiarta Hialla ór briósti*; it achieves callousness by its speed and suspense by its economy — for we know nothing as yet of Hialli.¹² In *Atlamál*, where sheer cruelty and a desire to bring anguish to Guðrún make Atli order the cutting out of Högni's heart, the attempt by kindly Huns to take the heart of the scullion Hialli instead is expanded with a comic display of his hysterical fear and his laments at leaving his herd of pigs. Sickened by his cowardice Högni persuades the Huns to let Hialli live and to cut out his own heart. This is an alternative way of shedding glory upon Högni, more laborious and coarse. In *Atlakviða* the reticence and brevity of the heart-excision resembles the reticence, even delicacy, in the presentation of Gunnarr in the snake-pit. The poet alludes to

¹² Sijmons and Gering, *ed. cit.* 352, consider it certain that lines have dropped out of the poem, in which the seizing of Hialli is described. This is surely insensitive: all we need to know of Hialli is that his heart betrays his cowardice.

the playing of the harp — as he does to the taking of Hialli's heart — as if the story were well known, without elaboration or explanation. Gunnarr does not play to still the snakes or to summon help, nor are we told that he uses his toes because his hands are fettered.¹³ Such elaborations, found in other versions of the story, are avoided by the poet of *Atlakviða*, partly because they destroy the line of his narrative, partly because they lead the mind to probe the probabilities of the situation in such a way that the scene loses its magic.¹⁴

The harp-playing is a motif as fantastic as the excision of hearts, and both fantasies are subordinated to the realities and the dramatic pace of the story. There is a likeness of art, also, in the treatment of the excision of hearts and Guðrún's slaughter of her children. In each case the horror is followed by words of loving pride or tenderness. There is a comparison made explicitly between what was and what is. The heart firm in death recalls the fearless living brother; after the boys' flesh has been served at the banquet, Guðrún remembers their flushed faces — *plreifsa tvá* — at other feasts in their father's hall; the murder that soaks the bedding evokes the image of husband and wife embracing with affection. How different is the vision in *Atlamál* (stanza 56) of long matrimonial wrangling between Guðrún and Atli — "I have no joy in our marriage, disastrous woman — seldom have we had peace since you came into our midst." Are all these moments of tender backward-glancing in *Atlakviða* the result of patchwork by different poets, or do they spring from one poetic imagination? They have no parallels in other versions of the story. This quality in *Atlakviða*, this sense of pain and cost, is observed by the poet of *Hamðismál*, who makes Hamðir chide his mother that her revenges hurt herself even more than those she punishes (stanza 8):

¹³ See the *Dráp Niflunga*; *Oddrúnargrátr* 29; *Atlamál* 66; *Völsunga saga* ch. 37.

¹⁴ Even the simple phrase in *Atlamál* 66: *Hörþo tók Gunnarr . . .* spoils the fantasy by its practicality.

“You believed you would bring Atli pain
 by Erpr’s murder
 and Eitill’s death —
 it was even worse for yourself.
 One should bring
 others to their death
 with wounding sword
 without hurting oneself.”

If there were not this humanity of sorrow, the story of *Atlakviða* would be nauseous in its cruelty, as that of *Atlamál* is nauseous. The horror becomes tragic only through its grief.

In attempting to trace the imagination of a single poet in the narrative structure of *Atlakviða*, I have not commented upon the variety of metre and diction that I am, in consequence, attributing to him. Becker declared it improbable that a poet would introduce whole stanzas in *fornyrðislag* when he was composing a poem mainly in *málaháttr*.¹⁵ But it has yet to be proved that *málaháttr* and *fornyrðislag* were in early Norse rigidly distinguished metres. The four-syllabled line alternated freely with five- or more-syllabled lines in Old English, Old Saxon and Old High German verse, and it may be that in Old Norse the maintenance of a consistent distinction between the two types of line developed only under the influence of scaldic verse with its syllabic regularity. An early poet might within a single poem choose to vary his metre for stylistic effect, as, in the first stanza of *Atlakviða*, the extreme simplicity of statement — *Alli sendi ár til Gunnars*¹⁶ — falls properly into two *fornyrðislag* lines, and the fuller development of the statement, describing first the messenger, then Gunnarr’s hall, expands into a *málaháttr* of six- or seven-syllabled

¹⁵ Becker, *op. cit.* 195.

¹⁶ I interpret *ár* as ‘messenger’; this gives a progression of ideas from the general term, *ár*, to the quality of the man, *kunnr*, to his name. *Ar* adv. ‘in ancient days’ would stand first in the sentence (cf. *Guðrúnarkviða* I, 1/1; *Sigurdarkviða* in *scamma* 1/1; *Hymiskviða* 1/1; *Rígsþula* 1/1).

lines. The sudden contraction of the metre to a four-syllabled line is common enough in *málaháttir* stanzas as a deliberate poetic variation — *kallaði þá Knéfrøðr kaldri røddo, seggr inn suðræni* — might not the same be true in the larger metrical patterns of stanza beside stanza? The *fornyrðislag* metre gives speed, and this speed may serve different purposes: after the full, impassioned stanzas in which Guðrún greets her brothers and Gunnarr replies with languorous resignation, the action of capturing Gunnarr is quickly, almost perfunctorily over: it was inevitable, why dwell longer on it?

Fengo þeir Gunnarr oc í fiqtur setto,
vin Borgunda,¹⁷ oc bundo fastla.

The speed of the next stanza is that of Høgni's own self-defence:

Siau hió Høgni sverði hvøssø,

suspended with an anacrusis for the final flourish of his strength:

enn inom áttá hratt hann í eld heitan.¹⁸

There is a light courtesy, a distance of tone, in the *fornyrðislag* lines

Frágo frænan ef fiqr vildi
Gotna þjóðann gulli kaupá,

as if the Huns are gentlemen, politely suggesting that Gunnarr may wish to ransom his life. The brutal request for Høgni's heart comes in reply, with the contrast of heavier lines:

Hiarta scal mér Høgna í hendi liggia,
blóðugt, ór briósti scorið baldriða,
saxi slíðrbeito —

as if each word were spoken through gritted teeth. When the hearts are brought to Gunnarr, the metre reverts to *fornyrðislag* for the ballad-like repetition of his words — "Here I have the heart of Hialli the coward, unlike the heart of Høgni the brave . . . Here I have the heart of

¹⁷ I have rejected the MS *vinir*, even though it could be read as an ironic comment on the action of the Huns (cf. *sífiungr þeira* 29/4).

¹⁸ I would regard *hratt hann* as an extrametric prelude to the following C-type line; any other reading destroys the rhythm.

Hogni the brave, unlike the heart of Hialli the coward" — yet between his words the verse swells to the broader rhythm of *málaháttr* for the torment of Hogni, and from the plain diction one ornate scaldic phrase emerges: "They cut to the heart the living sculptor of scars" — *qvigvan kumblasmið*. The warrior who inflicts wounds can also endure them.¹⁹ The frequency of shorter lines continues during the quiet revelation of Gunnarr's defiance:

er und einom mér öll um folgin
hodd Niflunga: lifira nú Hogni.

But as his triumphant theme develops the lines lengthen with rich parallelism:

Rín scal ráða rógmálmi scatna,
á sú in áskunna, arfi Niflunga;
í veltanda vatni lýsaz valbaugar,
heldr en á hǫndom gull scíni Húna bǫrnom.²⁰

The alternation between metres so fundamentally similar reflects a change of attitude and of tension. If we must suppose, as Becker does, that a poem in *fornyrðislag* has been interwoven with another in *málaháttr* then the joiner has achieved a poetic collage of genius.

In the sequence of verses from the ordering out of the wheeled chariots to take Gunnarr to the snake-pit to Atli's return, there is not only an alternation of metres but an interlacing of different poetic styles. The language is now rigid, now fluent, as the focus of the narrative changes. Atli rides out with remote formality (throughout the poem he is distant, featureless). He is the emperor, *inn ríki*, surrounded by the swords of his warriors, *sleginn rógþornom* — a scaldic phrase with no contextual significance that I can discover —, and he is also *sifungr þeira* 'brother-in-law of those men (Gunnarr

¹⁹ Despite the rareness of *kumbl* in the sense 'scar', 'wound' (cf. *herkumbl* 'battle-scar', *kumla* 'to maim'), it gives the best sense with *-smiðr*, and is particularly apt in the context. The interpretation 'smiter (like a smith) of helmet-crests' supposes a use of *smiðr* in compounds unparalleled in ON or OE.

²⁰ In reading *á sú in áskunna* I combine the emendations of Gering and Kuhn. It is tempting to omit *gull scíni* in the last line, and restore a *fornyrðislag* ending to the stanza, but the poet may have wished to give weight by anacrusis (cf. *hratt hann* 19/4) and repetition of the idea *lýsaz valbaugar*.

and Hogni)' — a plain phrase wholly significant in the context, for it is the only comment the poet makes upon his action. After the formality of this picture of Atli, comes the close, emotional image of Guðrún, *i þyshqollo*, the clatter of the departing men in her ears, at breaking point with grief and powerlessness, cursing this brother-in-law who betrays his vows. But she is, like her words, a parenthesis, incapable of influencing the course of the action, for the inexorable formality of Atli's procession is resumed again as Gunnarr is drawn to his death. Scaldic diction and bizarre word-order ornament the simple statement that a horse — shaker of the bridle — pulled Gunnarr — treasure-guarder, prince of battles — to his death. The same basic simplicity of statement and the same halting trick of unusual word-order appear in the next stanza, the central scene, when Gunnarr is set in the snake-pit — "A crowd of warriors placed the living prince in the enclosure that was crawling inside with snakes" — the plain statement is horrible enough, with its one telling adjective, *lifanda*. The effect of the unusual placing of the subject of the first clause in the heart of the second —

Lifanda gram	lagði í garð
þann er scriðinn var,	scatna mengi,
innan ormom —	

is to prolong the revelation of the horror of the snake-pit.²¹ The *fornyrðislag* metre and the short factual statements — with the sole intrusion of the poet's admiring words, "So must a prince guard his gold" — continue until the return of Atli and his men to the palace:

Atli lét	lanz síns á vit
ió eyrscán	aptr frá morði.

The adjective *eyrscán*, whatever its meaning, appears to be formal decoration, comparable with *sleginn rógþornom*. Only when the riders reach the courtyard and the ears of Guðrún does the narrative expand into richer circum-

²¹ Compare the interrupted clauses 2/1-3, 42/5-7, and especially the placing of the subject *brúðr* in 42/7.

stantial description again — *dynr var í garði, dröslom of þrungit* — and longer lines. Guðrún is now the centre of the drama, and the language becomes close and vivid.

The death-journey of Gunnarr stands out metrically and stylistically from the surrounding stanzas in a way that suggests design rather than accident. As Gering pointed out, the chronology of the action from the wheeling out of the chariots to Atli's return is in perfect order in the text as it stands, and it is therefore doubtful whether any of the stanzas are interpolated.²² Nor is there any feature of metre, word-order or diction that cannot be paralleled elsewhere in the poem. The fact that four lines appear to be defective (29/2, 29/5-6, 32/1) need not discredit the whole sequence.

The formality of style fits well the formality of the journey itself. It has the appearance of a ritual procession rather than of a piece of gratuitous brutality on the part of the Huns. Gunnarr is not roughly flung, bound, upon a horse, but placed in a chariot. He is drawn in this chariot, ceremonially, like a sacrificial victim, by a horse — traditional drawer of the car of the sun that passes into the world of the dead — to be cast into *Myrkheimr*, to the powers of the underworld, which the serpents embody, into some enclosure or cavern out on the moors, which men believed to be the entrance to the dark world of the dead.²³ The same link between funeral chariot and serpents is seen on the Oseberg wagon in the carving of a man contending with snakes. Atli rides a horse 'with ringing mane', *glaummpnom*; does this mean that there were bells, or rattles, adorning his horse's mane? Jangling metal rattles are found attached to carved wooden animal heads in the Oseberg grave: they had the ritual purpose, it is thought, of frightening away evil

²² Sijmons and Gering, *ed. cit.* 356.

²³ See O. Nordland, 'Ormegarden', *Viking* XII (1948), 101 (though I see no need to suppose that the name *Myrkheimr* reflects the Christian conception of Hell); also E. Küster, *Die Schlange in der griechischen Kunst und Religion*, 61 f. and *passim*.

spirits.²⁴ Was Atli's horse ritualistically decked to take part in the ceremony? Is Atli committing the sacrilege of sacrificing, with all the trappings of religious ritual, the brother-in-law to whom he is bound by the deepest oaths? If so, his action is answered by the godlessness of Guðrún, as she glories in the despoiling and burning of his temples.

While the brevity of the *fornyrðislag* metre fits dialogue and action well in the episodes of the heart-excision and the murder of Gunnarr, the poet reaches his greatest power in the fuller *málaháttir* stanzas. Here there are passages of great intensity and sometimes of difficulty, for they raise images in the mind so unusual that we lack common ground with the poet for understanding them. These lines have a magnetic power particularly because they are cryptic, and it is in them that the poet's individuality is most sharply perceived. I should like to study three of these passages.

Gunnarr's fierce prophecy as he drinks for the last time in his own hall (stanza 11) throws before the mind a picture of sombre snarling bears and excited dogs — a bear-hunt, or a bear-baiting, where the cornered bears fight with concentrated ferocity. The energy of the packed phrases — *bíta þreftönnom* 'bite with wrangling teeth', *gamna greystóði* 'bring sport to the troop of curs' — suggests that Gunnarr has a savage relish in the prospect. Is the image one of himself and Högni — *bræðr berharðir*, whose children are *húnar* 'bearcubs'²⁵ — cornered by the currish Huns, giving them fine sport, — just such an

²⁴ A. W. Brøgger, H. Falk, and H. Shetelig *Osebergfundet* II, 65, 232-237; also *Viking* VII, 117. Though the lines *Atli inn ríki reið glaumönnom* are not metrically conventional, and one would expect some word for 'horse' to be expressed, the striking word *glaumönnom* probably survives from the poem of stage 2, whose author clearly took pleasure in descriptive terms for horses. *Glaumr* is said to be Atli's horse in *Kálfsvísa* 3/3, but Boer is no doubt right in his suggestion (Commentar *ad loc.*) that this derives from a misunderstanding of *Akv* 29/2.

²⁵ In 12/4 the phrase *ór garði húna* causes difficulty. It is just conceivable that *húnar* in the sense 'bear-cubs', 'young boys' is meant, not with the affectionate implications of the word in *Völundarkviða* 32/4, but with reference to the heroic fierceness of their fathers. On the departure of Gunnarr and Högni, the Burgundian court is left in the hands of their children.

image as we have in *Hamðismál* of Jǫrmunrekkr, mutilated, roaring in the fight 'as a bear roars', *sem biörn hryti*, and avenging himself upon his attackers? Such a vigorous tone of exultation in defiance suits the general context well, for Gunnarr is aware that he is taking up a fatal challenge. The image does not reflect the outcome perfectly, however: Gunnarr does not in fact fight like a cornered bear (though Hǫgni does); Gunnarr only tantalises the Huns with false hopes and leaves fulfilment of revenge to Guðrún. Perhaps a precise anticipation of the outcome should not be expected here, or desired. For the moment the veiled prophecy of defiance, the insight into Gunnarr's battle-temper, is enough. Such an interpretation of Gunnarr's words in the second half of stanza 11 determines that of his preceding words: "No one shall enjoy my treasure when I am dead: lest a weaker heir cannot defend it against predatory enemies, I will hide it in a wilderness impenetrable by men, where the wolf is master." This would, like the echo of the phrasing — *Úlfr mun ráða arfi Níflunga . . . Rín skal ráða arfi Níflunga* — anticipate the outcome, but again with a difference: Gunnarr does not bury his treasure in a wolf-haunted wilderness, he sinks it in the Rhine. If, because of this discrepancy, we do not read the whole stanza as a defiant statement of Gunnarr's intentions, we must read it as a feverish statement of despair, comparable with the Geatish woman's lament for Beowulf, a vision of *heofungdagas*, . . . *wælfylla worn, werudes egesan*. If Gunnarr does not return, his inheritance will be overwhelmed by wolfish foes, his lands will be a battle-ground — perhaps of rival claimants savaging each other like bears, while jackal dogs rejoice in the conflict? Or will his lands simply revert to an uninhabited wilderness, overrun by beasts? Nowhere else in the poem are we concerned with the future welfare of the Burgundian kingdom, and such a despondent prophecy has no counterpart whatever in the outcome of the poem. In this poem it is the flower

of the Hunnish people that is destroyed: whatever disasters may subsequently come upon the Burgundians is wholly irrelevant to this poem, which otherwise has no irrelevancies. It seems right, therefore, to accept the immediate picture that Gunnarr's words present — that he will fling his gold to the wolves rather than let it fall into hated enemies' hands, and go deliberately into a trap so that his enemies may feel the sharpness of his teeth.

A second vivid passage, with the same cryptic concentration and power, occurs in Guðrún's wild speech to her brother, envisaging what might have been (stanza 16). He should have come armed against Atli —

“should have sat in the saddle
through days lit with sun,
made the Norns weep
at the corpses' forced pallor,
made the shieldmaids of the Huns
try their skill at the harrow.”

Here is the same precision of image as that of the bear-baiting in stanza 11: but what does it mean, 'to sit in the saddle through days lit with sun'? *Sólheiða daga* is a pleasant image: *sólheiðr*, like *sólbiartr*, *sólhvítr*, implies beauty, radiance, splendour (it is contrary to the associations of the word to suppose, as Neckel does,²⁶ that it refers to the uncomfortable heat of the day). Does not Guðrún mean that they should have fought in the saddle as long as there was light to fight by, and that those days on which they fought would have been radiant with victory? And just as Guðrún forces fate her way — *scop lét hon vaxa* — so her brothers should have made the Norns acquiesce to a vast annihilation at which even they weep.²⁷ To interpret *nornir* here as 'women' is to lose the force of Guðrún's satiric extravagance. All that they

²⁶ Neckel, *op. cit.* p. 148.

²⁷ Helgason (*op. cit.* 154) suggests that 'make the Norns weep' means in effect 'leave no one alive to weep', since Norns never shed tears. The Hunnish Amazons however are to remain alive, and would be able to lament in their degradation.

would have spared of the Huns after their defeat — their womenfolk — should have been subjected to slavery: their Amazonian arrogance should have been humbled; women who normally despised womanly tasks should have been set to subhuman labour, imposed on serfs only when beasts were lacking.²⁸ These practised wielders of shields should now drag the harrow like oxen. In six brief lines the poet has concentrated Guðrún's vision of triumph and humiliation, sour with hatred and extravagant with despair.

A third passage comparable with these in intensity is the description of Guðrún's grisly feasting of the Huns (stanza 35). Here again the poet's force and economy are evident, but this time all is explicit. By his use of two words — *skævaði*, *nauðug* — he conveys the woman's surexcited haste and strain of mind: she rushed, darted, to bear them drink. This is not the formal and dignified giving of the goblet by the queen in due order round the hall, as in Heorot:

Ymbeode þa ides Helminga
duguþe ond geogoþe dæl æghwylcne,
sincfato sealde. (*Beowulf* 620 ff.)

Guðrún's haste seems almost joyful, she is 'bright-faced' as she serves the wine. The poet gives a new vividness to what might have been simply a conventional phrase for 'woman', *in scirleita*, by using it at such a terrible moment. Her face gleams with triumph, just as, later, when she strews gold before the servants, she is radiant, *gaglbjarta*, 'gosling-bright'. The dæmonic mood is on her — she is *afkár dís* — with a fearful strength of will that is not human. Here *dís* is not only the epic title, 'lady', balancing *iðfrom*, 'princes', next to which it is placed: *dís* associates her with supernatural power; she has become, like the *dísir*, one who controls the fate of men. Fastidiously — *valði* — she selects the delicious morsels

²⁸ Cf. *Landnámabók* ch. 6, where the serfs of Hjórlleifr Hróðmarsson, who possesses only one ox in Iceland, are set to drag the plough.

for the company, as kings with their own fingers choose the best pieces from a dish to show favour to honoured guests. Outwardly, she is an attentive hostess, proud of her hospitality, but beneath the control is disgust and revulsion — revulsion against the food, revulsion against the Huns, pallid with the drink she has zealously plied them with. Her antagonism, her inner segregation from the others in the hall, is expressed by the repeated abrupt juxtapositions, *afkár dís, íþfrom . . . nauðug, neffðlom*. The poet delights in placing words so as to exploit them to the full, and his art reaches its climax here. When Guðrún tells Atli the truth, her terms are sickeningly plain: he is chewing, digesting, roast human meat. When he believed he was showing royal favour to his warriors by graciously sharing with them the delicacies of his table, he was drawing them too into his crime of cannibalism, his last sacrilege. His wife has defiled him as a father and a king.

Neckel, in his labyrinthine *Beiträge zur Eddaforschung* (p. 133), after giving his own summary of *Atlakviða*, remarks: "Even from this summary, I think we can see indications that our poem is not originally a unity, that it is held together only by the partial restoration of lost parts of the poem that are essential to its structure. The stanzas concerning the Burgundian brothers in general breathe a different spirit from those which treat of Guðrún and Atli." He failed to see the logical and insistent structure of the poem; he saw complexity and thought it a tangle. A more willing attention to the motivation of the poem as it stands, and an open sympathy towards the notion that a poet might have composed in a manner we have not met before, may lead us nearer to solving the problems of *Atlakviða*. Subjective pitfalls lie on either side, but those who dogmatically criticise the unity of the poem are as likely to fall into them as those who interpret it with too admiring an imagination. Had Genzmer tried to recreate for himself the reasoning of the poet who shaped the plot of *Atlakviða*, rather than study statistics of

sentence-structure and compound words,²⁹ he could not, on grounds of style, have attributed to the same scald the *Hrafnsmál*, as floridly static as carved mahogany, and *Atlakviða*, a work astounding for its speed, delicacy of line and force of passion.

²⁹ F. Genzmer, 'Der Dichter der Atlakviða', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* XLII (1926), 97 ff. Cf. Helgason *op. cit.* 136 ff.

GERMANIC AND CELTIC HEROIC TRADITIONS*

By JAN DE VRIES

WHEN we study heroic legends of peoples of all races and countries, we may easily come to realise that they have much in common. Throughout the world they all show the same features and all breathe the same spirit of undaunted heroism. One may compare them in their ubiquity and general character with the folktales. A miraculous birth of the hero, a youth in humiliating circumstances and threatened by several dangers, the combat with a dragon, the deliverance of a woman and a premature death belong to the 'curriculum vitae' of nearly every hero. To construct a pattern of a hero's life, that would be valid for Greeks and Hindus, Teutons and Celts alike, would not be difficult.

It is, however, not from this point of view that I propose to discuss the heroic traditions of Celts and Germans. There are, besides marked agreement between their heroic legends, no less striking differences. These are not in the trend of the narrative, but rather in the spirit in which the legends are told. It is a well-known fact that in many of their mental attitudes and in their outlook on the world Celts and Teutons stand almost at the opposite poles of human experience. I may remind you of an Icelandic saga and the world-famous tale of Cúchulainn. On the one side we move in a world of translucid reality: events and persons are drawn with great precision and clarity; men and women speak and act in an atmosphere of admirable lucidity; the conflicts are those of everyday life and might occur even nowadays. Even when the

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saga moves into the domain of the weird and confronts us with demons and ghosts, we do not wander in a world of horror and marvel, but the powers of darkness and sorcery seem to step forth into the realm of real life. Take for instance the fight of Grettir and the ghost Glámr. Surely the narrator has done his best to make the scene as lurid as possible. The moon shining forth through the shifting clouds gives the right atmosphere for this demonic fight; it is just the theatre for such an encounter of man and ghost. Then that brilliant scene at the end: Glámr falling backwards on the ground, Grettir jumping upon him to throttle him and the moon suddenly peeping forth between the clouds and shining into the mischievous eye of the monster. We hold our breath and await a sudden disaster. But in the same instant the sagaman recovers his serenity of mind and returns to the course of the hero's life. It is a touch of genius to make this scene the key to the psychology of Grettir: from this time on these demonic eyes will pursue him with their lurid glance and rob him of his self-possession as soon as they appear in the darkness of lonely nights.

So the Icelandic narrator does not allow us to go astray in a world of horror and enchantment; on the contrary this scene of ghostly moonlit fight is a piece of narrative adroitly put in with the object of giving a psychological explanation of Grettir's disturbance of mind.

Not so the Irish story-teller. Cúchulainn's combat at the ford, with the long series of single fights, could have been written in the manner of the *Iliad*. It is, however, quite different. Cúchulainn's behaviour is in many scenes exceptional. At the pitch of a combat he transforms himself into a demoniac figure by his 'riastrad' or distortion. One of its elements is the following: the hero draws one eye so deep into his head that a crane would not be able to reach it with its bill, while he protrudes the other one so far out of its orbit that it lies on his cheek. This is a grotesque exaggeration of

a mythical trait, which curiously enough is also to be found in the story of Egill. But how simple is the account of it in the Icelandic saga: in a moment of extreme discontent it is told that he drew one eyebrow down to the cheek and the other one up to the line of the hair on his forehead.

If we want to get an insight into the different character of Celtic and Germanic heroic fantasy, we have only to confront the two main currents of French medieval epic poetry: the Carolingian *chansons de geste* with the so-called British romances. The latter are elaborated on plots and schemes that originated in Wales and came by one way or another to France. Contrariwise, the epics of Charlemagne are thoroughly French, if not indeed Frankish: they treat of events and personages belonging to the real history of Merovingian and early Carolingian times. I do not wish to enter here upon the discussion of the problem, how the *chansons de geste* in their present form came into being. I am for myself convinced of a Frankish substructure, and at any rate the spirit pervading the *Chanson de Roland* is quite the same as that of the German and Scandinavian epics.

Turning from these poems, all of them showing the clear outlines of every-day warfare and conflict, to those of the British cycle, we are confronted with an altogether different conception of the world. No historical events at all, but tales of most fantastic invention. This is the more remarkable as the principal personage of the Welsh cycle, the king Artus, may be considered a historical figure. The *dux bellorum*, who fought twelve battles with the Saxons, although he is only mentioned first by Nennius and is absent from Gildas's account of the wars between the Britons and the Saxons, cannot be dismissed as a mere product of poetic invention. Curiously enough, when we read the much more elaborate story in the *Historia Regum Britanniae* by Geoffrey of Monmouth, we get the impression of a heroic tale, showing the character

of epic poetry in general: the infidelity of his wife Gunnhumara, the treachery of his nephew Modred, might appear in a German epic poem as well. But in the French poems of the British cycle the historical core is overgrown by the weeds of most luxurious fantasy. In the *mabinogi* of Kulhwch and Olwen the hero is obliged to perform a series of nearly impossible tasks in order to win Olwen and it is Artus who gives him assistance: the hunting of the boar Twrch Trwyth is the most remarkable feat among these adventures. The French romances introduce a new kind of literature; we have adventures like the famous one in the forest of Broceliande, where water sprinkled on a stone arouses a formidable tempest, whereupon a gigantic knight challenges the hero. We may say that here for the first time in Western Europe there appears something we are accustomed to call pure fiction. These romances are the outcome of most exuberant fantasy. But this is only one side of this remarkable literary phenomenon. For here we get the impression of a new kind of public too, with quite different tastes and wants. These nobles and noblewomen have no longer any interest in the glorious exploits of their forebears; they only expect to hear thrilling tales to drive away hours of idleness and *ennui*. They like to hear adventures of the utmost unreality, love stories extravagant and pathetic, conflicts with dwarfs and giants who suddenly appear around the corner of the street. But here we find at the same time a setting that is as unreal as it could be; often we have the impression of wandering through a country where rolling mists blur the sharp contours of reality. In effect these British champions are knights errant wandering at random. In this borderland of the natural and the supernatural we are prepared for everything unforeseen and weird; it is like a folktale, but more eccentric and more sophisticated.

I wish to emphasize by these examples taken from the

Welsh and French literatures the totally different character of the Celtic and the Germanic mind and spirit. Once aware of this different atmosphere of their literary productions, we can easily detect Celtic motifs and incidents in the medieval literature of Germany. To be sure they are not apparent in the *Nibelungenlied*, but they pop up in the *Kudrun* and they submerge the poems about Wolddietrich. One instance may suffice: for example, the meeting of the hero with the ugly old hag, who transforms herself into a lovely young maiden. We are reminded at once of similar instances in Irish tales: in a poem of the sons of king Dáire Doimthech we are told, that a very forbidding old hag requires them to sleep with her; they all shrink back from it with the exception of Lugaid; when all has become dark, she is changed into a lovely maiden and reveals to him, that she is the sovereignty of Ireland. This shows the hidden meaning of scenes of this kind; the future king must show his prowess and courage to win the beautiful woman, who represents the *flaith* or sovereignty.¹ Stripped, however, of its mythical meaning, the scene shows a quite unusual fantasy. Such maidens in the appearance of ugly hags move through the British romances and are even admitted into the tales of Wolddietrich, who is after all the East-Gothic king Theodoric the Great.²

So far I have tried to point out the difference in the methods of Germanic and Celtic story-tellers. We would like to understand the reason for these contradictory attitudes towards the real and the unreal, but we should run the risk of grappling with the dangerous problem of the psychology of peoples and races. This is moreover outside the scope of this paper.

The fact that literary motifs wander from one people to another is not surprising at all. More interesting, however, is the fact that in this case we cannot restrict

¹ See for other examples my *Keltische Religion* (1961), 242.

² For this identification see my paper in *Germanisch-romanische Monatsschrift* XXXIX (1958), 1-18.

ourselves to the mention of literary borrowings alone, for with them new modes of feeling and expression gain access to peoples who have not known them before. We are accustomed to this spectacle; we have experienced the influence of Scandinavian and Russian literature as well as of Italian or Spanish. We have assimilated them all. The unification of Europe began long ago, in the realm of imagination and literary expression, even of innermost thought in general: the melting of national idiosyncrasies into a uniform mould of European thought.

In former times, it seems to me, the individuality of peoples and races was more sharply defined, more thoroughly consistent in its basic characteristics and manifestations. The confrontation of Celts and Teutons must have been different in character from that of more recent cultures; it may be likened in some ways to a shock. And therefore the imprint of one people's mental structure on the other appears to us in higher colours.

If we grope back into the Dark Ages, when Western Europe began to become conscious of herself, and seek for instances of the intermingling of Celtic and Germanic literature, the examples to be found are rather few. They are nonetheless of great interest. Let us consider for a moment the poem *Beowulf*. Its contents are certainly of Scandinavian origin. The personages playing a rôle in it can be identified in the half-legendary history of Denmark and Sweden and there are episodes reflecting conflicts between the Gauts and the Swedes. This is all well known; it shows a mighty current of tradition wandering from Scandinavia to England and shows moreover that people here were deeply interested in the affairs of Northern Europe. We find a receptiveness of mind to the facts of history, which seems so akin to the spirit of the Icelandic saga.

An epic poem, however, has not the character of a chronicle. The plot of the action is not at all a reflection of actual political life. A monster entering a king's hall

and devouring the retainers, a dragon devastating the shore of Sweden, these belong to the supernatural world, in which the real hero wins his greatest renown. This is the case everywhere and the Germanic peoples are in no wise an exception to this general rule. But in the case of the Grendel-episode there are some details absent from Germanic epic poetry in general. This man-like being, stretching his arm into the hall and grasping a man asleep on a bench along the wall, and from whose body the hero tears an arm, is quite foreign to the Germanic epic tradition. More such details may be added: the figure of the demon's mother, the fire in the cave at the bottom of the lake, the blood coming to the surface of the water and misunderstood as a sign of the hero's defeat.³ They have been taken as proof of the derivation of this part of *Beowulf* from Irish sources.⁴

Indeed, it is not difficult to imagine a poet who, engaged in constructing the poem of *Beowulf* out of lays or narratives drifted ashore from Scandinavia, took the opportunity of embellishing his work with motifs of this kind. The great Swiss scholar Andreas Heusler expressed the opinion that the poet did not make use of a Danish fable of the hero's conflict with a monster, but that he substituted for it an Irish tale of a quite different construction.⁵

We are, however, confronted with the difficulty that a tale of quite analogous structure is to be found in the Icelandic saga of *Grettir*. The similarities are striking and they compel us to admit a connection between the English and Icelandic traditions. Most puzzling is the fact that in two corresponding episodes a sword bears a similar name in both cases: in the saga the weapon wielded by the giant is called *heptisax*, the hero's weapon in *Beowulf* *hæft-mece*. These prove not only a common

³ See Heinz Dehmer, *Primitives Erzählungsgut in den Islendinga-Sögur* (1927), 62 ff.

⁴ See Dehmer, *loc. cit.*

⁵ See *Anzeiger für deutsches Altertum* XLIII (1918), 53.

source, but even, because the words have a poetical ring: a poem.⁶

The question is made complicated by this little detail. It would have been relatively easy to suppose an Irish popular tale, that had reached independently the Icelandic saga-writer and the Northumbrian poet. This single sword-name prevents us from accepting this easy solution of the problem. The missing link between the *Beowulf* and the *Grettla* seems to have been a poem and even a Germanic epic. Why should we not assume that it was the English poem itself that reached by one way or another the author of the saga? But how and under what circumstances could an Icelander have become acquainted with the *Beowulf*? Apparently after a short period of fame and popularity — perhaps even only in the small world of clerics with literary interests — it slept hidden in the library of a monastery; it did not wander and could not fructify the literature of Iceland as so many German epics had done. Still less thinkable is the figure of an Icelander, visiting England and getting the opportunity of reading the manuscript or hearing a summary of it. It seems to me evident, that we cannot accept in this case an immediate borrowing from the *Beowulf* into the saga;⁷ both traditions meet each other in Denmark.

For the figure of Hróðgár with his devastated hall is as Danish as a king of Lejre can be. On the other hand the opportunities for an Icelander to be informed of Danish tales and poems were manifold; the so-called Heroic Sagas prove it sufficiently. A tale of a Danish hero Bewar has

⁶ It has been argued that these names could not be called poetic in the strict sense of the word. They could be adequate denotations of a sword of a peculiar type. But then it should be stressed that in Anglo-Saxon poetry this word *haft-mece* only occurs in line 1458 of *Beowulf* and that on the other hand *heptisax* is only to be found in the *Grettis saga*. Moreover the word *mece* is a typical poetical word. I therefore agree with Hermann Schneider, who says that this word belongs to the language of poetry and not to a popular tradition in prose (*Germanische Heldensage*, II ii 27).

⁷ This is the assumption of von Sydow in his paper 'Beowulf och Bjarki', *Studier i Nordisk Filologi*, ed. H. Pipping, XIV 3 (1923): a travelling Icelander of the twelfth century gets a notion of this part of the epic and brings it as an oral tale to Iceland.

found its way to England as well as to Iceland. More than that, not a simple tale, but a heroic lay because of the ominous poetical term *heptisax*.⁸ In this case we should not exaggerate the impact of Irish tales on the *Beowulf*;⁹ the Danish source, a lay of rather small dimensions, contained a heroic encounter with a monster; it was provided with some interesting details, it told the scene with such vigour and fullness that the name of the sword could maintain itself in the English as well as in the Icelandic tradition.

What then was the function of the Irish tale? Schneider is of the opinion that the description of the landscape with lake and moor as well as the elegiac atmosphere evoked by it are as un-Germanic as the character of the demon and its home on the bottom of a lake.¹⁰ But then we must ask again: an Irish story, told by some casual visitor to the author of the *Beowulf*? It would be an almost incredible instance of accident. A gifted monk eager to write a large epic about a Scandinavian hero, whose exploits he has become acquainted with through some Danish poem, meets at this period, when his work is ripening in his mind, an Irish story-teller, and he is so captivated by his curious tale that he decides to substitute it for that of his Scandinavian source. I am not quite at ease with this supposition, though I cannot deny the mere possibility of it. Why not rather a tradition nearer to the Northumbrian monk? Why not a tale, well-known in the neighbourhood of the monastery, a tale perhaps he may have heard from country-people when still a child?

This supposition, which may seem at first sight a very natural one, does not sufficiently explain the fact that we find the elements of Celtic inspiration in the *Grettis saga* as well. The *heptisax* may have come from Denmark

⁸ Schneider, *loc. cit.* 27, stresses that *heptisax* points to a poetic source; on p. 28 he seems prone to accept Irish models for this episode of the saga.

⁹ R. W. Chambers, *Beowulf: An Introduction* (2nd ed.), 451 ff., seems not much convinced of Celtic influences.

¹⁰ *loc. cit.* 28.

to Iceland, but when we must admit the combination of Danish heroic fable and Celtic tale, this cannot have been but exclusively English. Now it seems impossible that an English poem, even if it should have been a much simpler forerunner of the *Beowulf*, should have found its way to Denmark and that the scene of the fight with Grendel should have reached the Icelandic story-teller by the intercourse between Denmark and Iceland.

Many scholars have treated this problem. A clear solution seems difficult to find. Doubts are always creeping up, however ingenious the theories of the scholars may appear to be. Over and over again it has been said that several details of the account of the battle with Grendel and his mother are absent from Germanic tradition. Perhaps such an affirmation may be too rash. Are we really so sure about what was possible and not possible in Scandinavian stories about encounters with supernatural monsters? Such man-like beings as trolls, dwarfs, water-spirits and the like were liable to play a rôle in tales of this kind. Some such tale may have been connected with the royal hall of Lejre. Can we say with certainty how such a tale in the seventh century would have been told?

If Schneider is right in stressing the character of the landscape and the elegiac mood of the scene, we might come to the conclusion that the alleged Celtic character lies more in the accompanying circumstances than in the plot itself. This is, however, a point which is not without importance. For the author of the English epic did not borrow this colouring from a casual visitor to his monastery, but he bore it himself in the depth of his own mind. Then we may recall the elegiac spirit in which such wonderful poems as *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer* were written, and then we may arrive at the conclusion that this is not due to a more or less superficial mingling of Celtic and Germanic themes, but the consequence of a symbiosis, by which the Anglo-Saxon soul was affected

to its very core. The much discussed word *heptisax* loses much of its importance, because it may have belonged to an older stratum, not affected by Celtic influences. At any rate it may appear from a poem such as *Beowulf*, that an Anglo-Saxon poet, because he was born on originally British soil, feels and reacts in a way different from his kinsmen on the Continent.

But this was not the starting-point of my discussion. I wished to know if Celtic influences are to be found in the plot or the motifs of a tale in Germanic literature. A case in point seems to me the story of Siegfried. This may seem at first sight rather startling, for we are accustomed to consider this heroic tale as a typical example of Germanic epic poetry. Still a careful examination of the component elements of Siegfried's story leads us to the conclusion that it has several motifs rather extraneous to the common Germanic heroic tradition but which at the same time betray astonishing analogies with Irish ones. Let us take some of these cases, which may be culled as well from the Germanic sources as from the Scandinavian (*Edda* as well as *Völsunga saga*). Siegfried puts the sword that the dwarf has forged for him to the test, by cutting with its edge a tuft of wool floating down the Rhine into two pieces.¹¹ In the Irish literature this motif is often to be found: here it is usually a hair, by which the test is made.¹² In German epic tradition this motif belongs especially to the tale of Siegfried. To be sure, it is found too in the Low German tradition of the tale of the smith Velent, but it seems to me not improbable that this is a loan from the Siegfried tradition. At any rate the device of putting a sword to the test by cutting through a tuft of wool belongs to the region of the Lower Rhine, where since very

¹¹ Cf. *Reginsmál*, prose after str. 14: *Þat var svá hvast, at hann brá því ofan í Rín ok lét reka ullarlagð fyrir straumi, ok tók í sundr lagðinn sem vatnúl.*

¹² The motif is to be found in the *Togail Bruidne Dá Derga*; it is told of the sword of *Socht mac Fithil* (*Irische Texte* III i 199) and even of Cúchulainn's famous spear in the *Acallam na Senórach* (*Irische Texte* IV i 194 l. 6986: the spear is so sharp *co tescfad cach corran dib finda a maghaid in tsrotha*).

ancient times the ironmines have been exploited. And it is to be remembered that the art of metallurgy belongs to the Celtic La Tène civilization.¹³

A second instance is the horn-skin of the German hero, the result of his bathing himself in dragon's blood.¹⁴ The Irish hero Fer-Diad has a horn-skin as well;¹⁵ another hero Conganchness Mac Dedad has even got his name from it.¹⁶ This motif is connected with another one: the hero is invulnerable save on a spot difficult to reach by an attacking enemy; Siegfried has this spot between his shoulderblades, Conganchness on the sole of his foot.¹⁷

In the Eddic poem *Fáfnismál* it is told that Sigurðr gets the gift of understanding birds' voices by tasting the dragon's heart.¹⁸ The same is the case with the Irish hero Finn: he roasts a salmon and touches it with his thumb; he scorches his thumb, puts it into his mouth and gets by it the gift of understanding what birds twitter.¹⁹

The famous scene with the valkyrie Brynhildr²⁰ is filled with motifs which from a Germanic point of view seem extravagant. This wall of flames which surrounds the sleeping maiden reminds us of that island in the ocean, lying behind an ever-turning wall of fire, found by the famous Mael Duin on his fantastic journey.²¹ After having ridden on his horse Grani through this wall of fire, Sigurðr wins Brynhildr's favour, but he puts a naked sword between himself and the valkyrie. The same device to prohibit all intercourse between a man and

¹³ In all regions of the Celtic La Tène civilization we find abundant proof of mining enterprises. The Celts had found a method of making steel of good quality.

¹⁴ Cf. *Þiðreks saga*, ch. 166, and *Nibelungenlied*, str. 899.

¹⁵ Cf. *Táin bó Cualnge*, l. 3009: *ba conganchnessach Ferdiad*.

¹⁶ Cf. *Aided Chellchair maic Uíthechair* (Todd Lecture Series XIV (1906), 26).

¹⁷ To be sure, this is a common motif of heroic saga, as is shown by the same story of Achilles. But here it is combined with the effect of the dragon's blood.

¹⁸ Cf. prose after str. 31.

¹⁹ Cf. *Macgnimartha Find* (*Revue Celtique* XIV 245 f.). An analogous story is told in the Welsh story of Taliessin (Lady Guest, *Mabinogion*, III 321-6, 356-61).

²⁰ Cf. *Völsunga saga*, ch. 29.

²¹ Cf. *Revue Celtique* X (1888), 90: *mur tentidhe uimpe immacuairt 7 imreithedh immon n-ináisi imacuairt an mur sin*.

a woman is to be found in the tale of Tristan and Isolde.

Before entering upon a discussion of the curious coincidences, it will be convenient to stress the following points. All the adduced motifs belong exclusively to the tale of Siegfried. They are to be found both in the German and in the Scandinavian tradition. It is not safe to maintain that they belonged to the original legend lying behind the West and North Germanic traditions, but we might perhaps venture the conclusion that this legend was especially liable to harbour motifs of this kind.

On the other hand, the same motifs are scattered throughout the Irish literature. They appear as well in the Ulster cycle of Cúchulainn as in the Leinster one of Finn. One might draw the conclusion that these motifs were lying ready to hand for any Irish story-teller who wanted to adorn his tale with fascinating details. So we might aver that they are at home in Ireland and a wholly foreign element in the Germanic tradition.

The next step in our reasoning would be: the tale of Siegfried has adopted a series of motifs of Irish origin. Does this mean that a German poet has culled them from Irish sources? It would be only a natural conclusion at which we arrive in such instances. But it is impossible in this case. For then we have to suppose, that this German poet or several poets in succession would have had access to a broad mass of Irish literature, which is hardly credible. It would be more natural if these German poets had a source nearer to hand.

This difficulty has led some scholars to a quite opposite conclusion: they believe in an influence of Germanic on Irish tradition. We could bring in the Vikings in connection with this transmission; they could have carried motifs of this kind to the much harassed Irish people; at any rate they are made responsible for importing pieces of Irish or Gaelic literature into their homelands. But again we must ask: why have these borrowings been

confined to the tale of Siegfried alone? Why have they been scattered throughout Irish literature at large?

Let us face this problem cautiously. The Siegfried tradition is at home on the borders of the Lower Rhine; we may even point out the town of Xanten as a point of crystallisation and the starting-point of all later poetical treatment. I am inclined to agree with Professor Otto Höfler in Vienna that Siegfried is in fact the famous *liberator Germaniae*, the Cheruscan chieftain Arminius.²² With great acuteness Höfler has detected quite a series of motifs peculiar to the Siegfried story that point to a connection with the disaster of Varus. Long ago it was argued that the proper name of Arminius might have been Siegfried, because several of his kinsmen bore names beginning with the element *sig-* 'victory'. This, however, can be no more than a mere possibility. We want other arguments to carry conviction. Many scholars have been puzzled by the fact that in the Eddic *Fáfnismál* the hero says, when asked about his descent, that he has neither father nor mother, but that he is a deer. Why should this unimpeachable hero have told a lie? But is it a lie? As a Cheruscan hero he could rightly say so, for the name of this Germanic tribe may be formed from the Germanic word *herut*, German *hirsch*. A very unexpected and at the same time elegant solution of a problem which has hitherto baffled all scholars.²³

If a hypothesis succeeds in solving a problem of this kind, it may be usable in other cases too. I cannot make mention of other demonstrations in Höfler's illuminating book. But I should like to point out that after a careful investigation of the classical sources Höfler comes to the conclusion that the defeat of Varus took place on the Knetterheide in the neighbourhood of Detmold. Who will

²² Cf. his *Siegfried, Arminius und die Symbolik* (1961).

²³ It is, however, to be kept in mind that this etymology, first proposed by R. Much, is only hypothetical; how can we explain the fact that already in Roman times the *t* of *herut* has disappeared in the name *Cherusci*? Cf. H. Kuhn, *Gnomon* (1962), 629, and H. M. Heinrichs, *Lippische Mitteilungen aus Geschichte und Landeskunde* 31 (1962), 278.

not be inclined to connect with this geographical name the Eddic word *Gnitaheiðr*, where Sigurðr slew the dragon, especially when we take into consideration, that the Icelandic abbot Nikolás in his *Itinerary* remarks, concerning the pilgrim road to Rome between Minden and Mainz: here is the *Gnitaheiðr*, where Sigurðr slew the dragon Fáfnir? Höfler comes to the conclusion that the glorious feat of Arminius has been sublimated into a heroic tale; historical facts are cast into the mould of heroic fiction. Siegfried may in fact have been the Germanic name of Arminius. The Roman army has been symbolized in the well-known legendary form of a dragon. The idea and the word *dragon* have come to the Germans from classical tradition. Here in the legend of Arminius is probably one of the first instances of transmission. It is a well-known fact that dragon-standards were used in the Roman army; we know from later Scandinavian tradition that standards with the image of an animal had a kind of religious meaning. So it seems not at all improbable that the Roman army with its flying dragon-standards could be symbolized as a fiery dragon.

But this original heroic legend did not yet contain the figure of Hagen, nor, since the catastrophe of Varus was a military one, that of Brünhild. They may have been added at other times and in other places. The Cheruscan tale has broken loose from its roots in the native soil and wandered through the Germanic tribes everywhere; the tale of the young hero, fighting successfully with a dragon and dying in the prime of his youth through the treachery of his own relatives.

Hagen, however, is connected with the town of Xanten. He may even have originally been a mythical figure, as Franz Rolf Schröder suggested some years ago,²⁴ and as has been further emphasized by Otto Höfler.²⁵ A new stage in the development of this famous heroic legend has

²⁵ *loc. cit.* 64 ff.

²⁴ Cf. *Deutsche Vierteljahrschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* LII (1958), 55-56.

been entered upon. The Cherusicans had been swept away by the storms of the migrations and out of the chaos there arose that remarkable and vigorous people, the Franks, destined to become the rulers of Western Europe.²⁶ The Siegfried tale, that had survived these disasters, had become a Frankish tale. The figure of Brünhild came to the fore and after a while the connection with the catastrophe of the Burgundians created the puzzling and fascinating tale we all know.

The motifs common to the Irish tradition and the Germanic epic all belong to the Siegfried story. They are, moreover, part and parcel of the adventures of his youth. These must have been added in a later period, for the original Cheruscan tale had no interest in them. They belong consequently to the Frankish stage of the development of the Siegfried legend, more specifically to the countries of the Lower Rhine, those very regions where the equally romantic tale of the Knight of the Swan had its home. But it is also here that Celts and Teutons maintained for several centuries very close relations, not only of a military, but also of a peaceful character. Here, one might be inclined to suggest, we may expect a symbiosis, favourable for the exchange of literary motifs too. In this case, we should not endeavour to explain the analogies between the Irish and German traditions by accepting secondary influences, but we ought to keep in mind the fact that the evolution of the Siegfried story took place in a region where from the oldest times onwards elements of Celtic civilization were firmly rooted in the minds of the people.

Having formulated this conclusion in a paper, written about ten years ago,²⁷ I must confess that I myself was almost terrified by its boldness. No one had thought of

²⁶ On the character of the migrations and the origins of the Franks see my paper 'Völkerwanderung und Wikingerzeit' in *Archaeologia Austriaca* XXIX (1961), 6-17.

²⁷ See my paper 'Über keltisch-germanische Beziehungen auf dem Gebiete der Heldensage', *Paul und Braunes Beiträge* LXXV (1953), 229-247.

ascribing Germanic epic poetry to those prehistoric times. It was an irrefutable dogma that the poetry handed down to us is the reflex of the extraordinary experiences of the migrations. To be sure, the overwhelming part of the heroic figures reflect historical persons of this time: Ermanaric of the Goths, Gunther of the Burgundians, Walter of Aquitania, Attila and last but not least Theodoric the Great. But is it not thinkable that these eventful centuries readjusted the epic tradition rather than engendered it? Is it not evident that earlier generations too honoured their heroes? Is it not almost certain that the period of the great Germanic expansion in the early Iron Age saw equally startling events which could crystallize into a heroic poetry? Or that the conflicts with the Roman Empire were equally fruitful for the coming into existence of heroic figures and themes?

Of course we are only speaking of possibilities. Nothing has survived from these prehistoric times. Siegfried at any rate does not belong to the poetry of the migrations; he is anterior to it. And Tacitus informs us that the Germanic peoples of his time knew *carmina antiqua*, their only kind of annals and tradition.²⁸ We may infer from this sentence that heroic as well as mythical poetry reaches back into hoary antiquity.

I am now less diffident about the existence of heroic poetry in the La Tène Period, when Celts and Teutons were in close contact on the borders of the Lower Rhine. Very recently the Swedish scholar Stig Wikander has discovered remarkable parallels between the Scandinavian tale of the battle of Brávellir and the Indian epic of *Mahābhārata*.²⁹ These parallels are, moreover, of such a kind, that we must exclude all idea of accident, even of an independent parallel development. It may be interesting to mention some of these common motifs. In the famous battle of Brávellir a Frisian champion Ubbo

²⁸ Cf. *Germania*, ch. 2.

²⁹ Cf. his paper 'Från Brävella till Kurukshetra', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* LXXV (1960), 1-11.

fight with the Danes. He is invincible and slays all his opponents in single battle. Then the Swedes encircle him with a multitude of warriors who shoot at him at a great distance and Ubbo is pierced by 144 arrows. In the same way in the Indian epic the hero Bhîsma cannot be overpowered in single combat; the enemy resorts to a stratagem: he is overpowered by innumerable arrows. This is of course only a minor motif in the story. King Harald is blind, likewise the chief of the Kauravas Dhṛtarâstra. Most curious is an instance belonging to the history of the ancestors of the heroes: it is told that Harald had an abscess on his lips by which his breath had a bad smell; so too in the Indian epic Vyâsa is very ugly and his breath is stinking; queen Ambikâ shuts her eyes from horror in his embrace and the fruit of their union is the blind Dhṛtarâstra.

These similarities are too important to be discarded as fortuitous. For the moment we shrink back from the consequences to which they may lead us. We wait for new examples of the same kind and I am already informed that we shall not be waiting in vain. I am afraid that, when we consider possible explanations of these coincidences, we shall be compelled to conclude that the lines of the Scandinavian story and the Indian epic must be traced back to a common starting-point in an Indo-European tale, already elaborated in such a way that we may compare it with the legends we possess from historic times. It is moreover beyond doubt that many of the mythical themes known from Indian, Greek and Teutonic sources must have been inherited from Indo-European times. Then we may safely conclude that alongside a mythical literature there also existed heroic legends.

After having opened this perspective I return to my subject to sum up my conclusions. I began by stressing the totally different character of Celtic and Germanic imagination. It is unmistakable: this difference has been a ferment in our Western literature. Is this the result

of a secondary development or was it inherent from the beginning in both races? We must leave this question for the time being unanswered.³⁰ But we have pointed out that in a very early period of intercourse between Celts and Teutons the latter were subject to strong influences from the former. The epic tradition about Siegfried seems to be a clear case. At that early time motifs wandered across the Rhine, perhaps even in both directions. The tale of Arminius incorporated, during its stage on the borders of the Lower Rhine, a number of literary themes that had been known there from the La Tène period onwards.

This is the first known instance of a Celtic influence on the Germanic mind. To this day a current of Celtic spirit has fructified again and again our West European civilization. We seem entitled to say that the specific kind of Celtic feeling, Celtic wit and humour, above all the undaunted Celtic imagination, has often been the yeast that has made our Germanic spiritual bread lighter and more savoury.

³⁰ In my recent book *Kelten und Germanen* (Bern and München 1960) I have stressed the great similarity between both races from the outset of their history. But we must reckon with strong influences exercised by the subjugated peoples in Gaul as well as in the British Isles, who belonged to a much more primitive race than the Celts. After having written this paper, a book by R. Hachmann, G. Kossack and H. Kuhn, *Völker zwischen Germanen und Kelten* (1962), has proposed an altogether different theory about the earliest history of the Germanic peoples. If their opinion should prove to be correct, we shall have to reconsider many problems which have hitherto found an almost generally accepted solution.

MÍMIR: TWO MYTHS OR ONE?

By JACQUELINE SIMPSON

ALTHOUGH the passages concerning Mímir have been many times discussed,¹ he remains one of the more perplexing figures in Norse mythology, and it has been frequently held that the references to him reflect at least two markedly divergent traditions.

On the one hand, Mímir is a being, probably a giant, who guards a well under the roots of Yggdrasill; the texts embodying this version are *Völuspá* 28, together with Snorri's commentary on it, and a remark of Snorri's in the course of his account of the Doom of the Gods:

But under the root that runs towards the frost-giants is Mímir's Well, in which wisdom and understanding are hidden, and he whose well it is is called Mímir. He is full of knowledge, because he drinks from the well out of the horn Gjallarhorn. All-Father came there and asked to have a drink from the well, but he did not get it until he had given his eye as a pledge. So it says in the *Völuspá*:

I know well, Óðinn,
where you hid your eye
in that famous
well of Mímir.
Every morning
Mímir drinks mead
from Val-Father's pledge.²

Then Óðinn rides to Mímir's Well and takes counsel from Mímir for himself and his host. Then the ash Yggdrasill trembles³

On the other hand Mímir can also be represented as a severed head uttering words of wisdom when questioned by Óðinn; in this connexion his name appears in the form Mímr, not Mímir, a differentiation which de Vries considers significant.⁴ In the *Poetic Edda* the clearest text

¹ See Jan de Vries, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte* (2nd ed., 1956), I 245-8, and references there given.

² *Gylfaginning* ch. 14; Finnur Jónsson, *Snorri Sturluson, Edda* (1926), 21.

³ *Gylfaginning* ch. 50; *ed. cit.* 63.

⁴ *loc. cit.* A third form of the name, Mími, is implied by the name *Mímameiðr* in *Fjölsvinnsmál* 19-22.

embodying this version is *Völuspá* 46, in the account of the Doom of the Gods:

Loud blows Heimdallr,
his horn is aloft;
Óðinn speaks
with Mímr's head.⁵

The same situation is apparently alluded to, more obscurely, in *Sigrdrífumál* 12-13, where the valkyrie is teaching Sigurðr the uses of runes:

Mind-runes you must know
if you wish to be more
clever than any man;
these Hropr read,
these he carved,
these he pondered on,
from the liquid
which had oozed
out of Heiðdraupnir's skull
and out of Hoddrofnir's horn.

He stood on the cliff
with Brimir's blade,
he had a helm on his head;
then Mímr's head
spoke a first wise word
and talked of true lore.⁶

In his *Edda* Snorri avoids all mention of Mímir as a severed head. In paraphrasing *Völuspá* 46 he transforms "Óðinn speaks with Mímr's head" into "Óðinn rides to Mímir's Well and takes counsel from Mímir", even though he quotes the verse itself shortly afterwards; that he *is* paraphrasing this, and not some other source, is confirmed by the fact that he goes on at once to speak of the trembling of Yggdrasill, just as does *Völuspá* itself. He makes no use of the *Sigrdrífumál* passage. On the other hand, in *Ynglinga saga* he gives an elaborate account of how Mímir came to be decapitated by the Vanir and how Óðinn preserved his head:

⁵ Finnur Jónsson, *De Gamle Eddadigte* (1932), 15.

⁶ *ibid.* 251-2. Hropr is one of Óðinn's names.

Then they took Mímir and beheaded him and sent the head to the Æsir. Óðinn took the head and smeared it with herbs so that it should not rot, and chanted spells over it and put such power into it that it spoke with him and told him many hidden matters Óðinn had Mímir's head with him, and it told him many tidings from the Otherworld.⁷

Besides these two groups of texts we have only scattered hints: the name *Sokkmimir*, 'Mímir of the Deep',⁸ applied to a being whom Óðinn visits in disguise, apparently to obtain magic mead (*Grímnismál* 50); the names *Mímameiðr* and *Hoddmimis holt* (*Fjölsvinnsmál* 19-22, *Vafþrúðnismál* 45), both generally thought to refer to Yggdrasill, and of which the latter means 'Treasure-Mímir's Wood' and is parallel to the form *Hoddrofnir*, 'Treasure-Opener', in *Sigrdrífumál* 12.

The interpretation of these passages has caused much difficulty. Some scholars have declared it impossible to reconcile the conception of Mímir as guardian of the well of wisdom with that of him as an oracular head,⁹ and have pointed to the discrepancies in the forms of his name and the uncertainty as to whether he is Áss or giant as signs that we have only the remains of separate and irreconcilable myths. Others consider that he was originally a water god, and that the expression *Míms hofuð* in *Völuspá* 46 should be taken figuratively to mean fountain-head or well-head (source of the waters of wisdom); the metaphor would then have been misunderstood as a literal expression, and the tale of the mummified oracular head would be taken from memories of ancient headhunting and necromantic practices to account for it.¹⁰ It has also been suggested that Mímir lived in

⁷ *Ynglinga saga* chs. 4, 7; Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, *Heimskringla* I (1941), 13 18.

⁸ Gering prefers the form *Sokkmimir*, which he renders as 'der streitbare Riese', *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda* (1927-31), I 214.

⁹ e.g. Gering, *Kommentar*, I 37; H. A. Bellows, *The Poetic Edda* (1936), 12, 20.

¹⁰ See de Vries, *loc. cit.* and references there given; also S. Nordal, *Völuspá* (1952), 123-4. For headhunting among Germanic peoples, see H. M. Chadwick, *The Growth of Literature*, I 92-4; J. de Vries, *Kelten und Germanen* (1960), 12-16; for divination from mummified heads, see M. Eliade, *Le Chamanisme et les Techniques Archaïques de l'Extase* (1951), 352.

his well and thrust his head above its waters to reply to those who questioned him.¹¹

Such simplifications seem unsatisfying when set beside the actual Eddaic texts. If *Míms hofuð* merely means 'fountain-head of Mímir's Well', it is hard to see how Óðinn could be said to speak with it, or how it could itself speak, as in *Sigrdrífumál* 13; the only plausible explanation would be to connect it with a system of taking oracles from the sound of running water, but there is no evidence to suggest that such a practice was used by the heathen Norsemen. In any case one would have to admit that confusions and misunderstandings had already sprung up round this expression by the time the passage in *Sigrdrífumál* was composed, since one can scarcely account for 'Heiðraupnir's skull' and 'Hoddrofnir's horn' as natural extensions of this metaphor. It would be preferable to find an explanation that reconciles the discrepancies and at the same time does not entail departing from the literal meanings of the texts.

In various recent articles¹² Dr Anne Ross has presented a body of evidence from archaeological finds, from ancient and medieval Irish literature, from legends of Welsh and Cornish saints, from Welsh folk-practices, and from stories recently collected in Scotland, to show that in Celtic areas there is a frequent association between holy wells and severed heads. It has already often been noted that the best analogues to Mímir's speaking head are Celtic: the head of Bran in the *Mabinogion*, and the heads of several Irish heroes.¹³ In general it can be said that among the Celts severed human heads were revered as

¹¹ A. Olrik, *Nogle Grundsætninger for Sagnforskning* (1921), 91.

¹² A. Ross, 'The Human Head in Insular Pagan Celtic Religion', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* XCI (1960), 10-43; 'Severed Heads in Wells: an Aspect of the Well Cult', *Scottish Studies* VI i (1962), 31-48; 'Note on Votive Pottery Associated with Wells', *Scottish Studies* VI ii (1962), 228-34; 'Gently Dip But Not Too Deep', *The Listener*, Aug. 30, 1962.

¹³ For various aspects of Celtic head beliefs see, besides the articles of Dr Ross cited above, T. F. O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology* (1946), 282-3; N. K. Chadwick, 'Imbas Forosnai', *Scottish Gaelic Studies* IV (1960), 119 ff.

having oracular powers, as protecting the land where they were preserved, as presiding at an Otherworld feast, and as themselves the embodiments or symbols of an Otherworld god. The material assembled by Dr Ross contains several further points of considerable interest in connexion with the study of Mimir. She shows that a skull or skulls have frequently been found in sacred wells and pools of the Romano-British period; that there are Welsh and Irish stories of heads as guardians of holy and healing wells, and of wells and streams appearing where a severed head strikes the ground; that there is a belief, found both in Wales and Scotland, that the waters of a healing well are only effective if drunk from a particular skull; that such place-names as 'Well of the Heads' are common in Scotland and are often explained by stories of restless or speaking heads of murdered men being washed in or thrown into the well. In one case, the legend of the Cornish Saint Melor, it is said that the saint's murderer was carrying his head away when it spoke to him and ordered him to strike his staff into the ground, whereupon the staff changed into a most beautiful tree, "and from its roots an unfailing fountain began to well forth" The legend of this saint is thought to contain certain heathen motifs; for instance, he has a silver hand like that of the Irish divine king Nuadu.

The similarity of this Celtic material to the story of Mimir as told by Snorri is pointed out by Dr Ross herself:

The decapitation of the head, its preservation, its association with a well, and its powers of prophecy and Otherworld knowledge are all features which recur in Celtic tradition and belief. All the evidence suggests that this episode in Norse mythology, if not a direct borrowing from a Celtic source, at least owes its presence in Norse tradition to a detailed knowledge on the part of the story-teller of such beliefs among the Celts.¹⁴

The undoubtedly strong resemblance could, however, also be explained by supposing that both Celtic and Scandinavian traditions have preserved traces of archaic

¹⁴ A. Ross, 'Severed Heads in Wells', 41.

beliefs inherited from a common source. The general theme of the powers of the severed head appears in Norse literature quite apart from the story of Mimir, though the references to it are admittedly somewhat rare. There is the myth that tells that Heimdallr was killed by a man's head, though the details of the story are unfortunately lost;¹⁵ in *Eyrbyggja saga* ch. 43 a shepherd finds a severed head lying on a rocky slope singing a verse that prophesies a fight soon to take place on that spot;¹⁶ the Orkney Earl Sigurðr ties the head of his enemy Melbricte to his saddle, but is poisoned by a gash from its tooth;¹⁷ in *Þorsteins þáttur bæjarmagns*, a colourful *lygisaga*, a gigantic head "with flesh and mouth", growing from the end of a vast drinking-horn, speaks and receives gifts of gold.¹⁸ Furthermore, the related theme of the skull used as a drinking-cup is known, e.g. in *Völundarkviða*. Thus it cannot be taken for granted that the whole complex of ideas concerning heads was simply borrowed from the Celts. Even the more limited theme of the association of heads and water may be a survival of ancient beliefs of the Indo-Europeans; it occurs in the story of the dismemberment of Orpheus, whose head was thrown into the river Hebrus, where it floated downstream singing, until it was cast ashore on the coast of Lesbos and there preserved as an oracle in a cave.¹⁹

There also exists an English folk-tale of considerable interest in this connexion. It has been preserved in

¹⁵ Snorri, *Skáldskaparmál* ch. 15: "A sword is called 'Heimdallr's head'. It is said that he was struck down by a man's head; there is a verse about this in the *Heimdallargaldr*, and since then a head has been called 'the destruction of Heimdallr' " (*ed. cit.* 83.) The myth must be an old one, since it forms the basis of kennings, but its significance is obscure. There are Irish examples of the motif of the human head as a weapon; T. P. Cross, *Motif-Index of Early Irish Literature* (1952), F 839. 4.

¹⁶ Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarson, *Eyrbyggja saga* (1935), 116.

¹⁷ Guðbrandur Vigfússon, *Orkneyinga saga* (1887), 5-6.

¹⁸ Guðni Jónsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda* (1944), III 397-417. Although this *þáttur* is too striking to be omitted from a list of Icelandic tales of severed heads, it contains much that may be suspected of foreign origin, and its speaking head is not likely to be derived purely from native traditions.

¹⁹ Ovid, *Metamorphose*: XI; Philostratus, *Heroica* V 704.

George Peele's *The Old Wives' Tale*, of 1595, and in the chap-book *History of the Four Kings of Canterbury, Colchester, Cornwall and Cumberland, their Queens and Daughters*.²⁰ In Peele's play a father despairs of finding husbands for his daughters, since one is beautiful but ill-tempered, the other good but ugly. He is advised to send them to a Well of Life; the first to reach the well is the ill-tempered one, and when she "offers to dip her pitcher in, a Head rises in the well." It sings:

Gently dip, but not too deep,
For fear you make the golden beard to weep;
Fair maiden, white and red,
Stroke me smooth and comb my head,
And thou shalt have some cockell-bread.

Enraged, the girl breaks her pitcher on the head;²¹ the husband she meets is a deaf fool. Later her gentle sister also comes, with a blind man who loves her; when she dips her pitcher in, "a Head comes up with ears of corn, which she combs into her lap", and then "a second Head comes up full of gold, which she combs into her lap." The first of these heads sings the same song as that which appeared to her sister; the second sings:

Gently dip, but not too deep,
For fear you make the golden beard to weep;
Fair maid, white and red,
Comb me smooth and stroke my head,
And every hair a sheaf shall be,
And every sheaf a golden tree.

The gold she has thus won enables her and her husband to live prosperously.

The chap-book version of this story tells how the King of Colchester's daughter, persecuted by a wicked step-

²⁰ Printed in R. H. Cunningham, *Amusing Prose Chapbooks* (1889); also in E. S. Hartland, *English Fairy- and Folk-Tales* (1890).

²¹ Her anger is roused by the term 'cockell-bread'. Peele's is the earliest reference to this; it seems to have been the name of a mildly indecorous country game, and also of bread made from dough kneaded in a somewhat unusual manner and used as a love charm. See note *ad. loc.* in A. Thorndike, *Minor Elizabethan Drama* II, *Pre-Shakespearean Comedy*, 150-1; also NED *s.v.*, and Wright's *Dialect Dictionary s.v. cocklety-bread*.

mother, sets out to seek her fortune, having nothing with her but bread and cheese and small beer. This she shares with an old beggar, who directs her to a well beyond an apparently impassable thick thorny hedge, and tells her to sit on its rim.

Then coming to the well, she had no sooner sitten down, but a golden head came up with a singing note, "Wash me, comb me, lay me down softly." "Yes," said the young lady; then putting forth her hand, with a silver comb performed the office, placing it upon a primrose bank. Then came up a second and a third, saying as the former, which she complied with; and then pulling out her provision, ate her dinner. Then said the heads one to another, "What shall we do for this lady, who has used us so very kindly?" The first said, "I will cause such addition to her beauty as shall charm the most powerful king in the world." The second said, "I will endow her with such perfume, both in body and breath, as shall far exceed the sweetest flowers." The third said, "My gift shall be none of the least, for as she is a king's daughter, I'll make her so fortunate that she shall become queen to the greatest prince that reigns." This done, at their request she let them down into the well again, and so proceeded on her journey.

The princess's evil and ugly step-sister, learning of her good fortune, goes to the same well, but without sharing her food with the beggar. When the first of the heads appears:

She banged it with her bottle, saying, "Hang you, take that for your washing." So the second and third heads came up, and met with no better welcome than the first. Whereupon the heads consulted among themselves what evils to plague her with for such usage. The first said, "Let her be struck with leprosy in her face." The second said, "Let an additional stink be added to her breath." The third bestowed on her a husband, though but a poor country cobbler.²²

This English folk-tale has a close parallel in the Norwegian *Buskebrura*, 'The Bushy Bride'²³, though in this version the three heads emerge from a stream, not a well. This story also concerns a girl persecuted by a wicked step-mother and step-sister.

²² Cunningham, *op. cit.* 194-7.

²³ P. Chr. Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Moe, *Samlede Eventyr* (1944), II 52-4.

One day they sent her to the stream to fetch water, and up came an ugly, horrible head to the surface of the water. "Wash me, you!" said the head. "Yes, I will willingly wash you," said the girl, and began to rub and wash the ugly face; but a horrible task she thought it. When she had done so, a second head came up to the surface, and it was even more horrible. "Brush me, you!" said the head. "Yes, I will willingly brush you," said the girl, and tugged at the matted hair; but you cannot imagine more unpleasant work than that. When she had finished, a still more ugly and horrible head came to the surface. "Kiss me, you!" the head said. "Oh yes, I will kiss you," the girl said, and she did so, but she thought it the hardest task she had had in her life. Then the heads talked together, and they asked each other what they should do for this girl who was so kind. "She shall be the most beautiful girl there is, and as bright as the light of day," said the first head. "Gold shall drip from her hair every time she brushes it," said the second. "Gold shall fall from her mouth every time she opens it," said the third.

The wicked step-sister in turn goes to the stream, but refuses the heads' requests, so they decree that she should have "a mouth three ells wide, and a nose four ells long, and a fir-bush in the middle of her head, and that every time she spoke, ashes should fall from her mouth."

As the English folk-tale can thus be paralleled from Norway, and since in any case there is no reason to connect it with the Celtic areas of Britain, it would seem unlikely that Mimir is the only ancient non-Celtic example of a speaking head associated with water. The line of development represented by these stories differs in several ways from that discussed by Dr Ross; here the heads are bestowers of beauty, wealth, and luck in marriage, rather than guardians of healing waters; here too, and only here, we find the account of heads actually rising out of the waters of the well or stream, and their requests (oddly suggestive of a ritual or cult) to be washed, combed, brushed, stroked or kissed. Nor are these stories linked with explanations of particular place-names or the cults of local saints; they support the idea that the association of head and well was once widespread, though undoubtedly more easily traceable in Celtic cultures than elsewhere.

It therefore seems advisable to re-examine in some detail the texts concerning Mímir with Dr Ross's arguments in mind, and to see how far they cast light on the problems involved.

On this hypothesis, it becomes clear that there are not two or three Mímirs with different natures and attributes, but one; the severed head, still magically alive, is inside the well at the root of Yggdrasill, and Snorri's paraphrase of *mæliŕ Óðinn við Míms hofuð* as "Óðinn rides to Mímir's Well and takes counsel from Mímir" is no longer an arbitrary piece of rationalizing. The problem of whether Mímir was an Áss or a giant becomes of less importance; probably he never belonged to either category, but was essentially the Head, an Otherworld deity whose aptest title is *Sokkímimir*, 'Mímir of the Depths'. As such, he belongs neither to the world of the living nor wholly to that of the dead; there is thus no real contradiction between passages where he seems living and active, drinking the waters of his own well, and those where he seems merely to respond to Óðinn's necromantic arts.

Nor is his association with a tree or wood a discordant element; a connexion between holy wells and magic trees is common in folklore, and also in Irish literature,²⁴ and there are possible traces of it in some of the head-and-well stories — most clearly in that of St Melor (see above, p. 45), and perhaps also in the unexplained reference to a "golden tree" in the second version of the Head's song in Peele's *Old Wives Tale*, and in the magic thorn-hedge in the *History of the Four Kings*. Of course these may simply be wandering motifs accidentally attached to the story. It is not certain, though it is generally assumed, that the *Mímameiðr* of *Fjölsvinnsmál* 19-22 and the *Hoddmímis holt* of *Vafþrúðnismál* 45 are Yggdrasill; in the former passage particularly the qualities of the tree are not so much those of a cosmic supporter as of a healing tree,

²⁴ A. Ross, 'Note on Votive Pottery Associated with Wells', and references there given.

with particular value to women in childbirth. In any case, whether or not Mimir's connexion with Yggdrasil or some other tree is an original part of his myth, it is in no way irreconcilable with his major function.

The major function of Mimir is of course to be both the source and guardian of wisdom, especially magical, chthonic and prophetic wisdom; his name is cognate with *memor*, and the waters of his well (or its mead — see below, p. 52) give knowledge, not healing. That Óðinn's eye²⁵ should be hidden there has been often interpreted as being on one level a nature-myth symbolizing the dipping of the setting sun in the ocean, and on another, a myth of the winning of wisdom by sacrificial torments. At the same time it cannot be dissociated from the practice, amply attested over a wide area of Europe and at many periods, of offering sacrifices to sacred wells by casting objects or victims into them; thus Adam of Bremen speaks of the sacrifices held at the well beneath the sacred tree at Uppsala, and of a living man being cast into it.²⁶ Such sacrifices would accord well with a belief in an Otherworld deity dwelling in the depths of a well.

Of particular interest is the obscure passage of *Sigrdrífumál* translated above, p. 42; even if the last four lines of the first of these stanzas are an interpolation, their presence does at least prove that at some stage in the transmission of the poem someone thought it appropriate to pass from the runes carved by Óðinn to the "liquid that oozed from Heiðdraupnir's skull and Hoddrofnir's horn", and from this to an episode concerning Mimir's head. These two names are usually held to refer to Mimir. Hoddrofnir, 'Treasure-Opener', resembles the name Hoddmimir in *Vafþrúðnismál* 45; it probably refers to the "treasures" of hidden knowledge which he can bestow, or perhaps to literal wealth of which he is the guardian.

²⁵ And perhaps Heimdallr's horn; see below, p. 52.

²⁶ *Gesta*, IV 26 schol. 134. For other examples of well-offerings in the Scandinavian area, see A. Olrik and H. Ellekilde, *Nordens Gudeverden* (1926-51), I 372-93.

Heiðdraupnir, 'Bright Dripper', suggests the idea of Mímir's head rising, dripping, from the liquid of his own well; it is possible that this liquid was not mere water but the magic mead of knowledge, for *Völuspá* 28 speaks of Mímir drinking mead, and the element *heið*-itself may mean 'bright mead'.²⁷ In any case it is this liquid, "oozing" from a skull, which confers knowledge of what are apparently the most secret of runes, "mind-runes"

The second of the *Sigrdrífumál* verses is most tantalizing. Does it merely mean that Óðinn (if it *was* he who stood on the cliff, despite the uncharacteristic sword) consulted Mímir's head at a time of peril, as in *Völuspá*? Or does it imply that he himself had just cut off Mímir's head, which then for the first time spoke to him? And if this is so, is there any connexion with *Grímnismál* 50, where Óðinn boasts: "I was named Sviðurr and Sviðrir at Sökkmímir's, where I tricked the old giant and I alone was the death of Miðvitnir's famous son"?

Another unresolved problem concerns the association of Mímir with the Gjallarhorn, from which, according to Snorri, he drinks the waters of his well. Some scholars have seen in this only a misunderstanding of *Völuspá* 26, where it is said that *Heimdallar hljóð* is hidden under Yggdrasil and drenched by waters pouring from Val-Father's pledge. The sense of *hljóð* here is obscure; most interpreters take it to mean 'voice', and so 'horn', but Nordal believes it to be Heimdallr's ear (as Snorri says, he could hear even grass growing), and that he had cast it into the well, as Óðinn had his eye.²⁸ But Snorri's interpretation receives some support from the mention of a horn in *Sigrdrífumál* 12, and perhaps also from *Völuspá* 46, where the Gjallarhorn is mentioned immediately before Mímir's head and where the phrase *horn's á lopti* might imply not merely that it is being blown, but that it has been raised from some deep hiding place. That

²⁷ R. Höckert, *Völuspá och Vanakulten* (1926-30), I 528.

²⁸ S. Nordal, *Völuspá*, 94-6.

a deity of the Otherworld should be guardian of a remarkable drinking-vessel, whether horn or goblet, or of a magical cauldron, is a frequent motif in myth and legend.

It is evident that the problems concerning Mímir are never likely to be fully resolved, but the parallels presented here do at least make it probable that the various passages concerning him are merely presenting different facets of a single, though complex, figure, and that the approaches to understanding his significance are not blocked by any irreconcilable contradictions.

THE DATE OF THE COMPOSITION OF THE SAGA OF THE GREENLANDERS

BY JÓN JÓHANNESSON

Translated by TRYGGVI J. OLESON

Introduction

SHORTLY before his untimely death in 1957, Dr Jón Jóhannesson, Professor of History in the University of Iceland, published a very important essay on the date of the composition of the so called *Grænlandinga saga* or *þáttir* (*The Saga of the Greenlanders*). This appeared in Icelandic in a Festschrift presented to Professor Sigurður Nordal on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, *Nordæla* (Reykjavík, 1956), under the title of 'Aldur Grænlandinga sögu'.

As is well known to students of the explorations and settlements of the Icelanders in the Western Hemisphere, there has long existed a controversy among scholars as to the relative age and reliability of the two principle sources on the settlement of Greenland and the Vinland voyages around the year A.D. 1000: *The Saga of the Greenlanders* and the *Saga of Eiríkr the Red*. On the whole scholars have up to the present tended to regard the latter as the older and more trustworthy source,* but in his essay Dr Jóhannesson has added his voice to the few who in the past have regarded the *Saga of the Greenlanders* as the earlier and more valuable source. He has, it seems to me, advanced very strong arguments in support of his contention and, if they are accepted, they will of necessity lead to a large re-assessment, as indeed the author points out, of the history of the discovery of America and the pioneering voyages of the Icelanders thither. Because of the importance of this work and because it is both buried in a Festschrift and written in a language with

* For a discussion of the problem see Halldór Hermannsson, *The Vinland Sagas* (Islandica XXX; 1944).

which, alas, too many of those who presume to write on the Vínland voyages are unacquainted or read at best with difficulty, I have ventured to translate *Aldur Grænlendinga sögu* into English so that its conclusions may reach a wider circle both of scholars and of the many who possess an intelligent interest in the subject. My translation is also intended as a tribute to one of the finest historians Iceland has been fortunate enough to possess, although unfortunately for so short a space of time.

Professor Jón Jóhannesson's widow, Guðrún Helgadóttir, has graciously given her permission for the publication of this translation.

My only addition is the genealogical table on p. 60. The translation follows.

In volume IV of *Íslenzk fornrit* (1935) Matthías Þórðarson edited the saga which he called *Saga of the Greenlanders* (*Grænlendinga saga*) and which has since then been known by that name. It does not exist in a complete form or in any one manuscript, but consists of three parts found in the *Great Saga of Óláfr Tryggvason* (*Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar hin mikla*) in *Flateyjarbók* (chs. 340, 342 and 427-433). Hereafter for the sake of convenience the three parts will be referred to as A, B and C. Part A (ch. 1 in Matthías Þórðarson's edition) is found for the most part in other manuscripts of the *Great Saga of Óláfr*, and these portions derive from the accounts of the discovery of Greenland and its settlement recorded in the *Landnámabók* of Sturla Þórðarson (died 1284). It is thus clear that A cannot be the original beginning of the saga, and we can say nothing about that with certainty now. The closing passage in A, which lists the men who went to Greenland with Eiríkr and settled there, together with B and C (chs. 2 and 3-9 in Matthías Þórðarson's

edition) are only found in *Flateyjarbók*. The closing passage of A and the early part of B are dependent on the accounts of the discovery of Greenland and its settlement found in Sturla Þórðarson's *Landnámabók*, which differ from those given in Haukr Erlendsson's *Landnámabók*. It is possible to explain this material from *Landnámabók* in many ways, but it is most likely that the author of the text in *Flateyjarbók* inserted it as a connecting link when he incorporated the *Saga of the Greenlanders* in the *Saga of Óláfr*. The date of the *Saga of the Greenlanders* cannot thus be in any way determined from its relation to *Landnámabók*, and there is nothing to indicate that other written sources were used in the composition of the *Saga of the Greenlanders*.

Both the *Saga of the Greenlanders* and the *Saga of Eiríkr the Red* deal with the Vinland voyages, but they differ greatly. The latter is more detailed and agrees with various other sources, where comparison is possible, but the *Saga of the Greenlanders* has its own distinct version in these matters. For this reason most scholars have concluded that the *Saga of the Greenlanders* is not as trustworthy as, and younger than, the *Saga of Eiríkr* — that its composition may be as late as the fourteenth century. Sigurður Nordal was the first to point out how weak these arguments were. He writes:

“Finally it should be noticed concerning the two sagas dealing with the Vinland voyages, *Eiríks saga* and *Grænlendinga þáttir* (*Saga of the Greenlanders*), that there does not seem to be any particular reason to treat the latter as much younger (and less trustworthy) than the former. On the contrary, the two sagas, which each deal with the same subjects, are so independent of each other that the natural conclusion appears to be that they were both written about the same time, but in different parts of the country. *Eiríks saga* uses information which may stem from Gunnlaugr Leifsson

and which is also used by Snorri in *Heimskringla*, viz. that to Leifr Eiríksson (the missionary!) belongs the honour of discovering Vinland, while *Grænlendinga þáttur* names instead the otherwise unknown Bjarni Herjólfsson — a tradition which, in spite of some troublesome details, may well be the older and sounder one.”¹

There can be no doubt that Sigurður Nordal is on the right track here and that he has laid the foundation on which future views of the age and trustworthiness of the *Saga of the Greenlanders* will be based. In my opinion, however, he might have gone further. I believe that the *Saga of the Greenlanders* is older than the *Saga of Eiríkr* and that it was known to the author of the latter, who deviated from it, influenced by other sources, particularly the *Saga of Óláfr* by the monk, Gunnlaugr. In support of this view, certain arguments will now be advanced.

Towards the end of the two sagas, genealogies are traced from Karlsefni and Guðríðr down to Bishop Brandr Sæmundarson of Hólar (1163-1201), Bishop Þorlákr Runólfsson of Skálholt (1118-1133) and Bishop Björn Gilsson of Hólar (1147-1162). Both sagas certainly contained these genealogies from the time of their composition, as may be seen from prophecies recorded in them earlier about the descendants of Guðríðr. The *Saga of the Greenlanders* says that Þorsteinn Eiríksson, the husband of Guðríðr, uttered the following shortly after his death:

“I am desirous of telling Guðríðr her *fate* in order that she may bear my death better, for I have reached a goodly and restful haven. As for you, Guðríðr, you will be married to an Icelandic man, and have with him a long wedded life *and many descendants who will be vigorous, bright and famous, sweet and of good odour.*”²

¹ *Nordisk kultur* VIII B (1952), 248-249.

² *Íslensk fornrit* IV (1935), 259-260.

In the *Saga of Eiríkr*, on the other hand, the sybil, Þorbjörg, who is called Little Sybil (*lítillvölva*), says to Guðríðr:

"I will reward you out of hand for the help you have given us, for I now see your destiny very clearly. You will make, here in Greenland, as worthy a match as is possible, but it will not be long lasting, for your future path leads to Iceland, *and there a great and goodly lineage will spring from you, and bright rays of light will shine over your descendants.* Fare well and be hale, my daughter."³

In both sagas the reference is obviously to the bishops who are among the descendants of Guðríðr. The prophecies, which are clearly fictional, cannot be older than the genealogies in the concluding passages of the sagas, and were most likely written by the same authors. It is a strange coincidence, however, that two such similar prophecies should independently occur to two writers. Another passage in the *Saga of Eiríkr* throws some light on this. Here Þorsteinn speaks to Guðríðr shortly after his death and the incident is reported thus:

"He also told her of his circumstances and said that she would have a notable future. But he bade her beware of marrying a Greenlander."⁴

It might be expected that the author would here explain more fully what Guðríðr's destiny was to be, since he took the trouble to mention it at all, but he did not do this, for it would have meant only a repetition of what he had already recorded. There seems to be only one explanation of why the author should mention here for the second time a prophecy concerning Guðríðr's future. He must have known either the *Saga of the Greenlanders* or similar accounts and preserved here relics of these. However, it

³ Sven B. F. Jansson, *Sagorna om Vinland I* (1944), 43. Cf. *Íslenzk fornrit IV* 208.

⁴ *Sagorna om Vinland I*, 55; *Íslenzk fornrit IV* 216.

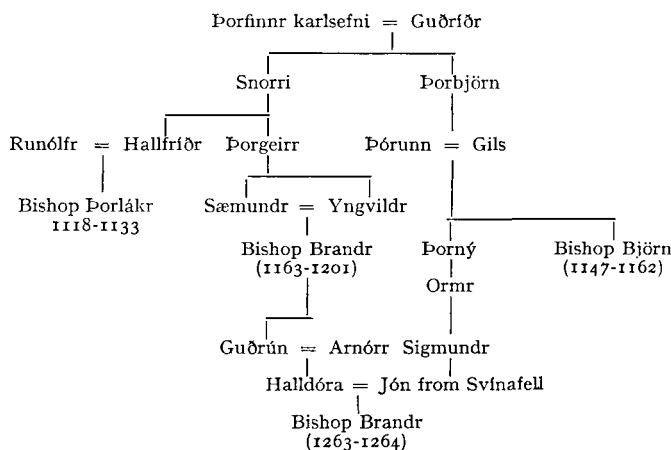
seems to have struck him as more satisfactory to have the prophecy of Guðríðr's fate occur early in her lifetime, and for that reason he invented the episode about Þorbjörg, the Little Sybil.

Let us now look again at the genealogies. Neither of the sagas mentions the name of Bishop Brandr's father, but it is significant that the bishop is in no way further identified in the *Saga of the Greenlanders*, whereas in both manuscripts of the *Saga of Eiríkr* he is referred to as "Bishop Brandr the First" (*Brandr byskup inn fyrri*) and is thus distinguished from Bishop Brandr Jónsson of Hólar (1263-1264). It is, therefore, clear that the *Saga of Eiríkr* was written after 1264. This dating also agrees well with the fact that the author of the *Saga of Eiríkr* seems to have used the *Landnámabók* of Sturla Þórðarson. To be sure, both the present writer and others have held the opinion that an older version of the saga previously existed. Sven B. F. Jansson shows, however, that material from the *Landnámabók* of Sturla Þórðarson has not been interpolated in the early chapters of the *Saga of Eiríkr* in any mechanical or artificial way, but rather in a manner one would expect only the original author to have employed.⁵ It is very probable, therefore, that the characteristics which have led scholars to postulate an earlier *Saga of Eiríkr* are to be explained by the author's use of various written sources. On the other hand, a study of the text of the *Saga of the Greenlanders* leads most naturally to the conclusion that it was composed before 1263, and is thus older than the *Saga of Eiríkr*.

Bishop Brandr Jónsson was also a descendant of Karlsefni and Guðríðr, and, moreover, through two branches of the family. His father, Jón from Svínafell, was the son of Sigmundr Ormsson of Valþjófsstaðir, but the mother of Ormr was Þorný, the sister of Bishop Björn Gilsson. Again, the mother of Bishop Brandr Jónsson was Halldóra, whose father was Arnórr

⁵ *Sagorna om Vinland* I, 84-90.

Kolbeinsson, and whose mother was Guðrún, the daughter of Bishop Brandr Sæmundarson.



It is very strange that the author of the *Saga of Eiríkr* did not trace the genealogy to Bishop Brandr Jónsson as he did to the other bishops, but very understandable in the case of the author of the *Saga of the Greenlanders*, if it was written before 1263. This neglect on the part of the author of the *Saga of Eiríkr* can only be explained on the assumption that he got the genealogies from some work without realising their nature fully or noticing that it was necessary to add the name of the fourth bishop who was descended from Guðríðr. It is most probable that his source was the *Saga of the Greenlanders*, for there are no longer any grounds for the assumption that there existed an older *Saga of Eiríkr*.

It is possible to advance further arguments on other grounds for this dating of the *Saga of the Greenlanders*. The *Saga of Eiríkr* states that Leifr Eiríksson went to Norway and spent the winter with King Óláfr Tryggvason. The following summer the king sent him to Greenland to introduce Christianity. On that voyage Leifr discovered Vínland the Good and saved some shipwrecked sailors.

He was thereafter called Leifr the Lucky.⁶ Similar accounts are found in *Heimskringla*,⁷ the *Saga of Christianity* (*Kristni saga*),⁸ the *Great Saga of Óláfr Tryggvason*⁹ and a geographical treatise in AM 194, 8vo (from 1387).¹⁰ Some scholars have erred in ascribing the latter in its entirety to Abbot Nikulás of Þverá (died 1159), but there is no doubt that he did not write the part which deals with Leifr.¹¹ The wide distribution of these accounts has led scholars to accept them as true. In reality, however, it is likely that all are to be traced to one source, i.e., as Sigurður Nordal has hinted, the Latin *Saga of Óláfr Tryggvason* by the monk, Gunnlaugr Leifsson of Þingeyrar (died 1219).

The author of the *Saga of the Greenlanders* had no knowledge of either the visit of Leifr to Norway or missionary activity in Greenland, and according to him it was not Leifr Eiríksson but Bjarni Herjólfsson who first discovered Vínland. On the other hand, Leifr later sailed in search of the lands which Bjarni had seen, and found them. On his homeward voyage he rescued shipwrecked sailors from a skerry and was from then on called Leifr the Lucky.

This account in the *Saga of the Greenlanders* is obviously not dependent on the account given by Gunnlaugr Leifsson and the other works which follow him. But how is it possible that the author of the *Saga of the Greenlanders* was not acquainted with an account which at an early date became very well known and was regarded as trustworthy by leading scholars? Ignorance cannot be pleaded, for if that were the case, his knowledge of many individuals of the eleventh and twelfth centuries who appear to be historical personages would be inexplicable. The only acceptable explanation is that the *Saga of the*

⁶ *Sagorna om Vinland* I, 45-8; *Íslensk fornrit* IV 209-212.

⁷ *Íslensk fornrit* XXVI (1941), 334, 347.

⁸ *Biskupa sögur* I (1858), 20.

⁹ See *Íslensk fornrit* IV 243-244, 248.

¹⁰ *Alfræði íslensk* I (1908), 12.

¹¹ *ibid.*, xx.

Greenlanders was composed considerably earlier than the date to which its composition is generally ascribed. It seems most natural to believe that it is older than the *Saga of Óláfr* by Gunnlaugr, which was composed about 1200. This view would make the *Saga of the Greenlanders* one of the oldest of the Icelandic sagas, written in the days of Bishop Brandr Sæmundarson (1163-1201).

The likelihood that the account given in the *Saga of the Greenlanders* is both old and historically sound is strengthened by the fact that Gunnlaugr's story and other related ones concerning Leifr's missionary activities in Greenland, instigated by King Óláfr, are very dubious. The oldest sources know nothing at all of the conversion of Greenland by Óláfr, and yet they supply an exhaustive list of all the lands and peoples he was responsible for converting. *Historia Norvegiæ* says that he converted the Orkney and Faroe Islanders, the Shetlanders and the Icelanders, in addition to the Norwegians.¹² The poetic *List of the Kings of Norway* (*Noregskonungatal*) and the *Catalogus rerum Norvegiæ*,¹³ both of which derive from the *Lives of the Kings* (*Konungaævi*) by Sæmundr the Learned, state that King Óláfr christianised five lands whose names are, however, not given. *Ágrip* again records that he christianised five lands: Norway, Iceland, Shetland, the Orkneys and the Faroe Islands.¹⁴ In a second group are the related poems, the *Lay of Óláfr Tryggvason* (*Óláfs drápa Tryggvasonar*), which is incorrectly attributed to Hallfreðr the Troublesome Poet (*vandræðaskáld*), and the *Rekstefja* of Hallar-Steinn. They relate that King Óláfr brought Christianity to five lands: Shetland, the Islands (i.e. Orkneys), Norway, Greenland and Iceland.¹⁵ The authors of the poems were obviously acquainted with the tradition that King Óláfr converted five lands, but they were uncertain as to what lands they were and finally

¹² *Monumenta historica Norvegiæ* (1880), 116.

¹³ *ibid.*, 183.

¹⁴ *Ágrip* (1880), 37; (1929), 22.

¹⁵ *Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning*, A I 546, 575-576; B I 527-528, 570.

inserted Greenland in place of the Faroe Islands. Finally the *Saga of Óláfr Tryggvason* by the monk Oddr Snorrason of Þingeyrar, states that it is said that King Óláfr converted five lands and the inhabitants thereof. The lands are then listed, but six, not five, names are given: Norway, Shetland, the Orkneys, the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland.¹⁶ It seems clear that Oddr Snorrason used two sources, one from each of the two groups mentioned above. Leifr is not mentioned in any of these works.

It will be seen from the above that the earliest historians in Norway and Iceland knew nothing of the conversion of Greenland by King Óláfr. Indeed, the *Historia Norvegiæ* says that the Icelanders found and settled Greenland and strengthened it with the Catholic faith.¹⁷ This can hardly be understood in any other sense than that the Icelanders were responsible for the conversion of the Greenlanders. Later it appears that, through misunderstanding, it came to be believed that King Óláfr had a share in this. From this it seems to follow that Leifr's visit to Norway is probably unhistorical, as is also his missionary activity in Greenland, since it is connected with King Óláfr. The monk Gunnlaugr appears to be the original author of these tales. Leifr thus did not discover Vinland on his way from Norway to Greenland, and there remains no reason to doubt that the *Saga of the Greenlanders* preserves the original and correct account of the discovery of the new lands in the Western Hemisphere.

When the author of the *Saga of Eiríkr* chose to follow Gunnlaugr's account of the discovery of Vinland, he had to deviate in various matters from the *Saga of the Greenlanders*. He had to omit completely the episode about Bjarni Herjólfsson, for this could in no way be reconciled with Gunnlaugr's account. He had to alter

¹⁶ *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar eftir Odd munk Snorrason* (1932), 154, 155.

¹⁷ *Monumenta historica Norvegiæ*, 76.

radically the episode about Leifr's search for lands and strike out everything which could not be reconciled with the story that Leifr found Vínland on his homeward voyage from Norway. Some details he ascribed to Þorfinnr Karlsefni and his companions, such as the naming of the new lands. Indeed he seems to have been very partial to Karlsefni and Guðríðr, even more so than the author of the *Saga of the Greenlanders*, although the difference between the two is not great in that matter. Most significant, however, is his displacement of the account of Eiríkr the Red. According to the *Saga of the Greenlanders* Leifr asked his father, Eiríkr, to head the exploratory expedition. After some hesitation Eiríkr agreed to this, but changed his mind when his horse stumbled, throwing him and hurting his foot, as he was on his way to the ship. This tale could not be used by the author of the *Saga of Eiríkr*, for he believed that Leifr sailed from Norway while Eiríkr was in Greenland. He, therefore, chose to connect this tale about Eiríkr with the exploratory voyage of the latter's son, Þorsteinn. These differences clearly illustrate the author's method, and they cannot be explained in any acceptable way if one believes that the *Saga of Eiríkr* preserves older traditions than the *Saga of the Greenlanders*. In the second place, the author of the *Saga of Eiríkr* has added some details. He relates that Eiríkr, on the morning he was to depart on the voyage, took a chest containing gold and silver and hid it. Then, when Eiríkr was thrown from his horse and hurt, the author has him blame his fall on the fact that he hid the chest. Sven B. F. Jansson has, however, pointed out that in this matter the *Saga of the Greenlanders* preserves an older mode of thought, in that it relates that it was the fall from his horse that caused Eiríkr to change his mind.¹⁸

It would be instructive to continue this comparison of the two sagas, but more will not be attempted here. One must, however, remember that it may well be that

¹⁸ *Sagorna om Vinland* I, 130-132.

the author of the *Saga of Eiríkr* may have used other written sources than the *Saga of the Greenlanders*, the *Saga of Óláfr* by Gunnlaugr (or a related work) and the *Landnámabók* of Sturla Þórðarson. It is by no means impossible that some of them may have been older than the *Saga of the Greenlanders*. The author of the *Saga of Eiríkr* was, no doubt, a learned man. His work shows acquaintance with the bookish geographical lore of southern Europe, such as the concept of the circle of lands¹⁹ and the Land of the Unipeds, although ideas about the former were also based on the experience of the Norse seafarers. Such views as these never appear in the *Saga of the Greenlanders*, another testimony to its age.

Previously, no one seems to have even entertained the thought that the author of the *Saga of Eiríkr* may have been acquainted with the *Saga of the Greenlanders*. There are two reasons for this. Opinions about the comparative age of the two sagas prevented such an opinion from being advanced. Secondly, the style and language of the two sagas do not indicate any such connection between them. The wording of them is alike only in one instance. "Þeir höfðu með sér alls konar fænað" (they had with them all kinds of domestic animals), occurs in both sagas in the account of Þorfinnr Karlsefni and his companions.²⁰ It would be dangerous to assert that this is pure coincidence. Again, one might point to related works, where the wording shows little, or no more, similarity than in our two sagas. For example, the author of the C version of the *Ljósvetninga saga* seems to have re-written an episode from the original version, which is still extant, but the similarities of wording are very slight.²¹ There is thus no reason to reject the view that the author of the *Saga of Eiríkr* knew and used the *Saga of the Greenlanders* even though evidence of similar wording in the two sagas is slight.

¹⁹ Cf. "um haf innan", *Sagorna om Vinland* I, 50; *Íslenzk fornrit* IV 213.

²⁰ *Íslenzk fornrit* IV 224, 261; *Sagorna om Vinland* I, 64.

²¹ Björn Sigfússon, *Um Ljósvetninga sögu* (Studia Islandica 3, 1937), and *Íslenzk fornrit* X (1940), xxiv-xxvi.

Opinions as to the value of the *Saga of the Greenlanders*, considered as a source, must inevitably be radically altered if it can be shown that it dates from the latter part of the twelfth century and not from the thirteenth or fourteenth century. Bishop Brandr Sæmundarson, third in line of descent from Snorri, Karlsefni's son, who was born in Vínland, could well have been the author's authority for the material in the saga, or if not he, someone close to him. At the end of the saga we read: "And of all men Karlsefni has given the most complete account of all these voyages, the account of which has to some extent been related here." There is no reason to doubt the truth of these words, and, indeed, the saga itself testifies that its contents are to be traced to Karlsefni and Guðríðr and have come down from them through the family. However, the prophecy about the descendants of Guðríðr indicates that the author of the saga took more liberties than would now be acceptable in historiography.

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON SCANDINAVIAN PERSONAL NAMES IN ENGLISH PLACE-NAMES*

By GILLIAN FELLOWS JENSEN

AN examination of the place-name material from the areas of Scandinavian settlement in England, collected and excerpted from printed sources at Copenhagen University's Institute for Place-Name Research, has revealed many facts which can help to throw light on Danish and Norwegian nomenclature in the Viking Period. Elucidation of problems concerning the personal names in place-names can often be found in other early English records and it is greatly to be regretted that no comprehensive list of the Scandinavian personal names found in English sources up to, say, the middle of the thirteenth century has yet been assembled and published. The value of such a list would lie in its very pretension to completeness and, within the limited scope of this article and with the material at present at my disposal, it would be impossible to give a fair sample. I wish only to comment on a few aspects of the place-name material which demonstrate the important contribution that the study of personal names can make to our knowledge of the nomenclature of the Vikings who invaded and settled in England and that of their descendants.

* Abbreviations used in this article:

County abbreviations are those used by the English Place-Name Society.

Bower = I. M. Bower, *The Place-Names of Lindsey*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, London University, May 1940.

BrNGG = J. Brøndum-Nielsen, *Gammeldansk Grammatik* I, 2nd ed., 1950.

DaGP = *Danmarks Gamle Personnavne*, 1936 —.

DEPN = E. Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*, 4th ed., 1960.

Feilitzen = O. Feilitzen, *The Pre-Conquest Personal Names of Domesday Book*, 1937.

Lind = E. H. Lind, *Norsk-Islandske Dopnamn*, 1905-15.

LRS = publication of The Lincoln Record Society.

Payling = L. W. H. Payling, *The Place-Names of the Parts of Holland*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, London University, June 1940.

PNCu = *The Place-Names of Cumberland*, ed. Cameron, EPNS XX-XXII, 1950-52.

PNnt = *The Place-Names of Nottinghamshire*, ed. Gover, Mawer and Stenton, EPNS XVII, 1940.

The name *Áskell*/*Eskil* (ON) or *Askil*/*Eskil* (ODan) is common in Scandinavian sources (cf. Lind and DaGP s.v.) and appears in English place-names in various forms, not only as *Askel*/*Askil* and, with *i*-mutation, *Eskel*/*Eskil*, but also as *Asketill*/*Anketell* and *Askete*. It is another form of the name, however, which I propose to discuss here. This form occurs in two Cumberland place-names: 1. *Astinebi* c. 1210 (cf. *William filius Astini* in *Astinebi* named in the same document) (Alstonby Hall, PNCu 102); 2. *Astinhole* 1261 (field-name in Rottington, PNCu 430). This name *Astin* may not at first sight appear to be a form of *Ásketill* and it has in fact been identified by various scholars with ON *Hásteinn*, ODan *Hasten* (e.g. E. Björkman, *Nordische Personennamen in England* (1910), 65), and this identification is probably correct for such early occurrences as *Astan*/*Asten*, the name of a ninth-century moneyer on English coins. In the thirteenth century, however, there is other evidence to show that *Astin* was derived from *Ásketill*. Two pleas were brought in Lincoln in 1202. The defendants, Alan and William, were the sons of a man who is variously referred to in the four entries in the Assize Rolls as *Astin*, *Anketill* and *Hanketill* (LRS 22. 194, 195, 509, 510). The two forms *Astin* and *Hanketill* appear within two lines of each other in entry number 194. *Astin* would appear to be a generally recognised diminutive form of *Ásketill*. It may have developed through a form *Asketin*/*Anketin*. A name *Askatin* (of a bishop of Bergen) is recorded by Lind. In one source (*Diplomatarium Islandicum* III 48¹⁴) this man is called *anglus* and Lind thinks that this could be correct. He suggests the possibility of the name's being borrowed from England. This possibility is also urged by Björkman, *op. cit.* 17, and Janzén in *Nordisk Kultur* VII (1947), 106. Janzén explains the name as a side-form of *Ásketill* with the substitution of the romance diminutive ending *-in(us)* for *-ill(us)*. This would imply Norman influence. The name, however, while occurring some few times in

English sources (e.g. *Ernild' filiam Asketini* (LRS 22, 393), *Anketinus messor* 1202 (*ibid.* 627) who is probably the same man as *Anketillus messor de Lutha* 1202 (*ibid.* 1032)), is apparently not recorded in Normandy. The abbreviated form *Astin* would appear to be Anglo-Scandinavian for it is not recorded as being borne by a Scandinavian in one of the homelands. It is, however, of interest in that it shows how easily and naturally the Scandinavian names were assimilated by the English.

Old sources contain several references to Danes bearing the name *Asfrid*. Among those quoted in DaGP are *Osfred cognomento Turdimulo*, *Osfrid f. Heiligen*, *Osfred*, all 811, *Ansfridum* ninth century, *Ansfridi Dani* tenth century, and in the form *Ostrid* the name occurs frequently in Denmark after 1239. These *Ostrid* forms could, in fact, equally well represent an earlier *As(f)røth*. A variant *-frøðr* of the element *-friðr* is found in both OW and OE Scandinavian (cf. ON *Hallfrøðr*, quoted by Janzén, *op. cit.* 103, the Manx runic inscription's *qsrupr* = *Asrøðr* < *Asfrøðr*, quoted in Lind, and the Hunestad runic inscription's *laikfrup* = *Læikfrøð* (<-frepur). The development *e* > *ø* presumably occurs under the influence of both the following *u* and the preceding *fr*; cf. BrNGG § 85 n.1. No form *As(f)røth* is recorded in English sources but Domesday Book names a few men called *Asford* (cf. Feilitzen s.v.) and this form appears in some place-names: 1. *Osfyrðtuna in Hoylandia* 1060 [*Asfertun*, *Asfortonia* 1316] (Aspertun L, Payling 108); 2. *Osferdebie* 1086 [*Asfordebia* c. 1125] (Asfordby Le, DEPN); 3. *Asfordecroft* 1200 (field-name in Saxilby L, Bower 568); 4. *Asforthebi* c. 1200 [*Hasfordebi* 1200, *Esfordebi* 1202, *Asfordebi* 1212] (Asserby L, DEPN and Bower 141); 5. *Hasfordhirn* 1316 (field-name in L, Payling). The name in 1. may be either original OE *Ösfrīð*, showing metathesis, with the later forms influenced by the Scandinavian name, or an original *Asford*, with the 1060 document giving an anglicised form. The 1086 form of 2. has probably been

anglicised. Feilitzen explains the element *-ford/-fort* as a development by metathesis from *-frøð(r)*, comparing *Durford* < *Þorfrøðr* (Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum* (1885-93), 1130). Lindkvist (in *Middle-English Place-Names of Scandinavian Origin* (1912), 171) had previously explained the development as being *Asferd* > *Asfeord* > *Asford* by diphthongisation before *-rð* and shift of stress, referring to Birch (*loc. cit.*) where the three forms *Durferð* passim, *Durfeorð* and *Durforð* are found. Feilitzen objects to this on the grounds of lack of evidence for diphthongisation of *-forð* in early sources and explains the isolated *Durfeorð* as a compromise between *Durferð* and *Durforð*. He also draws attention to the fact that in pre-Conquest sources the *o* variant is only found in Scandinavian names. This would seem to necessitate the derivation of *Asford/Asfort* from an unrecorded **Asfrøð(r)* and not from *Asfrith*. There is, however, just a possibility that the *Asford* forms show the introduction of the *o* variant by analogy, cf. in Domesday Book *Briford*, *Saxford* < OE *Beorhtfrið*, *Seaxfrið*, quoted by Feilitzen, § 14.

There is not very much evidence for the existence of a name *Ásvarðr/Asward* in old Scandinavian sources. Lind records (from *Njáls saga*) an *Ásvarðr* in Norway in the late tenth century and an *Aswordh* in 1520. The name is not found independently in Denmark but occurs in the place-name Asserbo (*Aswarboth*, *Asworthebode* etc., twelfth century, *Danmarks Stednavne* II (1929), 66). This sparse Scandinavian material can be supplemented from English sources. The form *Asward* occurs in three English place-names: 1. *Aswardetierne* 1086 [*Haswertherne* 1130, *Hasewardesthirne* 1166, *Aswardehirnewap* 1175] (*Aswardhurn* wapentake L; O. Anderson, *The English Hundred-Names* (1934), 59); 2. *Asuuardebi*, *Wardebi* 1086 [*Assewartheby* 1219] (*Aswarby*, *Aswardhurn* wap. L; DEPN); 3. *Asuuardebi* 1196 [*Aswardebi* 1212] (*Aswardby*, *Aswardhurn* wap. L; DEPN). These three place-names

may all have been named from the same man. In addition, two place-names contain forms of the personal name in *Os-*. These may represent either OE *Ōsweard* or Old Scandinavian *Asward*, since the *Os-* could be an Anglicisation of the original *As-* or a native Scandinavian development from **Ansu-* by *u*-mutation to *Qs-* and later development to *Os-* due to nasalisation (cf. BrNGG § 85 n.3, § 154, and L. Jacobsen and E. Moltke, *Danmarks Runeindskrifter*, cols. 115-17, 695n) or, of course, it could be original OE *Ōs-*. The place-names in question are: 1. *Oswardebec*, *Wardebec* 1086 (Oswaldbeck (lost) an eleventh-century division of Bassetlaw wapentake), taking its name from a stream and the manor; 2. *Oswardesbec* 1130 (PNNt 24, 43).

The three points treated above are only a few of the many which can confirm, add to or call in question existing information about Scandinavian personal names. It is much to be desired that the English Place-Name Society's county surveys for the areas of Scandinavian settlement will soon be completed and that the number of old documents from these areas made available in printed form will steadily increase, so that a comprehensive list of Scandinavian names in English sources may become something more than a castle in the air.

UM DAUÐANS ÓVISSAN TÍMA

Allt eins og blómstrið eina
upp vex á sléttri grund
fagurt með frjóvgun hreina
fyrst um dags morgunstund,
á snöggu augabragði
af skorið verður fljótt,
lit og blöð niður lagði,
líf mannlegt endar skjótt.

Svo hleypur æskan unga
óvissa dauðans leið
sem aldur og ellin þunga;
allt rennur sama skeið.
Innsigli öngvir fengu
upp á lífsstunda bið,
en þann kost undir gengu
allir að skilja við.

Dauðinn má svo með sanni
samlíkjast, þykir mér,
slyngum þeim sláttumanni,
sem slær allt hvað fyrir er;
grösin og jurtir grænar,
glóandi blómstrið frítt,
reyr, stór sem rósir vænar
reiknar hann jafn-fánýtt.

“ON DEATH’S UNCERTAIN HOUR”

BY HALLGRÍMUR PÉTURSSON

(1614-1674)

Translated by G. M. GATHORNE-HARDY

As grows a floweret tender
Up from the level lawn,
To bloom in purest splendour
Beneath the rays of dawn,
Then, by the scythe invaded,
Lies in a moment’s span,
Dead leaves, and colours faded —
So ends the life of man.

Childhood, of fate unwitting,
Ripe age and old foredone,
Along Death’s pathway flitting,
The self-same race must run.
No seal of state availeth
To grant our life a stay;
One common doom assaileth
All men — to pass away.

Then Death, meseems, most truly
Is like a reaper shown,
Who plies his sickle duly
Till all the field is mown.
Nor green of herbs and grasses
Nor flush of flowers he heeds,
But reed and rose he classes
Alike as worthless weeds.

Lífið manns hratt fram hleypur,
 hafandi öngva bið,
 í dauðans grimmar greipur,
 gröfin tekur þar við.
 Allrar veraldar vegur
 víkur að sama punkt;
 fetar þann fús sem tregur,
 hvort fellur létt eða þungt.

Hvorki fyrir hefð né valdi
 hopar dauðinn eitt strík;
 fæst sízt með fögru gjaldi
 frestur um augnablik;
 allt hann að einu gildir
 hvort illa líki eða vel;
 bón ei né bræði mildir
 hans beiska heiftar-þel.

Menn vaða í villu og svíma,
 veit enginn neitt um það
 hverninn, á hvaða tíma,
 eða hvar hann kemur að.
 Einn vegur öllum greiðir
 inngang í heimsins rann;
 margbreyttar lízt mér leiðir
 liggi þó út þaðan.

Afl dauðans eins nam krenkja
 alla í veröld hér;
 skal ég þá þurfa að þenkja
 hann þyrmi einum mér?
 Adams er eðli runnið
 í mitt náttúrlegt hold;
 ég hef þar og til unnið
 aftur að verða mold.

Swift runs man's brief existence,
Nor pauses for a breath,
Till ends his vain resistance
In the grim grasp of Death.
All earthly roads are sweeping
Towards one common bourn,
Where all men, glad or weeping,
Willing or loth, must turn.

Nor force nor law's devices
The steps of Death can stay;
No golden bribe suffices
To gain an hour's delay.
He comes, as little heeding
If welcomed or withstood,
Nor yields to curse or pleading
The fierceness of his mood.

Mazed in a wild unreason
We stray, for none may know
How called, or at what season,
Or whither he must go.
One single way provided
Entry to earth's abode;
But thence we fare divided
By many a sundered road.

All flesh alike consuming,
Death strikes with weapon bared,
Can I then hope, presuming,
I shall alone be spared?
Since Adam's nature courses
Through every human vein,
My heritage enforces
Return to dust again.

Hvorki með hefð né ráni
hér þetta líf ég fann;
sálin er svo sem að láni
samtengd við líkamann;
í herrans höndum stendur
að heimta sitt af mér;
dauðinn má segjast sendur
að sækja hvað skaparans er.

Nú vel, í herrans nafni,
fyrst nauðsyn ber til slík;
ég er ei þeirra jafni,
sem jörðin geymir nú lík;
hvenær sem kallið kemur
kaupir sig enginn frí;
ég læt þar nótt sem nemur,
neitt skal ei kvíða því.

Ég veit minn ljúfur lifir
lausnarinn himnum á;
hann ræður öllu yfir,
einn heitir Jesús sá;
sigrarinn dauðans sanni
sjálfur á krossi dó,
og mér svo aumum manni
eilíft líf víst til bjó.

Með sínum dauða hann deyddi
dauðann og sigur vann,
makt hans og afli eyddi,
ekkert mig skaða kann;
þó leggist lík í jörðu
lífir mín sála frí,
hún mætir aldrei hörðu
himneskri sælu í.

Life is no freehold, granted
To seisin or the sword;
My soul, in flesh implanted,
Was lent me by the Lord;
In his control it standeth
To claim his own anew;
Death is the slave he sendeth
To seek the Maker’s due.

Then, in God’s name, my brothers,
Since it must needs be so,
I am but as the others
Who rest in graves below.
No ransom price can aid me,
Whenever comes the call;
Yet, though the night o’ershade me,
I will not fear at all.

For sure in love abideth
My Saviour on his throne;
O’er all things he presideth,
Jesus his name alone;
Death’s victor, condescending,
Upon the cross he died,
And thus did life unending
For me, poor wretch, provide.

Death, by his death defeated,
Was overthrown and slain;
From sovereign power unseated,
To harm me ne’er again.
Though earth my flesh may cover,
My ransomed soul shall rise,
Its toils and torments over,
To bliss above the skies.

Jesús er mér í minni,
mig á hans vald ég gef,
hvort ég er úti eða inni,
eins þá ég vaki og sef;
hann er mín hjálp og hreysti,
hann er mitt rétta líf,
honum af hjarta eg treysti,
hann mýkir dauðans kífi.

Ég lifi í Jesú nafni,
í Jesú nafni eg dey;
þó heilsa og líf mér hafni
hræðist ég dauðann ei.
Dauði, ég óttast eigi
afl þitt né valdið gilt,
í Kristí krafti eg segi:
kom þú sæll, þá þú vilt.

On Jesus' love I ponder,
I yield me him to keep,
At home or when I wander,
Whether I wake or sleep.
He help and strength supplieth,
My very life is he,
On him my heart relieth
To soften death for me.

His name through life shall stay me,
And calm my dying breath;
Though health and life betray me,
I will not shrink from Death.
O Death, no more I dread thee,
For all thy might and power,
But in Christ's strength I bid thee
Welcome, whate'er the hour.

TWO LITTLE-KNOWN RENDERINGS OF THE OLD NORSE "WAKING OF ANGANTÝR"

By BRUCE DICKINS

ESPECIALLY after the publication in 1768 of Gray's versions from the Old-Norse Tongue of "The Fatal Sisters" (*Darraðarljóð*, from *Njála*) and "The Descent of Odin" (*Vegtamskviða*, or *Baldrs Draumar*) there was a lively, if scarcely well-informed, interest in Old Norse poetry. From this field no work proved so compelling to the English translator or adapter as "The Waking of Angantýr", of which several versions are recorded at pp. xxxiv-xxxv of the introduction to Chr. Tolkien's edition (London 1960) of *Saga Heiðreks Konungs ins Vitra*, the alternative title of which is *Hervarar Saga ok Heiðreks konungs*. Two, however, seem to have escaped the notice of the editor, those by William Bagshawe Stevens (1775) and the Rev. Joseph Sterling (1794). Stevens was in 1775 a demy (that is a scholar receiving half of the maximum allowance of a fellow) of Magdalen College, Oxford, and did not graduate till the next year, when he was appointed First Usher of Repton School, of which he became Headmaster in 1779. He held the post till his death in 1800, along with the rectory of Seckington and the vicarage of Kingsbury (both in Warwickshire) of which the patrons were the Burdetts of Foremark, Derbyshire. No great success either as a headmaster or as a parish priest, he was popular with the local gentry, perhaps because he was in some way connected with the Bagshawes of Ford Hall, Chapel-en-le-Frith. Stevens's most distinguished pupil was Joseph Bosworth (1789-1876), the Anglo-Saxon lexicographer, who was in 1858 elected to the re-constituted Rawlinson Chair in Oxford and added to its endowment; moreover he gave £10,000 in 1867 to establish the Elrington and Bosworth

Professorship of Anglo-Saxon in Cambridge, which came into being in 1878 when W. W. Skeat was elected. The best account of Stevens, with a reproduction of his portrait, is in Alec Macdonald's *A Short History of Repton* (1929), pp. 127-137.

Stevens's version of "The Waking of Angantýr" is at pp. 87-99 of his first book:¹ *Poems, consisting of Indian Odes and Miscellaneous Pieces*. Printed for the Author, and sold by J. and J. Fletcher, and S. Parker. Sold also by J. Bew, No. 28, in Paternoster Row. London. M.DCC.LXXV. 4to, pp. viii-107. "Hervor and Angantyr, An Ode imitated from an antient scald" is, it is claimed, taken from Olaus Verelius's *Hervarer Saga*, which is of course *Hervarar Saga på Gammal Götska, med Olai Verelii uttolkning och Notis* (Upsalæ 1672), pp. 91-95. Verelius's rendering was into early modern Swedish, and it is far more probable that Stevens was in fact dependent on the English prose translation provided by George Hickes (who had used Verelius) in *Linguarum Vett. Septentrionalium Thesaurus, Pars Prima* (Oxford 1705), pp. 193-5, from which the passage corresponding to the stanzas quoted is printed below. Verelius knew well enough that the correct nominatives, in his spelling, were *Swafa* and *Swafurlame*, whereas Hickes, followed by Stevens, was under the impression that the oblique cases *Suafu* and *Suafurlama* were the nominatives of the personal names we write *Sváfa* and *Svafrlami*.

It will be sufficient to quote Stevens's first two stanzas:

HERVOR

A WAKE! my Father, from the Dead,
 A From thy dark and dreary Bed
 Awake! — It is thy Child that cries,
 SVAFU'S Daughter bids thee rise;
 Bids thee from thy Tomb of Hell,

¹ Stevens's second book, listed in the printed catalogue of the British Museum Library as though it were another edition, is a different book altogether.

(Answering to my mutter'd Spell)
 Bids thee from thy Hallow'd Side
 Give that Sword the Warriour's Pride,
 Whose hardiest Strength and keenest Pow'r,
 Forg'd by Dwarfish Hands of yore,
 Gave an Empire firm and free,
 To thy Fathers and to thee:
 By my Helmet's sable crest,
 Mailed Coat of martial Wear;
 By my Sword, in Sharpness drest,
 Fiery Shield, and bloody Spear;
 From all 'neath ev'ry Root comprest,
 HERVOR breaks thy Iron-Rest.
 What are Andgrym's Sons no more,
 Vers'd so well in Mischief's Lore?
 Mute are EYVOR's Children all,
 Unresponsive to my Call?
 Then let my Curse, of blasting Pow'r,
 Within your Ribs unhallowed light;
 O let Corruption's tainted Show'r
 Pierce you in your Beds of Night;
 Unless, with Ear to my Commands,
 Ye give the Sword that Dwarfish Hands
 Call'd to Life, and bade to live,
 And the Belt of Glory give.

ANGANTYR

Daughter! thou whose pow'rful Spell
 Opes the dreary Jaws of Hell,
 Muttering thus those Accents dread,
 What Mischiefs wait thy desperate Head!
 Madness sure thy Soul oppress'd
 Thus to break my sealed Rest.
 No Father led me to my Grave,
 No Friend the Tears of Pity gave;
 And two, who still surviv'd, possess'd
 The Sword in magic Laurels drest;
 And TIRFING still the one enjoys.

[HERVOR. Awake Angantyr, Hervor the only daughter of thee and Suafu doth awaken thee. Give me out of the tombe, the hard'nd sword, which the dwarfs made for Suafurlama. Hervardur, Hiorvardur, Hrani, and Angantyr, with helmet, and coat of mail, and a sharp sword, with sheild and accoutrements, and bloody spear, I wake you all under the roots of trees. Are the sons of Andgrym, who delighted in mischief, now become dust and ashes! Can none of Eyvors sons now speak with me, out of the habitations of the dead! Harvardur, Hiorvardur! so may you all be within your ribs, as a thing that is hang'd up to putrifie among insects, unless you deliver me the sword which the dwarfs made ****and the glorious belt.

ANGANTYR. Daughter Hervor, full of spells to raise the dead, why dost thou call so? wilt thou run on to thy own mischief? th[o]u art mad, and out of thy senses, who art desperatly resolved to waken dead men. I was not buried either by father or other friends. Two which lived after me got Tirfing, one of whome is now possessor thereof.]

The second of these renderings occupies pp. 5-9 of *Odes. By the Rev. Joseph Sterling*. London: Printed for T. Payne, Mews-Court, 1794. This is a quarto pamphlet of 20 pages, of which pp. 2 (reverse of title), 10 and 20 are blank. It contains three items, each with its separate dedication. "Ode from the Hervarar Saga" is dedicated to the [2nd] Earl of Moira, a distinguished Irish peer; "Ode to Plynlymmon Hill" appropriately enough to Thomas Johnes, Esq., of Hafod (then occupied on the translation of Froissart); and "Hymn to Love. From the Second Book of Oppian's Cynegeticon" to Mrs Parkyns; she can be identified with Elizabeth Anne, the beautiful, witty and wealthy wife of Thomas Boothby Parkyns who was in 1795 raised to the Irish peerage as Baron Rancliffe. The introduction (p. 4) shows that Sterling's version is based on pp. 56 ff. of *Hervarar Saga*

ok *Heidrekskongs* [sic] *illustravit Stephanus Biörnnonis* (Hafniæ 1785).

After the half-page of Introduction the scene is set in a sonnet — which, like the nineteen examples printed in Sterling's *Poems* (thirteen in 1782 and six more in 1789), illustrates rather well the vogue of that form in the last quarter of the eighteenth century:

THE sun sets angry, clouds the sky o'ercast,
 T Red gleams the lightning, deep the thunders roar,
 Fell shriek the spirits of the northern blast,
 And loud the wild waves lash the rocky shore.
 A thousand tombs with fires portentous blaze,
 A thousand spectres cut the dusky air,
 The bold virago views with dauntless gaze
 Their jav'lins threaten, sees their faulchions glare.
 With haughty stride she treads o'er noble dust,
 The dust of monarchs and of warriors brave,
 Whose proud achievements claim'd the breathing bust,
 Tho' barb'rous honors only deck their grave.
 Angantyr's tomb approach'd the martial maid,
 And thus invoc'd her mighty father's shade.

The rendering, or rather adaptation, itself (which is, to put it mildly, free) begins:

HERV. Rise from thy sleep, Angantyr, rise,
 Thy daughter wakes thee, hear her cries:
 To me the fatal blade resign —
 Shall spectres wield the sword divine?
 Ye chiefs, who with my father fell,
 Obey, obey the potent spell;
 Ye chiefs, who rest beneath the oak,
 Sear'd by the lightning's rending stroke;
 Ye chiefs, who crimson'd glory's field,
 To me the sword Tyrfingyr yield:
 If not — eternal be your pain,
 And galling — galling be your chain!

ANG. O daughter, why, with charm unblest,
 Disturb thy sire Angantyr's rest?
 In Death's cold mansion strife should cease,
 And slaughter'd warriors sleep in peace.
 Ruthless Hervor, dire thy deed,
 That noble chiefs again should bleed;
 Tyrfingyr here you seek in vain,
 The victor's mede our arms remain.

These two stanzas will serve to illustrate the character of Sterling's version.

This was not his first venture into the Old Norse field, for already in 1782 his *Poems* included at pp. 27-46 (pp. 139-157 in the 1789 edition) "Odes from the Icelandic; with a dissertation and notes", in which "the sublime Gray" had been his guide. They were dedicated to the Hon. John Cunninghame,² presumably the eccentric, if not crazy, character who succeeded as 15th and last Earl of Glencairn in 1791 and died in 1796. These are "The Scald; An Ode" and "The Twilight of the Gods. An Ode". Sterling's introduction describes "The Scald" in the following terms: "The three first stanzas . . . contain a description of the Valhalla, or Hall of Odin, as it is pourtrayed in the Edda, Bartholinus de causis contemnendæ mortis, and other northern writers. In the fourth and fifth stanzas of the same Ode, the Flath Innis, or Noble Isle, is described; it was the paradise of the Celts, and differed in some particulars from the Valhalla." Indeed the skullcracking joys of Valhalla were in sharp contrast to the milder pleasures of the Noble Isle.

On "The Twilight of the Gods" Sterling comments: "The second Ode is still more obscure than the first, as in some measure it comprehends almost the whole Scandinavian mythology, which is a species of literature at present but little known." It seems unnecessary to

² He was reputed to be the author of a drama "in twenty-five acts and a few odd scenes, . . . commencing 'Act 1st, Scene I. Enter Adam and Eve stark naked, booted and spurred, puffing and blowing, in a hurry to be married'" (*Collectanea Genealogica*, p. 103, ed. James Maidment, Edinburgh 1883).

quote from either, both being similar in style to the stanzas already cited from "Ode from the Hervarar Saga".

Joseph Sterling was an Irish Protestant, a scholar of Trinity College Dublin who took his B.A. in 1769 but did not proceed to a higher degree. There is reason to believe that he was near of kin to (perhaps a younger brother of) the Rev. Anthony Sterling who between 1762 and 1799 held curacies and benefices in the dioceses of Waterford and Lismore. Anthony was the father of Edward Sterling of *The Times*, and so the grandfather of Sir Anthony Sterling, K.C.B., and of Carlyle's John Sterling. Joseph Sterling was in holy orders by 1781 at latest but I cannot trace that he was ever beneficed either in Ireland or in England despite his dedications and sonnets to promising patrons. His six volumes were published between 1768 and 1794, and he spent some time in England in the seventeen-eighties and -nineties. Not much is known of his career in England apart from letters written by him to Bishop Percy of the *Reliques* and printed in the 1858 volume of John Nichols's *Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century*. Those of 1791 show that he was a buyer of books, with a special interest in romances, and that he dined in good society, as with the 6th Earl of Granard, who had married the sister of the 2nd Earl of Moira mentioned above (Nichols, *viii*, 284-5). Those of 1794 solicit help for Mr Johnes in the elucidation of Froissart, and ask that letters may be directed to the writer at Mr Payne's, Mews Gate, the publisher of his *Odes* (Nichols, *viii*, 302-3). That is the latest information I have of him, unless by any chance he was the father of Paul Ivy Sterling (1804-79), who was called to the Bar and eventually became Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Ceylon (1855-63); when Paul Sterling entered T.C.D. in 1821 he was described as the eldest son of Joseph, *clericus*, of Queen's County.

Sterling was a keen medievalist whose interests were

not restricted to Old Norse, and a summary list of his publications may be welcome:

1. *Bombarino, a Romance: with Poems on the Four Sister Arts, viz. Eloquence, Poetry, Painting, and Music, and other miscellaneous Poems.* By Joseph Sterling, T.C.D. (pp. xv + 144, 8vo). Dublin: Printed by George Cecil. MDCCLXVIII.

Bombarino (a mock epic in imitation of Tasso, Ariosto, Spenser and others) occupies pp. 1-92, the second item pp. 95-122, the remainder pp. 123-144.

2. *The History of the Chevalier Bayard.* By the Rev. Joseph Sterling (pp. iv + 154, 8vo). Dublin: Printed by Luke White, No. 6, Crampton-Court. MDCCLXXXI. London: Printed for George Robinson, Paternoster-Row. MDCCLXXXI.

There is a sonnet dedicating the book to Frederick, 8th Earl of Carlisle, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland (1780-82); this was reprinted both in 1782 and 1789. *The History* has prefixed "A Dissertation on Chivalry" (pp. 1-36).

3. *Poems.* By the Rev. Joseph Sterling (pp. [ii] + 120, 12mo). Dublin: Printed by Joseph Hill. MDCCLXXXII.

The book is dedicated to Mrs Dickson, the wife of the Rev. William Dickson who became Bishop of Down and Connor in 1783. "The Rhapsodist" occupies pp. 3-26, "Odes from the Icelandic" pp. 27-46, "La Gierusalemme Soggettita" pp. 47-70, translations from Italian, Latin and Greek pp. 71-99, sonnets and other minor poems pp. 100-119, "Rime" in praise of Tasso p. 120.

4. *Cambuscan; or, the Squire's Tale of Chaucer, concluded by Mr Sterling* (pp. 112, 8vo). Dublin: Printed by J. Hill, No. 8, Cope-street. MDCCLXXXV.

Sterling's continuation occupies Stanzas CCXIV-CCCX.

5. *Poems.* By the Rev. Joseph Sterling (pp. vii-232, 8vo). London: Printed for G. G. J. and J. Robinson, Paternoster-Row. MDCCLXXXIX.

This edition is dedicated to William Dickson, Bishop

of Down and Connor (1783-1804), an Eton friend of Charles James Fox, to whom he owed the bishopric. There is a sonnet to him, and the British Museum copy is that presented to him by Sterling.

Cambuscan and a number of sonnets and other minor poems are added to the matter published in the earlier edition of 1782. There are, for example, at p. 226 a sonnet to Sir Richard M'Guire, Kt, who ascended in a Balloon at Dublin,³ at p. 229 another sonnet on the Eighth of May, the birthday of Miss Graham of Gartmore and of Edward Gibbon, Esq., and at pp. 230-232 an Ode for the Installation of the Knights of the Illustrious Order of St Patrick.

6. *Odes*. By the Rev. Joseph Sterling (pp. 20, 4to). London: Printed for T. Payne, Mews-Gate. 1794. Described above (p. 83).

Of Sterling's publications Numbers 2 (London), 3, 4, 5 and 6 are in the British Museum Library, 1, 2 (Dublin) and 6 in the University Library, Cambridge, and 3 and 5 in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

³ Dubbed in Dublin by the Lord Lieutenant on 14 May 1785, "as a mark of approbation for his undaunted courage and enterprising spirit in going up in the balloon".

ÁRNI MAGNÚSSON

By EIRÍKUR BENEDIKZ

THIS year is the tercentenary of the birth of Árni Magnússon or Arnas Magnæus as his contemporaries usually called him. In view of the debt all students of Old Icelandic and Old Norse owe to the Arna-Magnæan Collection it would seem not unbefitting that the *Saga-Book* should mark the occasion in a small way.

Árni Magnússon was born on the 13th of November 1663 in Dalasýsla in Iceland. He was brought up by his grandparents in Hvammur and later by an uncle, Páll Ketilsson, who prepared Árni for the Cathedral School at Skálholt which he entered at the age of 17 and left three years later.

In 1683 Árni went to the University of Copenhagen and became attestatus theologiæ after two years' study.

Soon after his arrival at the University Árni had the good fortune to come to the notice of Professor Thomas Bartholin, the learned antiquary and royal historiographer, who was looking for an assistant who knew Icelandic. He tested Árni's knowledge and was much impressed by his learning and the ease with which he translated and commented on difficult passages both of poetry and prose. He engaged Árni without any further question and the latter remained Bartholin's amanuensis until his death in 1690.

During these years Árni rendered invaluable assistance to Bartholin, both in the preparation of the work *Antiquitates danicæ*, which appeared in 1689, and by contributing about 3,000 foolscap pages of transcriptions, translations and commentaries on Icelandic source material to the so-called *tomi Bartholiniani* which are now preserved in the University Library.

It may be safely assumed that it was Bartholin who started Árni on his career as a collector of manuscripts.

When Áрни had to visit Iceland in 1685 for personal reasons in connection with his father's death he had explicit instructions from Bartholin to collect and bring back with him all the manuscripts he could possibly lay his hands on.

Many of the larger codices and other important manuscripts had already been sent out of the country and been deposited in the royal collection in Copenhagen and in the libraries of private collectors both in Denmark and in Sweden. But the farms and the cathedral libraries of Skálholt and Hólar were still a happy hunting ground for an ardent and avid collector like Áрни, who scorned no written scrap whether of paper or vellum, and would beg, borrow or buy — the method did not matter.

It is not known how fruitful this first visit was, but undoubtedly Bartholin must have been fairly impressed with the results, because he sent Áрни on a similar errand to Norway and Lund in 1689 to 1690.

After his return to Copenhagen Áрни still kept up his collecting and was untiring in writing letters to friends and relations in Iceland urging them to send him manuscripts. His great opportunity finally came when he was appointed by the King, together with lawman Páll Vídalín, to carry out a general survey of conditions in Iceland and enquire into administrative, judicial and trade affairs. This task took ten years, the greater part of which Áрни spent in Iceland.

After Bartholin's death Áрни became librarian and secretary to the Danish statesman Moth, who greatly appreciated his gifts and learning. It seems certain that it was due to Moth's influence that Áрни was appointed professor designatus at the University of Copenhagen late in the year 1694, shortly after he had left on a mission to Germany which lasted for two years. The primary object of this visit was to inspect and report on a collection of books which had been offered to the University and it would normally have lasted only a short time but Áрни

decided to extend his stay in Germany to pursue his own studies and interests. Árni's appointment had caused some criticism, chiefly because he had never had anything printed. We may presume that it was for this reason that Árni decided to publish an edition of some Danish chronicles under the title of *Incerti auctoris Chronica Danorum et præcipue Sialandiæ*. This book appeared in 1695 while Árni was in Leipzig.

Árni returned to Copenhagen late in the year 1696 and resumed his duties with Moth. In 1697 he was appointed secretary in the royal archives, a post which he held to his death.

It was about this time that the only book written by Árni Magnússon appeared in print in Copenhagen. It was almost certainly written at the request of Moth who had been one of the judges in the case. It deals with a case of witchcraft, or *obsessio diabolica* as Árni calls it, in the little town of Thisted in Jutland. The delinquents had been justly sentenced to imprisonment and it is clear that Moth, who trusted Árni's common sense and knew that he was free from the superstition of the age, considered him the right person to give a reasoned and at the same time a learned account of the affair. The pamphlet, 80 pages in small octavo, appeared in 1699 with the title *Kort og sandfærdig Beretning om den vidtudraabte Besættelse udi Thisted*.

As already mentioned, Árni spent the best part of ten years, 1702-1712, in Iceland on a royal mission. There is no need to go further into his work during these years except to say that, in spite of his official duties, Árni found time to pursue his life's interest of collecting, copying and studying manuscripts and other documents on the history of Iceland, its language and literature. The best known outcome of Árni's and Páll Vídalín's work in those years are the two monumental works not published until the present century, i.e. the *Manntal* of 1703, and the *Jarðabók* now printed in 11 volumes.

When Árni returned from Iceland in 1713 he took up his academic duties as professor "philosophiæ et antiquitatum Danicarum", the post to which he had been appointed in 1701, and in the University Library.

During all these years Árni's collection of books and manuscripts had steadily increased and contained many rare and invaluable items, some of which were irreplaceable. It was therefore an irredeemable calamity when his house caught fire in the great fire of Copenhagen of 1728. Although the greater part of the manuscript collection was saved, much was lost and almost all his printed books, among which was said to have been the only known whole copy of *Breviarium Holense*.

Árni married fairly late in life a widow ten years his senior, thus safeguarding himself against *cura posteritatis*, which he had so often in his talks and letters to friends shown a decided reluctance to shoulder.

Árni died on the 7th of January 1730.

Árni Magnússon was a man of great learning and a methodical, critical and intelligent scholar whose work and ideas were in many respects far ahead of his times. He disdained the uncritical methods of many of his contemporaries, who copied the works of others without any independent thinking and evaluation. Perhaps Árni's own words describe best his attitude to this type of scholarship: "Svo gengur það til í heiminum, að sumir hjálpa erroribus á gáng og aðrir leitast síðan við að útryðja aftur þeim sömu erroribus. Hafa svo hverir tveggja nokkuð að iðja."¹

Árni was known to learned men in many European countries and they wrote to him for help and information on books and manuscripts and especially for advice on points regarding the history of the Scandinavian countries. In this respect it would be meet to mention the great assistance Árni rendered to Þormóður Torfason (Torfæus),

¹ "And that is the way of the world, that some men put errors into circulation and others afterwards try to eradicate those same errors. And so both sorts of men have something to do."

the royal historiographer, in correcting and preparing his books for the press.

It is perhaps appropriate to end this brief sketch by reminding English readers that the second edition of Ari's *Íslendingabók* ever to be published was printed in Oxford in 1695 or 1696 (although with a title-page dated 1716 added later). It was edited by Christen Worm (born 1672, professor of theology 1710, bishop of Sjælland 1711, died 1737), but the translation and commentary were essentially the work of Árni. It seems typical of Árni, on the one hand, that he would not have this work regarded as his — "for that translation was made in my youth and consequently inaccurate" —, and, on the other hand, that he does not appear to have let the publication of his material without permission spoil his relations with Christen Worm.

BOOK REVIEWS

EARLY ENGLISH AND NORSE STUDIES. Presented to HUGH SMITH in honour of his sixtieth birthday. Edited by ARTHUR BROWN and PETER FOOTE. *Methuen and Co., Ltd.*, 1963. 225 pp.

The Quain Professor of English at University College London is honoured by the publication of a volume of nineteen essays by writers drawn from learned institutions of Britain, Scandinavia and America. They cover some of the many subjects on which this distinguished scholar has written. Appropriately enough in a *Festschrift* for a leading member of the Viking Society, seven of the items are concerned with Northern Research.

P. G. Foote has contributed an extended lexicographical note, listing thirty-three examples of the use of the rare Old Icelandic word *auðræði*, all from texts of clerical provenance. He identifies the first element, not with the noun *auðr* 'wealth', but with the common prefix *auð-* 'easy'. The word thus means 'easy proposal, easy action', and thence develops to 'easy circumstances' and so to 'wealth'. Professor Kr. Hald examines the evidence given by Danish place-names for the cult of Odin. He notes five possible examples (some of which require some special pleading) of the god's name combined with *vi* 'sanctuary', four combined with *hillæ*, an element of uncertain meaning, and one instance of *sal* 'building connected with the cult of the god'. There is, moreover, the district name *Othænsheret* (Onsjö, Skåne). There are few comparable examples of other gods' names used as place-name elements in Denmark, and Hald concludes that "a single god, Odin, played a completely dominant role in the public cult". Professor S. B. F. Jansson reports the discovery of a new runestone, an eleventh-century example re-used as a foundation stone of the tower of Törnevalla church, Östergötland. The beginning of the inscription is lost, but what remains is of interest. The stone commemorates one *DrængR*, a name otherwise unknown in Swedish runic texts, and was erected by the dead man's guild-brothers. It thus compares with the Bjälbo and Sigtuna stones, providing evidence of another early guild (presumably of merchants) in Sweden. Professor Chr. Matras discusses four place-name types rare in Norway but found in the Faroes, Orkney and Shetland, and occasionally elsewhere in the western world. Professor Sahlgren explains the town-name Eslöv (Skåne) as **Äsislev* 'ridge-dweller's inheritance', the ridge being either Söderåsen, or the smaller ridge on which the town itself stands.

In an ambitiously titled article, 'Uppsala, Iceland, and the Orient', Professor Dag Strömbäck examines the reputation of Uppsala in mediaeval Scandinavia. He discusses *Hvóa þáttir heimska*, which has analogues in Middle English, mediaeval French and Eastern tales, and shows how the writer combines the idea of Uppsala "as a place of . . . strange adventures" with that of the town "as a place with a firmly founded system of law and justice". Finally, Professor Turville-Petre contributes a short note on the *landdísir*, connecting them with the *spámaðr/ármaðr* of Koðrán Eilíffsson, with the spirits of natural objects venerated in early Scandinavia, with the elves, and with the cult of the dead.

There is much good material in the rest of the book — articles on Old and Middle English language and literature, and place-names. Outstanding, perhaps, are Professor H. C. Darby's consideration of the evidence of place-names for early geography, and a typically sceptical discussion by Professor R. M. Wilson of the language of Henry Machyn's diary. The editors are to be congratulated on producing a worthy *Festschrift* for a distinguished scholar.

R. I. PAGE

HUNDRAÐ ÁR Í ÞJÓÐMINJASAFNI. BY KRISTJÁN ELDJÁRN.
Reykjavík: Bókaiútgáfa Menningar sjóðs, 1962.

The National Museum of Iceland celebrates its hundredth birthday in February 1963. In the introduction to this book the Director of the Museum, Dr Kristján Eldjárn, gives a brief account of its foundation, its subsequent history and its manifold activities. It is of course primarily an archaeological and folk-life museum, but it is also responsible for the preservation of ancient monuments, for the supervision of local museums, for archaeological field-work, and for the maintenance of various special collections and archives, notable among them the place-name collection, not yet complete but offering a vast and practically untouched material for further investigation, and the recently instituted register of folk-customs (*þjóðhættir*), organised on a systematic basis but suffering from lack of money and, in consequence, of archive staff. Dr Eldjárn pays tribute to the work of his predecessors, not least to Dr Matthías Þórðarson who was Director from 1908 to 1947 and who died in 1961. Anyone who has visited the new Museum building, who has been in personal touch with its present staff or is familiar with their writings, to be

found in *Árbók hins íslenska fornleifafélags* and elsewhere, will know how well Dr Eldjárn and his colleagues are maintaining the traditions of scholarship and museum organisation established by Dr Matthías Þórðarson.

But the bulk of the book is made up of one hundred excellent plates, ninety-two of them from photographs taken by Gísli Gestsson, a member of the Museum staff, with on each facing page an article of 500-600 words on the object illustrated. Dr Eldjárn has solved the problem of selection in an unusual way, by taking ten items from the accessions of each of the ten past decades. This chronological order dictates the order in which the plates appear, and since the book celebrates the centenary of the Museum one cannot quarrel with it. Indeed, the result is to emphasise the great variety of the Museum's interests and to provide an excellent cross-section of its contents and responsibilities, illustrating both some of those antiquities that are outstanding in their artistic or historic significance and other humbler objects which have played their workaday part in the lives of past generations. A few random titles will suggest the scope: the contents of the tenth-century grave at Baldursheimur, the first gift the collection ever received; a cross-stitch coverlet from about 1700, with motives of much older origin, a design which remains an inspiration for Icelandic handwork of today; the ruins of the eleventh-century farm at Stöng in Þjórsárdalur; Víðimýrarkirkja, completed in 1836; an early eleventh-century coin hoard from Gaulverjabær; a loom of the old traditional pattern; shark-catching gear; the gravestone of the Rev. Jón Þorsteinsson, murdered by Algerian pirates in Vestmannaeyjar in 1627; a beautiful snuff-box (*baukur*) of walrus ivory from the late eighteenth century.

People who have read Dr Eldjárn's essays on antiquities and art history in his books *Gengið á reka* (1948) and *Stakir steinar* (1959) will know that he combines great historical and philological knowledge with his more specialised abilities as archaeologist and keeper of antiquities. They will know too that he writes with great clarity, perception and imagination, and that he can evoke an atmosphere of the living past without any affectation or preciousness of language. These gifts find new expression in this most worthy centenary volume.

PETER FOOTE

THE POETIC EDDA. Translated with an Introduction and Explanatory Notes by LEE M. HOLLANDER. Second edition, revised. *University of Texas Press. Austin, 1962.* xxix + 343 pp.

Despite the hard work that has gone into the revising of this annotated translation (first published in 1928), it still makes barbarous reading. The jostling archaisms, where the original is quite unarchaic — hight, thuswise, sate (i.e. sat), me dreamed, gan — and the bewildering, often grotesque inversions that make it difficult to grasp what is being said ('evergreen o'ertops Urth's well this tree') obliterate all distinction of style among the poems themselves and quite fail to convey the startling speed and clarity of idiom in the finer poems. The crude approximation to the alliterative metres, so laboriously achieved, is not worth the divergence from literal accuracy (*aurgo baki, Lokasenna* v. 48, is not 'with a stiff back', *svalar unnir, Völuspá* v. 3, are not 'salty waves', etc.) nor the distortion of English idiom. Alliterative rhythms spring from the natural rhythms of a language, and these depend on the conventional ways in which meaning is presented in the language: in sacrificing natural English word-order, therefore, Hollander is destroying his metre. Proper names are sometimes introduced to help the alliteration even though they are not in the original: this can alter the poet's intention by irrelevant association or inept precision (e.g. *Völuspá* v. 54, a stanza which should in any case have been revised in the light of Jón Helgason's edition, *Brot af Sigurðarkviðu* v. 19, *Allakviða* v. 30). Though it may have a few more inaccuracies than Hollander's, Bellows's remains the more valuable translation, more sympathetic to the original and more lucid in meaning (compare his *Völuspá* v. 40, "Among these one in monster's guise / Was soon to steal the sun from the sky", with Hollander's "will one of these, worse than they all, / the sun swallow, in seeming a wolf"). It is sad that the antiquated principles of translation which Hollander asserted in 1920 (see his General Introduction p. xxviii) should be repeated today when such a sparkling standard of translation is being set by American scholars and poets in other fields (Arrow-smith's *Petronius* — also from Texas, Lattimore's Greek poets, Lowell's 'Imitations'). The stylistic feeling of the translator must not be 'the court of last instance' but of the first. This is the greatest challenge he must meet.

URSULA DRONKE

ADORATIO CRUCIS. BY LILLI GJERLØW. *Norwegian Universities Press*, 1961. 177 pp.

In a spaciously printed book Dr Gjerløw considers mutilated pages of medieval manuscripts, relicts of Reformation binders' scissors, most of which are now deposited in Riksarkivet, Oslo. Her general conclusions are not unexpected, that English service-books were taken to Norway in the twelfth century, and that the *Decreta Lanfranci*, together with continental books, was used in the compilation of the Nidaros Ordinary. But the painstaking process of identification of the fragments collates and adds much factual information for students of medieval Christian thought. Some of the fragments indicate influences bearing solely on the Norwegian church. One group (designated Mi 12 in Ch. III) is an early English missal fragment, containing instructions for the Veneration of the Cross on Good Friday, which repeat phrases from the *Decreta Lanfranci* as well as from the *Regularis Concordia*. Three mutilated leaves, discussed in Ch. IV, attest the existence of the *Decreta Lanfranci* in a vernacular translation which may be linked with the name of Archbishop Øystein Erlendsson of Nidaros who was in England A.D. 1180-83. This translation obviously incites Dr Gjerløw to compare the *Decreta* with the Nidaros Ordinary for the Good Friday service and to demonstrate influence from the English book (Ch. V). But the lengthy discussion, in Chs. I and II, of the twelve leaves designated Mi 1 is illuminating particularly to an Anglo-Saxonist. Mi 1 is one of the earliest extant English missals, related to the school of script created by Æthelwold of Winchester and dated c. A.D. 1000. Its most notable feature is a series of three prayers prescribed by the *Regularis Concordia* for the Veneration of the Cross on Good Friday. These prayers, in exactly the *Concordia* form (as opposed to the form in earlier collections of prayers such as *The Book of Cerne*) and extant in a service-book of the Winchester school, allow Dr Gjerløw to suggest that Mi 1 represents a form of sacramentary which was available to the instigators of the *Regularis Concordia*. The investigation proceeds further to find a continental witness for the novel use of the three prayers, and a clue is offered by the inclusion of the *Concordia* form of the prayers in a twelfth-century Brussels missal (printed in Appendix I), compiled for the parish church of St Nicholas at Ghent. Monks of St Peter's at Ghent offered advice for the *Regularis Concordia* and Dunstan was in exile in that city, A.D. 955-57, so St Peter's may well have been the monastery from which the prayers went to the Brussels Missal and to the *Regularis Concordia*.

Dr Gjerløw's English style includes a few Scandinavianisms but none are likely to mislead. *Shere Thursday* (pp. 72, 73) for *Maundy Thursday*, however, is now obsolete.

J. E. CROSS

EIRIK THE RED AND OTHER ICELANDIC SAGAS. BY GWYN JONES. *London: Oxford University Press, 1961. xvi + 318 pp.*

Translation is ideally a process of assimilation into our literature, a making English of what had been quite foreign. The translator's responsibility is, of course, correspondingly high. The publication of these sagas in the *World's Classics* series is an unspoken recognition that assimilation has taken place.

Professor Gwyn Jones's book is excellent in many ways for bringing English readers to the literature of Iceland. To this end he has omitted some stumbling-blocks, such as the genealogies, and has provided an enthusiastic and illuminating introduction. His selection could hardly be bettered, the sagas and *pættir* being varied and good entertainment. He seems consciously to have avoided the traditions of translating from Icelandic: generally speaking, the archaisms of the Dasent-Morris school are as absent as the comparative vulgarities of more modern translations. His aim seems to have been to produce a translation into good English, shunning both extremes.

There is, however, a good deal of residual quaintness still present. In a way this is useful, for every reader will be aware that the sagas are often quaint. It might even be said that this is one of the properties that attract readers to such literature. Thus it is clever to retain passages like — "these arrow-maids of mine will have stung some of your comrades with a sleep-thorn ere I sink on the grass" (p. 36). But since such language occurs only now and then, it makes for a certain unevenness in style, especially when it is contrasted with phrases such as — "humming and hahing", "sent him packing", "to lick into shape". Some of the archaisms — as the one quoted above — are in the nice tradition: it is difficult to see the value of such words as "riever", "moil", "franklin" and "housecarl". Some expressions are simply pompous — "she proposed to succour him". Worthy of comment is the peculiar sentence on p. 146 — "He was a bad Christian, but he had an extensive knowledge of the wastelands" — brought about by a fusion of two sentences in the original. Even Icelanders were not always as strange as all that.

The difficulty of nomenclature in translating is one that must

be resolved. Generations of English readers will have known Eric the Red as such, and it is like springing an unkind scholarly trick to tell them that he is really Eirik. Similarly all the pleasant mystery of Wineland is lost when it is left as Vinland. Skrälingar could be written as Indians: Einfætingaland and Hvítramannaland ought to be translated, since they mean so little as they stand. To call Gunnlaug "Wormtongue" is quite to destroy the power of meaning that there is in the title and to produce a ludicrous effect.

Eirik's Saga — with its lively Gilbertian verses — is one of the best of a spirited bunch of translations and there seems no reason why it should not stand at the beginning of the collection. For the beginner it would certainly be a better introduction than Hen-Thorir. Of the rest Authun is a work of art, the tone admirably suiting the translator's arch style. The verses in the book are accurate and energetic and have the virtue of being readily comprehensible. An index of names would have been useful.

A. P. PEARSON

THE ICELANDIC SAGA. BY PETER HALLBERG. Translated with an introduction and notes by PAUL SCHACH. *University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln*, 1962. xxiv + 179 pp.

The need for a popular introduction to the prose literature of medieval Iceland has long been felt, and this is now provided by Dr Peter Hallberg, docent in literary history in the University of Gothenburg. Dr Hallberg studies the literature humanely against the background of history, and particularly the history of the thirteenth century, the Sturlung Age. In useful chapters he surveys the various theories about the origins of the sagas and the circumstances under which they developed, giving prominence to the oral theory of A. Heusler and K. Liestøl and the book-prose theory, most ably expounded by Sigurður Nordal. He even finds time to mention the eccentric theory of Barði Guðmundsson, who interpreted *Njáls saga* as a *roman à clef* from the Sturlung Age. Dr Hallberg's own views are moderate and carefully balanced. Dr Hallberg also considers certain similarities between the Family Sagas and the "hard-boiled narrative technique" of our day, as represented by Ernest Hemingway, but he finds these similarities not so profound as might appear at first glance. It might be suggested that comparison between the detached, objective sagas

and some of the English novels of the eighteenth century would prove more productive.

This book is translated into lucid and enjoyable English by Professor Schach. Very useful bibliographical notes are appended, and these are largely the work of the translator.

G. TURVILLE-PETRE

THE RUNES OF SWEDEN. BY SVEN B. F. JANSSON. Translated by Peter G. Foote. *Phoenix House, London, 1962.* 168 pp.

The title of Professor Jansson's book is misleading. Instead of dealing, as we have some right to expect, with the runes of Sweden, he writes on the contents of (mainly) rune-stone inscriptions from a loosely defined Sweden, nearly all from the late Viking age. This is not, as the jacket claims, a "survey of the unique wealth of Swedish runic inscriptions, from the first centuries after the birth of Christ down almost to the present day". The pre- and early Viking material is given summary treatment, disposed of in thirteen pages (basic texts like those of the Vadstena bracteate and the Lindholm amulet are omitted altogether): the post-Viking inscriptions get eleven pages. The runes themselves are largely ignored. There is no account of the forms of characters in the twenty-four and sixteen letter fuparks, their sound values, the direction of writing, cryptic runes (relevant to the Rök and Norum inscriptions included in the book), or of any formal developments which took place in later times — Hälsinge runes are mentioned, but only with the obscure comment that they are "the shorthand of the ancients". Consequently much of the usefulness of the excellent illustrations disappears. The sceptical reader is shown that the stones *do* exist, but is not encouraged to try to read their texts. Even if he does, he is unlikely to find much correspondence between the illustrations and the texts quoted by Professor Jansson, since the latter are usually heavily normalised. The occasional close transliteration — as when we are told that the Lövhämra stone's *i lukobri* "must undoubtedly be read . . . i Laughambri" — is likely, in the absence of any serious account of the vagaries of runic spelling, to baffle the beginner and to suggest to him that there is even more guesswork in the interpretation of these texts than there actually is. Under "Sweden" Professor Jansson includes those south-western provinces of the modern kingdom which belong runologically to Norway or Denmark, while at the same time he accepts Swedish

inspired or made objects outside the modern boundaries — in Bornholm (it is only from the caption to the photograph that the reader learns that the Åkirkeby font is in Bornholm, not Gotland as the text suggests), Hedeby, and even the London stones which are not certainly Swedish at all.

However, within his definition of his subject Professor Jansson has produced an excellent book. He quotes extensively from the stones, using the material to cast light on a number of topics of interest to the mediaeval historian as well as the Old Norse scholar: on the Swedish expeditions overseas, on the qualities the Vikings admired, on social and legal conditions in mediaeval Sweden, on the conversion to Christianity. Particularly valuable to the English student, whose knowledge is so often confined to the West Norse field, is a long and detailed section on the verse texts of the rune-stones, the only readily available account of much of this material.

Peter Foote's translation is fluent, readable and free from Scandinavianisms. There is no index in what is otherwise a well-produced book.

R. I. PAGE

THE SWORD IN ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND, ITS ARCHAEOLOGY AND LITERATURE. BY H. R. ELLIS DAVIDSON. *Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press*, 1962. xxvii + 225 pp.

This book deals exhaustively and palatably with the form and the reputation of the sword in Anglo-Saxon times, basing the account on the examples found in England, but relating these to the European finds to such an extent that the work forms a survey of the 'teutonic' sword in the period from the Age of the Migrations to the Age of the Vikings. The work consists of three parts: (i) The Making of the Sword, a study of the typology and fabrication of the sword; (ii) The Telling of the Sword, an anthology of literary allusions to the germanic sword in Anglo-Saxon, Norse, Arabic and Byzantine contexts; (iii) The Using of the Sword, a selection of literary quotations illustrating the sword at work. There are two appendices, (a) The Forging of a Pattern-welded Sword, a synopsis of the work of J. W. Anstee and L. Biek, especially the experiments at the forge of the Museum of Rural Life, Reading, and (b) The Shifford Sword, contributed by R. E. Oakeshott. There is a good bibliography, a provocative furniture of footnote references, and a satisfactory index. The four photographic plates are very good. The twenty-six line

figures tend to be overcrowded but this does not spoil their detail. Fig. V is a pair of distribution-maps of swords of a particular make.

From the archaeological point of view, the book is of especial interest where the manufacture of the pattern-welded blade is described and discussed. One hopes that Mr Anstee will not be charged with carrying an offensive weapon as he walks about the world with a home-made pattern-welded sword under his coat. The author and Mr Anstee between them have provided a detailed account of a method of achieving the pattern-welded effect, and it is pleasant to have a book in which a method is drawn and described. This will kill for good the old confusion between 'damascening' and 'pattern-welding'.

"This search for the sword will have been worth while if by it other students of Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse literature are saved time and effort, and gain a glimpse into the heroic world of weapons which the makers of that literature inherited as their natural birthright, but which is now lost to us." This purpose the book surely fulfils. It ought to be observed, however, that this book *is* likely to cost the student some time, because it is a plain invitation to explore the literature of an ancient mystique. It is just the right kind of book to lay before the student.

JOHN MCNEAL DODGSON

THE AGE OF THE VIKINGS. BY P. H. SAWYER. *London: Edward Arnold, 1962.* 254 pp., 17 figs. and 10 pls. 30s.

The aims of this book are explicit: (a) to help towards an improved understanding of the nature of the evidence of the different disciplines — archaeology, numismatics, history, philology — used in building up a picture of Viking civilization; (b) to re-examine certain basic assumptions commonly made about the Viking period; and (c) to offer an explanation of the changing patterns of Scandinavian activity as the Viking period progressed.

It can hardly be said that Mr Sawyer has achieved any of these aims, but Viking studies — or perhaps one should say certain areas of Viking studies — need critical re-examination, and any attempt, especially one as readable as this, to undertake a new survey can only do the subject much good by enlivening discussion.

It is perhaps inevitable, considering the scope of the field, that Mr Sawyer appears too ambitious a polymath to be able to

summarize fairly the methods of the four different disciplines he considers. He condemns the saga material out of hand without commenting on the meticulous scholarship which has gone towards the reconstruction of a historical framework for the Viking period in Iceland and elsewhere. Such an overstatement as, "The sagas are not, however, entirely worthless, for the saga writers used and sometimes quoted poetry of the Viking Age", is significant of his attitude. His evaluation of the runic inscriptions of Scandinavia is similarly inadequate.

Mr Sawyer's criticism of the methods used by archaeologists suggests that he does not entirely understand the archaeologist's rôle. To quote an Irish philologist (O'Rahilly) for an evaluation of this rôle (p. 46) seems an insult to the great archaeological thinkers. Could any archaeologist, or indeed any thinking person, agree with the statement, "Archaeological facts are often dull"? *When seen in a context*, they are neither more, nor less, dull than a document, a coin, a place-name, or any other piece of evidence about the past.

Similar lack of sympathy for the archaeological discipline may be found in some of Mr Sawyer's generalisations concerning art-history. He says, "It is . . . unlikely that artistic developments had much to do with political and economic changes" in the Viking period. This is daft. It is becoming more and more evident that political and economic changes have a considerable bearing on art styles. Western Europe in the Viking Age abounds in examples — Carolingian art, English art of the tenth century, Viking art after the coming of Christianity, all demonstrate in one way or another the effect of political and economic forces. It is noteworthy too, and from the point of view of method deplorable, that Mr Sawyer accepts Dr Almgren's highly controversial art-historical theories, to the virtual exclusion of all others.¹

Perhaps the best part of the book is that which deals with the numismatic evidence. Mr Sawyer has thoroughly assimilated the doctrines of the English school of numismatists and he manages to outline some of their methods in language understandable to the layman. He is a little one-sided in his arguments — rather too fond, perhaps, of the earlier and more exiguous numismatic material — but many of the conclusions he reaches are fair. It is a pity, however, that he has used results taken from unpublished work by Sture Bolin but without summarizing Professor Bolin's evidence.

I am not a philologist and must leave criticism of Mr Sawyer's

¹ B. Almgren, *Bronsnycklar och Djuvornamentik* (1955).

consideration of philological evidence to others. Some of his own criticism of certain established dogmas based on such evidence would appear to be just. He here enlarges on an earlier paper and is clearly very much at home with some aspects of the subject. Even the layman can detect certain exaggerations, however, and these do not make his arguments any more convincing. Faced with Professor Smith's famous map of Scandinavian parish names in England, the layman cannot but be convinced that Scandinavian influence — and probably therefore Scandinavian settlement — was very strong in comparison to English influence in the Danelaw, and particularly in the area of Halfdan's settlement of Yorkshire. The fact of which Mr Sawyer makes much — that many of the most barren and inhospitable areas of northern England have Scandinavian elements in their nomenclature — need mean nothing more than that these areas had no particularised name when the Vikings arrived and that settlement under the Vikings was concentrated enough to require a name for them. They need not indicate that these were the only areas available for Viking settlement.

In his major detailed arguments there are some serious faults, of which two examples will suffice. Firstly, to any writer on the Vikings, the easiest chapter is that on ships and seafaring; the evidence of archaeology is so impressive that, even though there were no surviving literary description of voyages or boats, we should still know an enormous amount about them. In his clear technical discussion of the surviving ships Mr Sawyer has produced nothing new, but he has made the interesting suggestion that the ships normally used by the Vikings for their overseas expeditions were not much larger than the Gokstad ship — that the long boat, in fact, is a legend. One of his strongest arguments is that oak trees yielding straight runs of timber long enough to form the keel of the Gokstad ship were few and far between in Scandinavia — he points out that the keel of the 1892 replica of the Gokstad ship had to be imported from Canada and says "it is difficult to believe that reliable seaworthy ships could be built (in the manner in which Viking ships were built) with a keel made of more than one piece of timber" He quotes no authority for this opinion — it is presumably his own — but I fail to see any reason why a keel should not be scarphed in the Viking period, as it was in later periods. If he had merely suggested that boats of the size of the Gokstad ship did make ocean journeys in the Viking period, he would have many good arguments in his favour, but he has gone farther and has overstated his case. There is ample evidence for large boats in the Viking period and his arguments must be

qualified. For example, he assumes that the Norwegian ships levied in the thirteenth century, which are known to be considerably larger than the Gokstad ship, were longer than any used in the Viking period (p. 79). There is no evidence for this: the representation of boats doodled in wood found in the thirteenth-century levels of the recent Bergen excavations bear a striking resemblance to similar doodlings on a plank found in the Oseberg ship and the ships they represent are structurally similar in every respect to the Viking ship found at Gokstad (complete, incidentally, with weather-vanes of the Söderala type). The Bergen representations are not unique in the thirteenth century, for they can be paralleled by many an idle scratching on the wood walls of Norwegian churches, and they suggest that this was the normal type of boat in the thirteenth century. If long ships of this type could be built in the thirteenth century, then there seems no reason to deny the possibility that long ships were built in the Viking period, the problem of the scarphed keels must have been overcome, and we must await new evidence.

As the second example of serious deficiency may be noted the pages later in the book where Mr Sawyer turns his attention to the Trelleborg type of camp. He makes the point that these camps cannot be closely dated (using the bracket A.D. 950-1050), saying that they could be associated with any one of a number of large military campaigns. He goes on to say that there are "good reasons for believing that these camps are more likely to have been constructed after Cnut's conquest of England than before". But his chief argument is extraordinarily weak: "There is . . . no reason to believe that the tenth-century rulers were more capable of building (the camps) than their eleventh-century successors". The argument seems singularly feeble and ill-marshalled on these pages (134-135).

In many minor details Mr Sawyer has slipped up — the first rule of iconoclasm is surely accuracy. There are repetitions of long-accepted, erroneous saws in this book, some of which I list here:

p. 1: The date 798 for the sacking of a monastery in the Isle of Man is based on an Irish annal for that year which records the sack of *Inis Patraic*. There are many St Patrick's Isles in the West of Britain and there is no reason why this one should be St Patrick's Isle, off Peel, rather than, say, Holmpatrick off Dublin.²

pp. 54 f.: There is no evidence that Harold was buried in one

² Cf. B. and E. Megaw, 'The Norse Heritage in the Isle of Man', *Early Cultures of North-West Europe* (ed. C. Fox and B. Dickins; 1950), 143-4.

of the large mounds at Jelling as Mr Sawyer implies, following many Viking scholars.³

p. 64: It is an ancient bit of archaeological folk-lore that churchyards were periodically cleared out. Mr Sawyer gives a footnote acknowledging this 'suggestion' from an archaeologist, but is there any evidence at all for the theory? The reason why so many churches appear to be on mounds is that the ground level rises as more bodies are buried there;⁴ it was not the habit of pagan Vikings, Christian men of the Middle Ages nor eighteenth-century rationalists to disturb unnecessarily the bones of their ancestors: only in the last hundred-odd years have town churchyards been desecrated to make way for railway-stations or public parks.

p. 133: Why should the absence of swords from a cemetery be 'remarkable'? This is often commented upon, but swords, as any reader of heroic literature knows, were costly things and were apparently passed from father to son with great frequency: they cannot have been normally buried in an ordinary man's grave.

p. 136: Mr Sawyer says "some men may have prayed 'From the fury of the Northmen O Lord deliver us'" and quotes as a source Delisle.⁵ What Delisle actually says is: "Je n'ai point remarqué ces mots dans les litanies de l'époque carolingienne que j'ai eu l'occasion d'examiner" Until the source is traced let us refrain from using this hackneyed — if picturesque — phrase, and rather use the somewhat longer prayer recorded by Delisle.⁶

It is proper, however, to leave the book by stressing its good points. Particularly important, as I have already said, is the discussion of the numismatic evidence — for the first time, this has been given a reasonable amount of space in relation to its importance. Mr Sawyer's enthusiasm may cause him to go further than his evidence warrants, but this is a brilliant chapter and one that deserves our best attention. In the archaeological part of the book some of the pure description is very good, particularly that of the Trelleborg monuments and of the great trading centres. Despite some dubious premises, his discussion of archaeological method is often thought-provoking. He is surely right, for example, to dismiss Arbman's interpretation of the Chernigov grave as that of a man of Viking ancestry, and equally justified in his criticism of the dating of Jarlslof.

³ Even Brøndsted wonders who was buried in the Southern Mound: *The Vikings* (1960), 277.

⁴ Some interesting calculations as to the number of bodies in a single churchyard will be found in F. Brittain, *South Mymms* (1931), 29 f.

⁵ L. V. Delisle, *Littérature latine et histoire du moyen âge* (1890), 17-18.

⁶ *loc. cit.*

I must end by expressing my gratitude to the author for the stimulation provided by his provocative statements. The book has greatly broadened my view of the Viking Age. I am sure it will do the same for others.

D. M. WILSON

CELTIC AND GERMANIC RELIGION

By JAN DE VRIES*

JULIUS CAESAR has given in the sixth book of his Commentaries a most important sketch of the Gaulish religion; he speaks about the gods, about the sacrifices and the druids. After finishing this account, he adds some remarks about the religion of the Teutons and writes down the remarkable phrase, that there is a great difference in this respect between the Gauls and the Germanic peoples. This sentence has often been the corner-stone of comparison between the religious ideas and cults of both peoples, for it seemed to be an indubitable proof that on the one hand the religion of the Teutons at Caesar's time was still very crude and primitive, whilst on the other hand the Celts had arrived at a much higher standard of civilization.

It may therefore be worth while to reconsider the exact value of Caesar's statement. At the time when he was writing this little essay on the Gaulish creed, he had scarcely had the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the cultural and social situation on the other side of the Rhine. As far as we can judge now, after having got much more extensive information about the Germanic religion, we must state that Caesar's remarks show a very superficial knowledge of it, although they are not altogether erroneous. But his fairly detailed account of the situation in Gaul seems to prove that he had both the wish and the opportunity to be well informed.

Still, modern scholars doubt his reliability in this part of his memoirs. Some do not shrink even from asserting

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that he wrote these chapters with a very superficial and inadequate knowledge of the facts and that his statement was coloured by bias and by political intentions. This verdict seems to me rather exaggerated. We have, after all, a very scant knowledge of the cultural and religious state of Gaul, a knowledge which has moreover so many gaps and uncertainties that we should be most cautious in criticizing Caesar so severely.

Caesar, at any rate, had the opportunity of seeing with his own eyes and hearing with his own ears, and we may be sure that he made a copious use of this opportunity. For Caesar was not doing this merely out of more or less scientific curiosity, as a modern ethnographer would do, but he was a general and a statesman. In this position, he had to inform himself about the ways of thinking and believing of his enemies. Nowadays a general may wage war without bothering himself about the imponderables of creed and mind; but even now the history of modern times has demonstrated that they should not and cannot be neglected with impunity. Entering into a conflict with a people whose religious beliefs are still in full vigour, it would be unwise to leave them altogether outside the scope of consideration.

In ancient times religion was the pivot of all social and political activity. I remind you of the Roman custom of the *evocatio*: the gods of the enemy had to be propitiated by a promise of a temple and a cult in the city of Rome itself. So it seems quite unthinkable to me that Caesar should have contented himself with a couple of ethnological common-places culled from writers like Poseidonios. He must have been aware of the necessity of being acquainted as fully as possible with the real state of affairs in Gaul. He had the opportunity for it. He had many transactions with the nobles and even with the druids of the Gaulish tribes: he could get from them reliable information. Moreover, in the Narbonensis Romans and Gauls had lived in close contact for

about a century; in Gallia Cisalpina the relations had been even more intimate and lasting. I take it for granted that we may confidently rely upon the information given by Caesar.

But, even so, this information is very defective. At any rate we would like to know more and better. Some remarks about the high gods, presented with the names of the Roman deities, are most unsatisfactory from our modern point of view. What we would like to know, for instance, are the tales about their acts and feats: without a myth a god remains only a hazy concept. In this respect the disparity between our information about the Celtic and the Germanic religions is glaring. From Icelandic sources we have a remarkably abundant account of all kinds of myths and tales, by which we can get a clear-cut image of most of these deities. In the whole Celtic world there is nothing comparable to the detailed information about the Germanic creeds. To be sure, we can glean some precious bits of mythological lore from Irish literature, but they are imbedded in quasi-historical sources or even in profane tales; this makes it very difficult, if not altogether impossible, to reconstruct the original religious meaning.

Snorri Sturluson wrote a marvellous essay about Scandinavian heathen mythology, but we have nothing of this kind from the Celtic world. So if we get a fairly coherent and highly coloured picture of Germanic religion, we have only the flotsam and jetsam of Celtic tradition, long since disintegrated and forgotten. The state of information about Celtic religion is therefore most disappointing and we may even despair of ever getting an adequate idea about the beliefs of this people, in many ways so puzzling. Some scholars have even asserted that Irish heathendom had not known fully-developed gods at all, but had on the contrary lived constantly in a world of bewildering magic. In that case this people would be a most curious exception to their Indo-European kinsmen all over the world.

Such an exaggerated judgment must be attributed to the scantiness of our information. The Irish sources were all written down in a period remote from the old pagan times. Christianity had long ago superseded the heathen religion and notwithstanding the remarkable interest of Irish clerics in the old national lore, it is only too natural that they should eliminate the "demons" which had led their ancestors astray. But if these gods were suppressed, openly or tacitly, in the mythical tales, the core was cut out of them. In this way it is very difficult for us to distinguish even the faint outlines of a hierarchical system of deities, each with its own character and functions.

Here an almost insurmountable difficulty presents itself. Our sources of information, roughly summarized, are these: a few chapters of Caesar's and a few sentences in other classical authors; a most bewildering quantity of inscriptions, monuments, of different kinds, coins and votive-offerings as well as the result of minute excavations, all pertaining to the Gaulish peoples. About the other continental Celtic tribes we know next to nothing. On the other side of the Channel, we have in Romanized Britain a considerable quantity of monuments and even the results of very interesting excavations, showing us at any rate that there are clear correspondences between religious beliefs in Gaul and Britain. From Wales we have literary documents, written down at a comparatively late time; they may contain valuable pieces of heathen lore, but they are adorned with all kinds of romantic themes and some of them are suspect of being introduced by Irish settlers.

It is obvious that to harmonize this heterogeneous material should be the first concern of the scholar. All attempts to do so hitherto have, however, failed. Considering the different ways of approach, we can easily understand why the results have been so meagre. They are often even quite disconcerting. Following the general

trend of modern scholarship, which denies any real value to Caesar's little essay on the Gaulish religion, a Belgian scholar has put his full confidence in the inscriptions and documents which have been brought to light by archaeological excavations. One could be sure at any rate of the reliability of these documents, which the pagan inhabitants of Gaul themselves had dedicated to the gods. But these documents are mute; their interpretation is most difficult and uncertain. They inform us of many curious deities, which seem to have been utterly unknown to or disregarded by the Roman conqueror. The names Mercury and Mars could scarcely have been applied to monstrous figures like the god with the three faces or that other one with stag-antlers on his head. Moreover we are confronted with new names like Cernunnos or Esus. When we try to decipher the members of this pantheon by means of their attributes, nearly always borrowed from the Roman way of representing their gods, we must consider the fact that these attributes are quite arbitrarily connected, at one time with the Gaulic Mars, at another with Mercury. So the modern scholar I just mentioned arrived at the quite unforeseen conclusion that the great variety of deities is only an illusion; in fact the Gauls had, under different forms and names, adored one great and universal god. By a rather sweeping method of amalgamation the chaos had been reduced to a kind of order, even of the utmost simplicity.

Such a treatment of the available material is a warning for every one who attempts a solution clear-cut and logical as scientific solutions ought to be. So the question is not whether we can arrive at another and better reconstruction of Gaulish religion, but rather what may have been the source of such great misunderstandings. It seems to me that we cannot understand any such complex documentation as that about the Gaulish religion without taking into due consideration the social structure underlying it. We may be sure that Caesar got informa-

tion from the leading classes, from the nobility and the druids, for he came into contact with the chieftains, not with the people. But the inscriptions and monuments are mostly dedicated by men of the broad masses, peasants or merchants or craftsmen. Can we be so sure that their beliefs were the same as those of the aristocracy?

The answer can only be: certainly not. It is impossible to draw a picture of the way in which the population of Gaul had come into being, but I must briefly point out to you what in my opinion the situation was. We are wont to speak of a Gaulish people, but this phrase is very misleading. There was a Celtic superstructure, rapidly diminishing from East to West in its quantity and importance. The Celtic Gauls had come as conquerors and had established themselves as rulers, who subjugated the aborigines in a most cruel way. The original population still continued to exist and multiply; it reached back into the Older Stone Age and no one can say what kind of race it was nor what language it spoke. During the first centuries after the conquest they disappear into invisibility; Caesar speaks of them contemptuously as a *miserrima plebs*. But after the Roman conquest things changed rapidly. The leading classes assimilated Roman civilization, adopted the Latin language and scorned the traditions of their ancestors. Moreover they were disintegrating completely. The druids had been suppressed; the nobles were reduced to poverty by crushing taxes; very soon a new class of nobility came to the fore, the *equites*, men of the people grown rich by trade or other means, and they superseded the old nobility. But, with the ruling classes declining and disappearing, the *miserrima plebs* got the opportunity to manifest itself; the peasants, who had formerly been mere slaves, attained well-to-do circumstances; they were able to erect monuments, sometimes sumptuous, by which they expressed their devotion to their gods.

Here we must emphasize the words "*their gods*". For

we have no certainty whatever that this suppressed people, thrown back on their own way of life and their own traditions, had abandoned their beliefs and religious customs. On the contrary we may expect that in the villages and hamlets of Gaul life went on as it had done for thousands of years. The monstrous gods depicted in the monuments have no connection with Celtic religious thinking; they belong to quite another and much more primitive layer.

Hence, we have no need to strive to harmonize deities belonging to quite different religious spheres. This, however, leads to far-reaching consequences. Since it is our concern to understand the character of the real Celtic religion, we have to focus our attention on the creed of the upper classes. But for this the slight essay of Caesar tends to become the chief document for our information.

The only question is, how shall we read it? As a matter of fact, Caesar muffles the Gaulish gods by giving Roman names to them. When he says Mercury, he does not mean the Roman god, but a Gaulish deity who in some respects could be compared with him. At any rate these gods were not at all identical, for Caesar says that Mercury was the god whom the Gauls revered most, which is incompatible with the function of the Roman god. Can we be satisfied to consider him as a god of commerce, who for the Roman merchants must have been of prime importance? We may surmise that the Gaulish Mercury had in some way extended his sphere of action into the activities of traffic and trade, but we are not at all sure that he did not have a much wider and even very different sphere.

When the town of Lyons was made into the centre of Roman Gaul, it was the god Mercury to whom the chief temple was dedicated. His cult was fused with the imperial cult of Augustus and therefore the first of the month of August was chosen as the highest festival. So

far all seems clear and simple. But the name of the town Lugdunum tells us that the Gaulish name of this Mercury was Lugos. From Irish sources we know that the great feast of this god, the so-called Lugnasad, took place on the first of August. Now it must be evident that the emperor Augustus could not have arranged this most important cult in Lyons, if Mercury-Lug had been no more than a god of merchants.

The identification of Mercury and Lugos may give us the clue to the solution of the problem. Piecing together what we learn about the Gaulish god and the Irish Lug, we may arrive at a better understanding of the character of this deity. Still we must realize that we cannot expect much help from comparison with the Roman god. In Caesar's time the religion of Rome was completely hellenized. In the Roman Mercury there is much more of the Greek Hermes than of the original Roman god. How can we expect to know what kind of deity this Gaulish god was?

Here I must make a small digression. The Gauls belong to the Indo-European family. They spoke an Indo-European language, they must have inherited from these ancestors a social structure, an ideology belonging to it, a religion embodying it. Nowadays we do not believe any more that the Indo-European people still belonged to a primitive stage of culture; on the contrary there are so many remarkable correspondences between different peoples belonging to this common stock that they must be treated as part and parcel of a common heritage. Comparative studies of latter years have revealed to us that already in this remote Indo-European time a well-balanced system of deities had come into existence, and that moreover in historical times this system, more or less altered and developed, lived on among the descendants of the ancestor-people. This self-same system must form the basis of the Gaulish religion too.

Now it becomes evident that careful attention has to be paid to the agreements between religious activities and ideas of the Celts and the Teutons. We should not be deterred by the casual remark of Caesar, that these peoples showed marked differences in religion, for we are better equipped than he to form a proper idea of Germanic cult and creed. In a little book, published two years ago, I pointed out that there are many instances of similarity, even of identity, in these two peoples of Western Europe. These can still be perceived in spite of the bewildering differences which have arisen in course of development along different lines, during many centuries.

If we want to understand the character of a god, we must know what people said about his deeds. Or in other words we must be acquainted with the myths in which he plays a part. Now we have about the Irish god Lug a very interesting mythical tale, which has been preserved in the well-known story of the *Battle of Mag Tured*. This is a matter much too complex and difficult to be discussed here in detail. I am not even able to sketch the course of events and I must content myself with giving some striking details about the rôle Lug plays in this conflict. The war is in fact of a mythical nature; the battle between the Tuatha Dé Danann and the Fomorians may be likened to the famous war between the Æsir and the Vanir in the Eddic mythology. Lug plays an important part in this conflict, in fact he is the protagonist of the gods. In the beginning of the tale he comes to the chief of the gods, Nuadu, and begs to be admitted into the circle of the gods. He boasts of many kinds of skill and handicraft; he may be called *samildánich*, that means one who has himself alone many arts. And we are reminded of Caesar's remark about the Gaulish Mercury "omnium inventor artium". Here the Roman general evidently has given a very adequate statement of his character.

I should like to add another remarkable scene in this battle. Before engaging in it Lug performs a curious rite: standing on one foot and closing one eye, he went, whilst he sang a charm, round about the army of the Tuatha Dé Danann. This, of course, was a magical act, intended to protect the army of the gods and to ward off evil influences. But why was it performed in such a curious way?

Master of magic was the Scandinavian god Odin likewise. He too is depicted as having only one eye. Formerly it seemed quite natural to regard this as a characteristic of the Sungod, who wandered as a watchful eye through heaven. But nowadays we reject such naturalistic explanations. How are we to understand this single eye? Odin is a god with high spiritual qualities. The single eye may denote this feature: losing the eye for visible things of the world, he got the gift of deeper insight into the problems of the cosmos. At any rate, the loss of one eye (sometimes even total blindness) is of particular interest for the understanding of Odin. We have some instances of mortal men, such as Egill Skallagrímsson, a fervent adorer of Odin, who strove to be similar in this respect to the god. Now it seems to me of peculiar importance that the Irish hero Cúchulainn, who is said to have been a son of the god Lug, shows in his famous *riastrad* or distortion a countenance of just the same kind: he drew one eye deep into his head, so that a crane would not have been able to reach it, and he protruded the other one so far that it seemed to lie on his cheek. No one will like to consider such cases of analogy as pure whims of accident; we are facing in such cases a mythical structure common to Lug and Odin alike.

We know that the sacred bird of Odin was the raven. Two of these birds, it is said, came every evening flying to him and perched on his shoulders, whispering into his ears what they had seen during the day. Curiously

enough, there have been found some statuettes in Gaul showing a god who bears on his shoulders two birds looking towards his face; the representations are generally so clumsy that the species of bird cannot be identified clearly; it may be a dove, but in some cases also a raven. Of more importance, however, is the legend about Lug, in which ravens also play a prominent rôle. It is told in a Greek source that two ravens came down from heaven as Lyons was founded. The Greek writer adds that in the Celtic language *lugos* is a name of the raven. The Celtic word for raven, however, is *brennos*, and the modern critic cries out triumphantly that the Greek author must have been mistaken or badly informed. And at the same time the truth of this little piece of mythology is completely rejected. But then, what could have been the reason for representing the genius of Lyons on medallions with a raven at his feet? Evidently not because of the small note by a Greek author, who was probably never known in the city of Lyons.

Instead of challenging small bits of information, which at first sight may seem untrustworthy or doubtful, it seems wiser to consider them with the utmost care and to piece them together into a coherent image of the deity. Here we have a case in which the comparison with a Scandinavian god, about whom we are abundantly informed, may help us to understand a Celtic one better.

Now, it is of importance that the same may be said of other deities too. In the *Battle of Mag Tured* the god Nuadu loses his hand and is thereby unable to act as chief of the gods. Afterwards a silver hand was made, and so skilfully adjusted to his body that he was restored to his former integrity. A god who loses his hand is surely not a very common motive. But the same is told about the Scandinavian Týr, who lost his hand by putting it into the mouth of the wolf Fenrir, when he deceitfully pledged the faith of the gods. A very important myth, to be sure, showing that even the gods are on some

occasions compelled to break the most holy vows in order to safeguard the existence of the world. We are entitled to conclude that just like Týr the Celtic Nuadu was a god of high importance, exercising high authority among the gods and having the function of royal power. The loss of the hand, however, disqualifies him from exerting the rights of sovereignty.

I have given you some instances of Celtic gods who fully agree with deities of the pantheon of another Indo-European people. We may be quite reassured about the reliability of Caesar's essay on the Gaulish religion. He speaks of real gods like Jove or Mars and he was entitled to do so, because such gods were adored by the Gauls. When we compare the indeed very scarce documents on the Celtic religion with the so much more abundant ones about the Germanic gods, we shall be able to discern even more of the basic beliefs of the Celts. It is only in this way that we can reconstruct their original religious system, inherited from the remote ancestors of Indo-European times. It has been overgrown in the course of many centuries by the weeds of allogeneous creeds and superstitions. These give, to be sure, significant information about the faith of the *miserrima plebs*, but they are of little use for the understanding of the religion of the upper classes. As for Ireland, I must remind you that the traditions, which are of prime interest for the investigation of the Celtic beliefs in this island, have been distorted during a very long period of Christian civilization. The gods lost their status of sanctity and venerableness; if they were not degraded into demons, they were at least euhemerized into half-historical kings of the past. But even here a judicious investigation of the meagre documents may show the main features of the original religious system.

Not long ago I insisted that the Germanic and Celtic peoples, when they came into contact with each other in the so-called La Tène period, did not differ very much

in their ways of living and thinking. We may even suspect that the language at that time could not hinder mutual understanding. The Germanic sound-shift had not yet taken place, and so the consonants stayed still at the same stage as that of the Celtic language; nor had the Indo-European vowel system suffered any considerable changes.

But we should not try to disregard the differences of culture-pattern, still less those of religious system between these peoples. Caesar indeed mentioned great differences, and marked differences there were. The Roman observer was struck by the totally deviant character of the priestly organizations. The mighty and well-organized institution of the druids failed in Germania. In fact, looking over the information we possess about the Teutonic priesthood, we cannot but arrive at the conclusion that it was in no way as strictly organized as the druids were. Perhaps the Icelandic sagas do not give us an exact picture of the *goði* or priest; perhaps after the settlement, by a peculiar development, the Icelandic priest gained more or less the character of a political functionary. Still we cannot believe that in earlier times the Germanic priest could have been equal in might or influence to the Celtic one. It is often said that in this respect the position of the Germanic priest accorded more nearly with the conditions of Indo-European times. To be sure, we get the impression that the system, so solid and coherent, which the Gaulish druids had contrived to build up, must have been the result of many generations of assiduous and deliberate policy. But I am not at all sure that this conception is right. It is important to state that in India as well as in Rome a priestly organization had existed, which was by no means inferior to that of the druids. The high position of the *brahmans* is beyond doubt; it developed even to rather grotesque proportions. In Rome the development was quite contrariwise, but enough subsisted

even into historical times to show that the *flamines* were once most venerable and influential priests. It is a precarious enterprise to try to reconstruct the original character of Indo-European priesthood, and it may be an alluring idea that at the dawn of this civilization priesthood was a rather modest affair, the more so since we like to consider it as of a more or less democratic type. We can indeed build lofty hypotheses about the primordial state of affairs. But at the moment the Indo-European peoples become, however faintly, visible to our scrutinizing eyes, we discern a form of society that is highly organized as a system of clear-cut classes. The religion is in many respects its counterpart. The gods are balanced in a coherent system which corresponds to that of the social structure. Perhaps we may conclude that the peoples issuing from the common stock showed the same character of social and religious structure, although it may not have been as pronouncedly rigid as it was among the Vedic Indians or the Gauls.

Perhaps the crucial question is not how and why in Gaul the druidic organization got its peculiar form, but on the contrary how an originally complex system had disintegrated among the Germanic peoples. The royal families, the aristocratic warrior-class, the mass of peasants and craftsman, they are all present in their original form and validity; only the priesthood seems to have fallen off. This is a problem of great interest, which I will here only touch upon. It seems to me in the light of the Celtic conditions that we should seek carefully for evidence showing a higher standard of Germanic priesthood. Therefore I should like to remind you of the Old Norse *pulr*, a priestly personage, whom we see rather hazily through very scant traditions. Moreover, there existed in Gaul a functionary with the name of *gutuator*; it seems tempting to draw a line from him to the Scandinavian *goði*. If the more practical mind of the Germanic peoples contrived to keep down the high

aspirations of the priestly class, we must ask how an older and more powerful priesthood was curtailed and we should like to know what the starting-point of this development was.

I am coming to the end of my considerations. I have tried to give you some solid facts and to build upon them a picture of the Celtic religion. I must avow that my reconstruction may be after all a frail hypothesis, but I flatter myself with the belief that it has still rather firm foundations. But above all I would like to urge the necessity of prolonged and minute investigation into the essence of this pagan religion. We ought not to be despondent about the results of studies of this kind. On the contrary I nourish the hope that my small contribution, which I have the honour to deliver before an audience of British students, may have aroused in the minds of some of you the wish to devote their time and their intellect to a problem which has the merit of a high scholarly value. We must never forget that in archaic civilizations religion is the very core of all human aspirations and activities.

ANTI-NATURALISM, TOUGH COMPOSITION AND PUNNING IN SKALDIC POETRY AND MODERN PAINTING

By STEFÁN EINARSSON

THIS paper would hardly have been written had I not been dealing with Icelandic poetry from its skaldic origins to the modernists. Now the modernists reject skaldic poetry as a dead form, a treatment which to me seems rather unjustified, considering the fact that skaldic poetry — apart from the sagas — is by far the most original artistic creation of Scandinavia and Iceland. It is, of course, true that much of the work of the modernists or the so-called atomic poets in Iceland is more closely related to the poetic prose of the Bible than to the Edda. But as soon as you look at the modern pictorial arts, whether in Iceland or abroad, you cannot help feeling that there is a strong family likeness between the old skaldic poetry and the *rímur* on the one hand and the modern painting of Picasso (or Kjarval) on the other. It seems to me that the skaldic poets, Picasso and Kjarval are all animated by the same spirit, a spirit for which I would blame neither the skalds nor Picasso and Kjarval: I should be more inclined to consider this spirit the reason for their artistic greatness. To this spirit I attribute the grand obscurity in the skalds and in much of modern art, and the marked distortion of nature both in the skaldic kennings and in Picasso's drawing of natural objects. Furthermore I cannot imagine more similar formal strivings among different groups of artists than are displayed in the preoccupation among the Icelanders on the one hand to compose miniature stanzas of four lines in ever more artistic form, from the old skaldic helming to the modern quatrain, and on the other hand the interest

of the modernists in France (Cézanne, Picasso, Braque) in composing pictures that preferably should be composition alone, or composition in the abstract, however that composition might be arranged and using the most insignificant and nondescript materials assembled from everywhere. The product of the cubist painters is comparable to the art of the *hringhenda* and *sléttubönd* poets in Iceland. Finally one must mention the play on words or homonyms which Snorri calls *ofljóst*, "too easy to understand". Modern painters call it visual punning; Maurice Grosser says that all modern art is full of it. This type of painting has even spread to Iceland. Kjarval's 'Sterling [a boat] in the fog' is an example: there is nothing to see but fog.

It is also true that I would hardly have written this article had I not read 'Nature and un-nature (or a-nature) in skaldic poetry', by Hallvard Lie.¹ Lie thinks that the style of the skaldic poetry is un-natural (or a-naturalistic) because it was designed to describe in the shield-poetry the primitive, a-naturalistic and magic-laden art which the Norwegians and Scandinavians in general then imposed upon their art objects, household goods, and ships, the animal-ornament style, in which the animals were not animals drawn from nature but long complexes of bands and lines with dragon or griffin heads and dragon claws or grips where the artistic form demanded knots in the drawing. To imitate this complex plastic ornament the skalds primarily used kennings as dissonantic and un-natural as possible; kennings which Snorri called "nickered" and Ólafr hvítaskáld *finngálknað* or "homocentaurized", for all the hoofs turn the wrong way on the "nicker", which in *Beowulf* is a water-monster and in Iceland a horse living in lakes or the sea. But the *finngálkn* or *homocentaur* is thus described: "Looking towards the head she is like a human being, but an animal

¹ "Natur" og "unatur" i skaldekunsten (Avhandlingar utg. av det norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo. Hist. fil. kl. 1957. No. 1).

below and has wondrously big claws and a terrific tail.”² But the “nickered” style is actually a style of mixed metaphor or catacrexis where the poet proceeds from one distinct thing to another, everything being out of line, dissonantic and baroque. Often the formation of the kenning itself is dissonantic, thus “the blue land of Haki” is no land but the sea. “The magic song of swords” is of course no song, but the battle. A poet (Kormákr) asks the king “to keep the moving meadow of the bow over him”; now “the moving meadow of the bow” is, of course, the hand, but meadow is land, and how is the king to keep a whole land over the poet? And how is land to move? Another poet (Einar skálaglam in *Vellekla*) addresses his earl in this way: “Listen, earl, to the blood of Kvásir” Now “Kvásir’s blood” is, of course, the “mead of poetry” or poetry, but how is the earl going to listen to the seemingly quiet blood? To make matters a bit more natural we could, of course, here demand that the word for blood, *dreyri*, had its original meaning of “falling blood”. If the blood fell hard enough it could be heard.

Opposite to or contrasting with this “nickered” catacretical style is the style which Snorri called *nýgörvingar* and which we could call metaphoric style, or a style of consistent metaphor. This style introduces consistent metaphors throughout the stanza (or half-stanza). Egill was a master of consistent metaphor; he expresses the same thought as Einar Skálaglam above in the following words: “so that the beaker of Odin (Yggr) came pouring to every one’s ear-mouths” Obviously it is a more natural thing (or metaphor) to drink a pouring beaker with your ear-mouth than to listen to the mead, which cannot be done in a natural way. In Snorri’s time consistent metaphor was much preferred to mixed metaphor, or *nýgörvingar* to “nickered” style, even among the learned rhetoricians of the clergy like

² *Fornaldarsögur Norðrlanda* (1829-30), II 243; *Fornaldarsögur Norðrlanda* (1943), I 347.

his nephew, Ólafr hvítaskáld. Consistent metaphor (*nýgörvingar*) was also found in the variation of *fornyrðislag* called *kviðuháttir*, earliest found in the *Ynglingatal* by Þjóðólfr of Hvinir. This poem probably embodies the spirit of the earliest ancestral cult in Scandinavia (Sweden). You did not have to know the mighty deeds of your ancestors, only their names, their mode of death, and their burial place. That sounds almost like a martyrology. Perhaps their names were not any less potent than the names of the saints. The "nickered" or mixed metaphor style is first found in Bragi Boddason's shield-poetry, the *Ragnarsdrápa* which is composed in *dróttkvætt*, the skaldic meter *par excellence*. So there is no doubt that this unnatural skaldic style is found in poems which are imitating the a-naturalistic primitivistic and magical ornamental sculptures of the Scandinavians — in the same way as Picasso imitated primitive Negro sculpture in the first years of our century. Neither the Scandinavian ornament carving nor the Negro sculpture had any perspective, as was not to be expected, since perspective was developed by the Renaissance and considered natural until Cézanne and Picasso began to violate it at the beginning of the modern period.

But it is not the violation of perspective which primarily ranges Picasso's style with the "nickered", catacretical style of the skalds. It is rather, as his biographer tells us,

the unbounded liberties that he chose to take with human form The Cubist method of describing an object simultaneously from more than one viewpoint had induced Picasso as early as 1913 to inscribe a profile on a head seen in full face. In 1926 the ideal was carried further in painting of violently distorted heads in which the recognizable features — eyes, mouth, teeth, tongue, ears, nose and nostrils — are distributed about the face in every position, with the bold line of a profile making a central division of the head. In some cases the eyes appear on the same side of the face, in others the mouth takes the place of an eye — every permutation is tried, but miraculously the human head survives as a unit powerfully expressive of emotion.³

³ Roland Penrose, *Picasso* (1959), 235.

Compared to this the deformations of the old "nickers" and the Homocentauri seem mild indeed, though the principle of distortion is the same. But for a comparison with skaldic style, we should notice how the skalds would distort *their* head, describing it in their language of kennings. You find head described in 75 different ways, for example, "a field of the brows", "high-mountain of the hair", and "holtwood of the brain house". An eye can be permuted in 65 different ways and called "forehead-lightning", "the white field of the eye-lids", and the famous "lash-moon of the brows". In comparison with eyes the skalds have not many variations for ears and noses, only fifteen and five respectively. Egill calls his ears "the mouth of hearing", his nose "the mid-stall of the brows". Mouth can be varied in 35 ways and called "the temple of words", "the land of the gums or the teeth", "the smithy of sorcery or song", and "the village of dispute". Perhaps the skalds were not any less successful than Picasso in dismembering the head.

Another feature of skaldic poetry is the irregularity of its word order. This feature did not bother the Icelandic scholar Finnur Jónsson who had learnt his lesson from some undeniable tmeses in the poetry like *þá var Ið-með jötnum/-unnr nýkomin sunnan*, "Then was Id- among the giants -un recently come from the south", where we have a separation or tmesis of the name of the goddess Idun. But Professor Ernst A. Kock of Lund spent a quarter of a century trying to read order into what he termed the topsy-turvy editions of Finnur Jónsson. Brilliant as he was, much more so than Finnur Jónsson, he may well have succeeded in isolated cases, but hardly in divining the underlying spirit of the skalds, who may have wanted to be understood by their audience, but spoke nevertheless in as hard riddles as they could. In fact, their spirit may sometimes have been nearer to the modern poet who does not care whether he is understood or not, or to the modern painter who primarily wants to dazzle or impress or

shock the beholder. For the old skalds were probably just as great individualists as the modern artists, poets and painters, and just as proud of their art. This individual pride is obvious from the striking fact that of all early Scandinavian artists the skalds alone succeeded in committing their names to posterity.

If you look for obscurity and dissonance in modern literature, you will probably find plenty of examples to match the obscurities, the dissonances, the mixed metaphor and even the unnatural word order in skaldic poetry. A page in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, not to speak of his *Finnegans Wake*, is hardly any easier to read than a stanza in *Þórsdrápa*, reputed to be the hardest poem in skaldic poetry. I even have my doubts whether some of our modernist Nobel-prizewinners, like T. S. Eliot and William Faulkner, are any easier to read than most skaldic poetry. T. S. Eliot has written only a comparatively small corpus of poetry; nevertheless, he can seemingly not be read, even by university students, unless a sizable commentary does for him what Snorri Sturluson did for skaldic poetry with his *Edda*. The German critic and literary historian Hugo Friedrich says about him:⁴

Die Deutungen die sein lyrisches Werk durch die Kritik erfahren hat gehen bis zur Unvereinbarkeit auseinander. Nur in einer Hinsicht herrscht Übereinstimmung: das dieses von Absonderlichkeiten erfüllte Werk eine Bannkraft ausübt dank seines Tones.

Whoever looks at modern literature or art may be able to discern two tendencies in its formal aspect, one preferring the chaotic and formless, the other striving for hard and fast composition. The chaotic form or formlessness strives for a complete volcanic-like eruption of the subconscious mind or of pent-up feelings. An eruption of feeling marks the German expressionists, whose shrill cries in literature have hardly anything corresponding in skaldic poetry, but whose rough and uncouth lines in pictorial art may certainly have parallels in the mixed

⁴ Hugo Friedrich, *Die Struktur der modernen Lyrik* (1956), 145.

metaphor and fragmentation of the skaldic lines. A still more violent eruption of the subconscious was called for by the French surrealists in the twenties of the present century — in André Breton's *Manifeste surréaliste* (1924), which became H. K. Laxness' gospel when he was writing his début book, *The great weaver from Cashmere* (1927), and gave it its stylistic furioso. The French surrealists had two nineteenth-century prophets whom they liked to quote and imitate: Lautreamont (Isidore Ducasse, 1846-1870) and Rimbaud (1854-1891). Of these two Lautreamont died at the age of twenty-four in the year of the great French débâcle at the hands of the Germans, while Rimbaud was then only sixteen years old. This to me, as it would have to Taine and Brandes, goes a long way to explain their pitchblack pessimism and the violence of their literary revolt. Rimbaud's poetry was quite volcanic in character while Lautreamont is credited with having foreshadowed all the gloomy themes of modern poets and the fascination that ugliness has on them. This also goes far to explain their favour with the French surrealists and literary rebels, who during World War I lived through the same terrifying experience, although this time the French were victorious. The surrealist tenets resulted in "the stream of consciousness" literary style than which nothing could be more unlike the hard composition of skaldic poetry. But Joyce's *Ulysses*, though ostensibly written in this style, reveals almost as tough a composition as any skaldic poetry underneath the flood of words. Laxness' first book, written with a stylistic furioso, had the surrealist abandon but not Joyce's hard composition.

Surrealism also resulted in a preference for the world of dreams. The surrealists chose dream at any time in preference to waking reality, which, to most of these artists, was the most despicable of all things. Enemies, too, were common sense and reason.

Now compare with this what Einar Ól. Sveinsson has to say about the nature of the Old Norse kennings:

The mark of their art is not nature, for all things in them are different from what they pretend to be. 'Yoke-bear' is not a bear but an ox, the 'spirit acorn' not a fruit but a man's heart. The 'land of the swans' is the opposite to land, sea. These poets do not want to give reality but turn it into its opposite, phantasy. This is a dream, put together in the world of dreams. The thing is there and still not there. And beneath the surface there is a meaning different from what it seemed to be at first sight. The poem has to be solved like a dream or — a riddle. But solution is possible because firm rule and logic reign in this dream world.⁵

According to this it may be that the chief difference between skaldic poetry and surrealist painting is that the poetry is easier to read or solve than the painting, although we are told that the key to the latter's phantastic images is usually to be found in the Freudian sex-world. But it is interesting to note that one of Salvador Dali's paintings, the woman with vanity-chest drawers in her breast, would have parallels not far to seek in skaldic poetry. Snorri teaches us that a woman could be called a tree of feminine gender and characterized by all her belongings, rings, bracelets, headdress and thus without any doubt by the contents of her vanity case. Thus we actually find her called a "ring-willow", "bracelet-maple", and the "oak of the serpent-town"; "serpent-town" would, of course, be a kenning for the lair or the bed of the serpent: gold.

Some of the modern poets preferred a stricter form than the eruptive stream-of-consciousness style. This is true of S. Mallarmé (1842-1898), whose verses were smooth though adorned with ideological pitfalls of a personal nature as well as his burning desire for the unspeakable Absolute. It is probably also true in the main of T. S. Eliot (born 1888) and Ezra Pound (born 1885). In his *ABC of reading* (1960) Pound gives a final piece of advice on *Dichten* — *Condensare* which appears to be due to his misunderstanding of the German language.

⁵ 'Dróttkvæða þáttur', *Skírnir* CXXI (1947), 19; or reprinted in *Við uppspretturarnar* (1956), 34.

Nevertheless, the skalds seem always to have followed this rule; their poetry and form is almost always condensed. This goes for the *rimur* poetry too. If we turn from poetry to the world of art, we find that the cubists of all the painters were most concerned with strict composition. My colleague, Dr Christopher Gray, author of *Cubist æsthetic theories* (1953), thinks that some of Matisse's pictures made of scraps of coloured paper might be better examples of tough composition than the cubist paintings. Thus their art in two respects resembles the art of skaldic poetry, first in its strict composition, second in its great deformation of nature.

Since deformation or distortion of nature seems so obvious to the layman in modern art, it is rather interesting to observe that my chosen specialist in painting, Maurice Grosser, author of *The painter's eye* (1955), does not have the word distortion in his index, much less a chapter on the subject. This omission strikes me in the same way as if Snorri should have omitted any discussion of the kenning in his *Edda*. Fortunately for me I found another art critic, Mr Patrick Heron, who was not afraid to start his lectures on art with a chapter on "The necessity of distortion in painting" ⁶ One can see the reason why critics friendly to modern art would avoid the term distortion, since that would be the first cry of its enemies. Likewise the kennings could also be blamed for their distortion. But in both cases I would prefer to call a spade a spade, feeling that we have here to do with an important artistic principle, of great effect both in skaldic poetry and modern art. What would *Guernica* be without distortion of its forms?

This principle of distortion makes modern art — like skaldic poetry — as unclassical, unnaturalistic and unrealistic as possible. It is therefore rather peculiar, to say the least, to find a great modern master of painting, like Picasso, called realistic. But that is what our

⁶ P. Heron, *The changing forms of art* (1955-58).

Nobel-prize-winner, H. K. Laxness, did in 'Digtningens problematik i vår tid', a lecture given in the Norwegian Student Society, Oslo, on 8 May 1954.⁷ To call Picasso's surrealist art realistic seems to me a *contradictio in adjecto* and it must be said that Laxness succeeded in this feat of paradox only after changing the sense of his words or rather his premises. He did this by claiming that all art is realistic, if it acts on contemporary reality, because it sprang from contemporary reality. In this way Laxness claims that the Icelandic sagas are realistic, because their heroes became patterns not only to the frail and erring generation which created them but for all Icelanders to come. The so-called social realism of Russia is also, according to Laxness, realistic and for the same reason. Having thus changed his definition of the word realistic, the whole medieval art of the Church would, according to Laxness, become realistic, martyrologies, legends, exempla and allegorical stories, for they all most certainly sprang from the need of their times and had their great effect on posterity. But in his extremely interesting 'Minnisgreinir um fornsögur'⁸ Laxness contrasts very effectively the realism of the Icelandic sagas with the allegorical point of view of Western Christianity.

Laxness mentions here the pattern of heroes in Icelandic and Russian literature. But I suppose one would have to search a long time for heroic figures painted by modern artists, figures which other artists would like to imitate, as classicists would imitate the Greek statues and Christians would idealize their Madonnas. The human figure in modern art would look as if it had been distorted by a thousand medieval devils or crushed and compressed by the steamroller of the modern machine age. But Picasso and his companions helped to create a form of painting which became a great pattern to other painters, hardly less admired than the most famous Madonnas of

⁷ Printed in *Dagur í senn* (1955).

⁸ Printed in *Sjálfsgöðir hlutir* (1946).

old. This may have sprung from his subconscious, like Joyce's *Ulysses*, but it was no formless mass but the toughest composition in painting which the world had seen up to that time: cubist painting. About the memorable origin of cubism I shall quote Maurice Grosser (p. 129):

The Impressionists had not been particularly interested in composition. But . . . Cézanne needed a more dramatic device, a more intense sort of pictorial organisation. He systematically increased the size of distant objects and diminished the nearby ones, to fit the knowledge of our motor senses. Most important, he abandoned the usual classical perspective which depends on the convention of one fixed unmoving eye. Thus Cézanne can almost be said to be the Father of Modern Art. As early as 1909 Braque and Picasso had begun to imitate, explore and further conventionalize Cézanne's conventions of drawing and perspective. These painters were already interested in stylistic analysis as can be seen from their pictures of 1906-07 that imitate the mannerisms of Negro sculpture. But these African pictures have little of the real style, unity and beauty that later cubist pictures possess. It was through Cézanne that men became interested in solving the problem of composition by methods of analysis and abstraction.

'Composition', however, is perhaps too simple a word for what these painters were doing. To speak more exactly, their subject matter was art itself, — how pictures are built. Their aim was to isolate the essential qualities of character and of structure in a picture which makes it a work of art. What is it, independent of the idea a picture communicates, regardless of the story it tells, purely through the balance of its lines and masses, through its shapes abstracted from any meaning, what makes the picture interesting to look at and makes us continue to find it interesting? What is it that makes a simple dolphin inscribed on a bronze discus as moving to us and as memorable as the most beautiful face? This, essentially, is the problem of composition.

Most certainly the early cubist still-lives of Picasso and Braque cannot be regarded very seriously as attempts to depict multiple perspective in their half-legible objects — the folded newspaper, the bottle, the goblet, the guitar, the pipe and the package of Virginia tobacco on a table top. They are rather the use of these conventional objects for the purpose of making pictures whose subject matter is the analysis of composition.

Here I venture to say, by way of comparison, that one could hardly find in the realm of word-composition

a structure at the same time as unified and as variable and as concerned with its structural laws as the skaldic helming or half-stanza and later on the skaldified *rímur* quatrain in Icelandic. The sound pillars of this four verseline composition are marked by alliteration, assonance, internal or end-rime. The alliteration connects two stressed syllables in the odd lines with the first stressed syllables of the even line, combining the two to make an alliterative couplet. For the purpose any consonant could alliterate with itself, as well as the special combinations *sp*, *st*, *sk*. But any vowel could alliterate, and preferably did, with some other vowel, making the task of the alliterator considerably easier than that of the rhymester. The first line of each couplet should have a consonantic assonance, like *bend* : *band*, the second a full rime, like *round* : *sound*. Usually the skaldic metre, counting six syllables to a line to make up a helming of the magically potent twenty-four syllables, would have a disyllabic ending to each line, usually not riming, although a row-rime might occur, but never alternate rimes. The *rímur* quatrains would have either alternate end-rimes or row-rimes: *aa bb* or *aaaa*. This is, of course, purely a composition of sound effects: one could imagine the alliteration words coloured green, the assonance blue, and the full rime yellow. In the quatrain of the *rímur* poetry the assonances and internal rimes are worked to an ever greater artistic degree in hundreds of variations until one can, in the so-called *sléttubönd*, end up with every word in the second half of the stanza riming with every word in the first, and one can read the stanza in a great many ways, sometimes backward and forward with or without change of meaning.⁹ This may remind one of paintings that can be hung many ways on the wall.

⁹ The following example of *Sléttubönd*, by Hallgrímur Pétursson, is changeable in 96 ways, see Helgi Sigurðsson, *Safn til bragfræði íslenskra rímma* (1891), 114-128; he prints 48 of the variants.

Máttur réttur snjalla snill
 snara færa kynni
 háttur léttur valla vill
 vara tæra minni.

As the painter is limited to the four corners of his painting, so the poet is limited to the four lines of his half-stanza: both have their unit of composition, the skaldic half-stanza is really a miniature. I have described the regular sound-frame composition of the poet, but just as the painter throws in several nondescript objects to fill his still-life composition, so the poet throws in distorted, perhaps catacretical, kennings as well as irregularities in word order to fill his stanza. The skald often uses a keystone word to complete the sense of his stanza.

We saw at the beginning of the paper that Hallvard Lie thinks catacretical kennings were formed in imitation of un-natural wood-carving styles. But Finnur Jónsson thought that they arose from the demands of strict composition within the skaldic helming or the modern (*rimur*) quatrain. It is interesting to observe that Maurice Grosser also attributes distortion in modern pictures to the strict composition. But it may well be that Maurice Grosser is over-emphasizing the effect of composition on distortion in paintings. Why not take into account the burning revolt of the artists against "waking reality, common sense and reason" — as well as their desire to shock the public?

At this point one might add one more unnatural trait in the skalds which has a curious parallel in modern painting. The composition of the skalds is often quite similar to snapshots for there is very little time movement in it; usually the sentence ends with the half-stanza or helming; the second half-stanza may be co-ordinate or subordinate, but to carry sentence structure from one stanza to another as the author of the sacred *Plácítúsdrápa* does, in order to tell his story, is extremely odd in skaldic poetry. Professor Lie notes this stagnant character of skaldic poetry, contrasting it with the swift flow of the Eddic poetry. He thinks this style results from the skald's imitation of the static pictures on the shields. A similar anti-naturalism, though of opposite nature, arises

in modern painting when the futurists try to introduce time and movement into their pictures.

In touching upon surrealist painting and skaldic poetry, we found that both could be interpreted in the light of dreams. It seems to me that in cubist painting we may have a closer approximation to the working or the mechanism of the kennings than in any other painting form. You can look upon cubist painting as made up of abstract lines and more or less concrete representation of the subject matter. Similarly, the kennings can be looked upon as being always made up of two things, an abstract base word (prop) and a concrete definer. In other words, you have the same polarity between abstract and concrete both in skaldic poetry and in cubist painting. In a great many cases the abstract base in skaldic poetry is a *nomen agentis* or the name of a doer, like "ring-giver, -thrower, -spender", who is being concretely defined by the object of his doing, the rings, the gold, the treasure. Incidentally, most verbs in skaldic poetry are embedded in these *nomina agentis*, so that the style of the poetry is eminently a style of nouns, another definitely un-natural and unprosaic trait of the style. In still other cases we have names of trees as abstract base words, masculine or feminine, according to whether it is a name for a man, or a woman, a warrior or a lady. You can thus call man an ash, a maple or a grove of trees and define him by his fighting, his weapons, his ships. You can call woman an oak, log or willow and define her by her finery, such as necklaces, bracelets, finger-rings (cf. above on Dali's vanity-case breast picture), or you can define her as a beer-spending hostess, or a giver of wine and mead. This use of tree names as a basis for kennings seems more abstract than most bases and is extremely peculiar and mysterious, unless it might be connected with the World-tree cult of the Scandinavians. That such a cult existed seems certain not only from the well-known Eddic myth of the Ash of Yggdrasill and Adam of Bremen's

testimony about the sacred grove in Uppsala, but also because trees, probably cult trees, are clearly seen in the Swedish Bronze Age rock carvings. Should this, I admit rather bold, hypothesis be correct, we would have less difficulty in understanding why gods' names are also used as an abstract base in kennings, male gods for men, goddesses for women. Otherwise such a usage would be extremely hard to understand, and I am not aware that anyone has so interpreted it, though Einar Ól. Sveinsson in one place suggests that it might be due to religious trance (*leiðzla*) or mystic consciousness in which men imagined themselves to be gods.¹⁰

It is a well known fact, though unexplained, that Njörðr (28), Týr (19), Freyr (16) and Baldr (14) were most commonly used as abstract bases for kennings, while Óðinn and Þórr, Heimdallr and Loki were used practically not at all. Likewise Þórr is extremely common in Iceland as a first element in proper names while Óðinn is not. Finally the attitude towards sacred Christian names is quite different among Protestants and Catholics. Protestants can use Maria only as proper name for a girl, but Catholics can use Jesu Maria for a boy! We have no way of penetrating the meanings of these differences in the old kenning use of gods' names, but we guess that underlying them there must have been different religious attitudes or tabus.

But the story of the abstract base names is not yet fully told. Snorri tells us (*Skáldskaparmál*, chapter 40) that instead of gods' names you could use elves' names (*álfa nöfn*) and that such a usage would be quite correct. But if you used the names of giants or trolls, you would be aiming at intentional satire or calumny in your poetry. Such usage was not unknown in the skaldic poetry and grew increasingly common in the *rímur* in describing the villain of the story. One such description, which lingers in the memory of every Icelander, even our Nobel-prize-

¹⁰ In his 'Dróttkvæða þáttur', see note 5 above.

winner, is so powerful that I would not hesitate to advance it as a motto to Picasso's *Guernica*:

Ferleg vóru fjörbrot hans,
fold og sjórinn stigu dans,
gæðasljór með glæpafans,
Grímur fór til andskotans.¹¹

And a strong element of satire is one thing which the *rímur* have in common with modern art, including painting.

We come now to the last great similarity between skaldic poetry and modern painting: the love of punning in words and pictures. Snorri treats punning and play on words in two chapters of the *Edda*, chapters 40 and 88 of *Skáldskaparmál*, especially the latter. In both cases it is based on the homophony, or likeness of sound, between words of different meaning. Ideally the homophony should be perfect, but Snorri's examples show that such was not always the case. In chapter 40 he mentions among other things two abstract base *nomina agentis*, one masculine, the other feminine, which at the same time are tree names and can as such be used as abstract bases for kennings. Perfect examples are for a man: *reynir vápna* "the tester of weapons" from the verb *reyna* "to test", but *reynir* may also be interpreted as "rowan tree" or "mountain ash" and "a mountain ash of weapons" would be another perfect kenning based on the tree name. For a woman: *selja öls* "the giver (or seller) of ale", from the verb *selja* "to give, sell", but *selja* is also a tree name, "salix, willow", and as such can serve as an abstract base for kennings. In chapter 40 Snorri implies that the use of tree names in kennings had its origin in such equation of homonyms, but that is not very likely, if we think that there is some connection between the tree names and the sacred names of gods. In chapter 88 Snorri gives more

¹¹ Transl. by Paul Bjarnason:

When the Fates with merriment
much too late their order sent,
through the gate with guilt-content
Grímur straight to Hades went.

examples of verbal puns or verbal riddles based on homophony or seeming identity of words of different meaning, like the English (verb) *see*, *sea* (ocean), (bishop's) *see*, *c* (the letter). In English, as here, there is sometimes a variety of spelling to keep the words apart. In Snorri's examples some might have an accented vowel, others not. That would make for difference in pronunciation, so that they would not become homonyms except on paper. Among other things Snorri lists several meanings of the form *lið(r)*, some of them being different words:

Lið(r) is a joint where bones meet in a man, *lið* is a ship, *lið* is people, *lið*, too, is help that one man gives to another; *lið* is called ale. *Hlið* is a doorway in a fence, men call oxen a *hlið(r)*, and *hlið* is a slope. These terms can be so put in poetry as to make the passage 'too clear' (*ofljóst*), so that it will be difficult to understand, if another term is used than one would have expected from the previous verse-lines.

It seems fairly certain that Snorri coined the term *ofljóst*, "too clear", for such riddles with his tongue in his cheek.

A young Icelandic scholar, Ólafur M. Ólafsson, claims that scholars have as yet overlooked much *ofljóst* punning in skaldic poetry. A verse by Egill Skalla-Grímsson reads in quick translation: "I feel lonesome, lying alone, an old, old carl, on the king's defences." Everything is clear except the last line. But Ólafur explains it. The "king's defences" must be men, but men are also, according to Snorri, *dúnn* "down", and lying on down needs no explanation in a land of eiderducks.¹²

A special and probably an extremely ancient kind of *ofljóst* or punning are the riddles connected with the runic names. If our guesses about the origin of sacred tree names and gods' names in kennings are correct, the runic riddles ought not to be younger. We have an Old English poet like Cynewulf of the eighth century who conceals or reveals his name in runes. This practice was continued up to the present day by composers of *rimur* in Iceland.

¹² *Á góðu dægri: afmæliskeðja til Sigurðar Nordals* (1951), 122.

We shall finally see what our specialist Maurice Grosser has to say about visual punning in modern painting (p. 167):

For the painter who wants to make composition the real subject of his picture, what the picture represents is just an obstacle; in fact it is the major obstacle. If the picture's composition is to have its proper emphasis, all reference to the familiar visual world must be destroyed. Or if this is too drastic, the objective meaning of the image it presents must at least be considerably weakened; otherwise the painter is just where he was before, painting a picture which is well composed, perhaps, but which is still an anecdote, an illustration. This difficulty the modern artists avoided by their most brilliant device — the multiple image or the visual pun. By multiplying the meaning, by making a picture with layers of images or layers of meaning, the value of each image can be weakened, and the mind can be drawn from the picture's sense to the picture's composition.

Here we have to bear in mind that the multiple image corresponds to the skaldic kenning. He goes on:

For us in our time, if a thing is to hold attention, one plane of existence, one level of meaning is not enough. A man must mean two or three things at the same time. [Was not that what Egill succeeded in doing in his metaphoric kennings in *Þél höggv stórt fyrir stáli?*¹³] By these extra meanings it acquires for us the depth, the back and forth dimension [well known in the kennings of skaldic poetry], the uncertain position and the evasive essence which, for us, all real existence has. It is this multiple meaning [nowhere better paralleled than in the skaldic kennings] which renders a thing interesting and keeps it so, whether it be an opera of Mozart or a character in Proust.

And he goes on:

But for us the parody, the visual pun, the multiple image is an essential part of all our serious art — our poetry, our music and our painting. It is characteristic of our humor — the joke where the situation given by the drawing is contradicted by the social situation implied by the one line caption.

Grosser denies that the modern double image has anything to do with allegory, but it seems to me that its polarity is more similar to the polarity of the kennings or the cubist paintings. A kenning always displays a double word image.

¹³ In *Egils saga*, ch. 57.

My comparison of skaldic poetry and modern art has come to an end. I hope to have shown what I set out to show: first, that the principle of un-natural distortion is just as alive and potent an artistic striving in skaldic poetry and medieval Icelandic *rímur* as it is in modern art, whatever the reasons for it in each art form; second, that strivings for a tough hard composition are just as vigorous in skaldic poetry and in the modern Icelandic quatrain as they are in some modern art, notably cubist painting; and third, that the will to punning, riddling, and parody is just as prominent in skaldic poetry and especially in the medieval *rímur*, later on, as it is in much modern painting.

Given such great similarities between skaldic verse and modern art in method and in their strivings after form, we must still try to answer the question: Is skaldic poetry great poetry or inferior art? Our greatest Icelandic scholar and critic, Sigurður Nordal, has answered this question in the negative. According to him, skaldic poetry is so difficult and uninteresting that it is read only by misled schoolboys and dry-as-dust Icelandic scholars. I would not dare to disagree. But I do not think that he has ever tried to compare skaldic poetry with modern art. Neither do I know how high he might value the paintings of Picasso, although I know he likes the modernist paintings of the Icelander Kjarval. But here is the rub. No one until the modernist painting period could hope to have any possibility of understanding skaldic poetry with the help of his own artistic principles. It was a different matter with the simple almost classical art of the sagas which were appreciated, first by the romantics, then by the realists of the nineteenth century. The great scholar W. P. Ker compared their art to Flaubert's, and now they have won world acclaim. Two great scholars of the twentieth century, one German and the other American, translated skaldic poetry into their native idiom, but neither compared it with modern art. Hallvard Lie was

obviously conscious of the similarity to modern art. I would not have noticed it except for my preoccupation with modern poets in Iceland who reject skaldic poetry, although they admire modern painting and Picasso. To me the question now boils down to this: is Picasso and his painting great or is it not? I am sure that nowadays no one would answer this question in the negative. But if we grant this acclaim to Picasso and modern art, I can see no way of denying it to the skalds and their poetry.

KATTAR SONR

BY ANNE HOLTSMARK

THE *First Lay of Helgi Hundingsbani* (referred to as *HH I* hereafter) is the most chivalric of all the eddaic poems. It is true that Helgi, the hero, has killed his father's slayer, King Hunding, but this is told in a couple of stanzas and it is a different exploit altogether that we are to hear about. Helgi is to save a valkyrie from marrying a man she does not want as her husband. The valkyrie, Sigrún, tells Helgi of the proposed match and says:

en ek hefi, Helgi,
Höðbrodd kveðinn
konung óneisan
sem kattar son.

Helgi promises that he will die before such a thing happens, and the rest of the poem describes the great battle he has in order to free Sigrún.

It has been generally agreed that Sigrún's words just quoted are an insult to Höðbrodd, but there has not been general agreement as to what she really means when she describes the rejected suitor as *óneiss sem kattar son*. Gering thinks that *óneiss* "bedeutet hier gewiss 'schamlos, frech' . . . während das Wort an den übrigen Stellen, wo es sich in der Edda findet, keinen verächtlichen Sinn hat".¹ To this Sijmons adds in parenthesis that the word could be translated in its usual, positive sense but interpreted here as ironical in intention. In the commentary to his *Edda* edition of 1932 Finnur Jónsson translates it as "en konge der ellers er daddelfri".² Gering elsewhere glosses *óneiss* as "ohne Schande,

¹ *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda* II (1931), 82.

² *De gamle Eddadigte* (1932), 186.

makellos";³ Neckel gives "kühn, keck".⁴ Sophus Bugge writes: "*neiss* betyr skamfuld, *óneiss* siges derfor om den som ikke skamfuld holder sig tilbage, men som kjæk gaar i spidsen og udmærker sig, *óneiss* betyder ikke udadledelig".⁵ Bugge connects *kattar sonr* with the name of the Irish king, Carpre Caitchenn, a point to which I shall return later. Finally, Finnur Jónsson also speaks of the use of *óneiss* in *HH I* with the words "hvor dog betydn. 'ikke skamfuld' = 'fræk' kunde være den rigtige".⁶

It is doubtless right to take the word *kveðinn* to mean not that Sigrún had told Høðbrodd himself that he was *óneiss* like the son of a cat, but that she had said it about him when her father proposed the marriage to her. But it also implies that she cannot accept him without loss of honour.

But what exactly did she mean?

The adj. *óneiss* means "not *neiss*". We must first try to decide the significance of this word. In verse it occurs only once, *Hávamál* 49.

Váðir mínar gaf ek velli at
tveim trémönnum:
rekkar þat þóttoz er þeir rípt höfðo;
neiss er nøkkviðr halr.

In prose I have also only found it once. Fritzner cites the Norwegian text of *Barlaams saga*, where a king who has been stripped of his clothes and sent to a deserted island to starve to death is described as *næktan oc neisan*.⁷

The alliterating connection with *nøktr*, *nøkkviðr* shows that the word is *neiss* and not *hneiss*, as Fritzner writes it.

³ *Vollständiges wörterbuch zu den liedern der Edda* (1903), s.v.

⁴ *Edda. II Kommentierendes glossar* (2. Aufl. 1936), s.v.

⁵ *Helge-digtene i den ældre Edda* (1896), 46-7.

⁶ *Lexicon poeticum* (2. udg. 1931), s.v.

⁷ R. Keyser og C. R. Unger, *Barlaams ok Josaphats saga* (1851), 62. English evidence suggests that the cliché *neiss ok nøkkviðr* was more widespread than the Norse sources reveal, see *NED* s.v. *nais*: "nais and naked", c. 1300; "nakid and nais", c. 1325; modern dialect, "nace nyaukit", 1871; *NED* glosses "covered with shame, destitute".

Neither is the adj. *óneiss* preserved in a form **óhneiss*. The word must thus have existed in Old West Norse without *h-*. It is worth noting that the Icelandic text of *Barlaams saga* here has *hneyctan* — did the Icelandic writer not know the word *neisan*? *Hávamál* otherwise always alliterates *hl*, *hn*, *hr* with *h-*, not with *l*, *n*, *r*.⁸ At the same time there did also exist *hneisa* f., *hneisa* (-st-) vb., *hneisulegr*, *hneisulega*; and in Norwegian texts these too are spelt without initial *h-*. Early Swedish and Danish have *nesa*, *nese*, Nynorsk *neisa*, vb. and subst., but no adj. corresponding to Old West Norse *neiss* is found.

According to dictionaries (Hellquist's, Holthausen's), the etymology of these words is "dunkel" and I do not intend to propose any solution of it. We ought perhaps to regard the words with *h-* and without *h-* as originally distinct: the loss of initial *h* in Norwegian and East Norse caused them to fall together, and adj. *neiss* was discarded in favour of the past participle of *hneisa*: *hneistr*. It will be safest to consider the significance of adj. *neiss* in isolation.

In *Hávamál* 49 we have what sounds like a proverb: *neiss er nøkkviðr halr*. The axiom is illustrated by a little story: I gave my clothes to two tree-men; when they got them they thought they were *rekkr*. ON *rekkr* m., OE *rinc*, OSax *rink*, is one of the ancient words for man, hero, warrior.

The words *rekkr* and *óneiss* are also linked in *Atlakviða* 18: *langt er at leita . rekka óneissa*. Gunnar needs warriors against Atli, but he has brought no followers to Atli's country, and now it is too late to send messages for help. He should have had with him bold armed men, dressed for battle, in *herváðir*. In stanza 13 of the same

⁸ In *Hávamál* 49 a reading **hneiss er nøkkviðr halr* would give a satisfactory alliteration (*hneiss* - *halr*), but the *Barlaams saga* confirms the alliteration in *n-* (*neiss* - *nøkkviðr*). Initial *h-* in *hneisa* is demonstrated by the alliteration in *Stjórn* (1862), 512: *herfilega hneista*; and in *Biskupa sögur* (1858-78), I 106: *herfilega hneist ok rangliga raskat*. *Stjórn* is thought to be a Norwegian work in origin. In *HH* I 48 a false but alliterating *h-* is put in *hniflungar*.

poem the men Gunnar left at home are called *lýðar óneisir*; they appear weeping (*grátendr*) as they escort him out of the courtyard. The adj. is also used once in *HH I* before it comes again in Sigrún's disdainful words about Höðbrodd. Helgi asks Hjørleif if he has mustered the army for the battle: *Hefir þú kannaða koni óneisa?* In all these instances *óneiss* has a laudatory meaning, for which a reliable gloss would seem to be "unafraid, battle-ready".

In that case the meaning in *Hávamál* 49, *neiss er nøkkviðr halr*, would be that the naked man is afraid, timorous, defenceless.

It should be emphasised that the phrase used at the beginning of *Hávamál* 49 is *velli at*, not *velli á*. Most people translate this as "on the field", but that cannot be right. *at* means "at, to, towards; against, by", etc., cf. e.g. *Rígsþula* 2, *kom þar at húsi*. It might then be translated "by, at the field" or "for use on the field", and then it is reasonable to think of the *vøllr* as having a defined functional significance — such as *víg-vøllr*, *þing-vøllr*. In that case, it is probably the same *vøllr* as the one referred to in *Hávamál* 38:

Vápnom sínom skala maðr velli á
feti ganga framarr,

i.e. a man is advised not to stir from his weapons on the field, doubtless the battlefield. In *Vafþrúðnismál* 18 it says: *Vígríðr heitir vøllr er finnaz vígi at*, "Vigríð is the name of the field where they meet for battle".

Hávamál 49 could also be interpreted as saying: "I gave my clothes to two tree-men *for use on the field*"; the clothes, *váðir*, might be thought of as *herváðir*, "war-clothes, armour", although the word *ript* must, it seems, refer to cloth.

It must be right to translate *neiss* and *óneiss* in the eddaic poems as respectively "defenceless, afraid" and the opposite "armed, fearless". The meaning "defence-

less'' is suitable also for the *næktan oc neisan* of *Barlaams saga* — the king has been stripped of everything and cast away on an island to die. I thus translate *neiss* in a negative way — it is used of the man who is destitute of clothes, weapons, food, courage; and *óneiss* is the man who has these things and so is unafraid. Then he can be a *rekkr*.⁹

This positive sense of the formally negative word *óneiss* fits every other context where the word is used in the *Edda*, but it needs an explanation in *HH I*, where Sigrún abuses Hǫðbrodd as *óneiss sem kattar son*. It is clear from the above, however, that it cannot be the adj. itself which is insulting — the insult must lie in the comparison with the cat.

The cat is not very old as a domestic animal in Scandinavia. The first archeological evidence of the domestic cat is from about A.D. 1000 and comes from Lund (Skåne). But the name *kǫttir* was used for many animals that caught mice, among them the ermine, common in Norway and the other Scandinavian countries but not found in Iceland. John Bernström believes that the white catskin which, according to the *Eiríks saga rauða*, Þorbjörg lítilvölva wore in Greenland was certainly ermine, and that the pair of cats which in the *Prose Edda* are said to draw Freyja's chariot were also thought of as ermine. He says that this animal played a large part in the pre-Christian world of ideas, but little research has been done on its significance. He reminds us of the position held by the cat in witchcraft and popular beliefs of modern times.¹⁰

A philological investigation concerning the cat in Old Norse literature yields a meagre harvest. The only cat in all the poetry is the one in *HH I*. The word *kǫttir* appears as a *heiti* for giant in the *Pulur* of the *Prose Edda*.¹¹ Here

⁹ *Guðrúnarkviða III* 4 has acc. sg. *jofur óneisinn*, usually emended to *óneisan*. The poem is certainly Icelandic. Does the manuscript form represent a cliché that was wrongly remembered?

¹⁰ *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder VIII* (1963), s.v. *katt*.

¹¹ *Pulur IV* b 5. Finnur Jónsson, *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar* (1931), 195 (v. 421).

too, as was mentioned above, the cat appears as the draught animals of Freyja. The description there of the fetter Gleipnir which is used to bind the Wolf Fenrir also displays knowledge of the cat. One of the things that went to its making was *kattar dynr*, "the noise of the cat" — and everybody knows that there is no noise when a cat runs (*engi dynr verðr af hlaupi kattarins*), for it was all used up to make the fetter. Útgarða-Loki also produced a "rather large" cat for Thor to lift. The cat must have been completely familiar to Snorri and his contemporaries. We find in the *Miracle Book of St Thorlák* that the dog and cat are counted natural domestic animals on an Icelandic farm.¹² This comes in origin from 1199, contemporary with Snorri's younger years. In the *Niðrstigningar saga*, a twelfth-century Norwegian (or Icelandic?) translation of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, we find that the word (mouse-)trap is translated as *tréköttr* "wood-cat" — the cat was the usual mouse-catcher.¹³

Bernström also mentions the fact that *köttr*, *kausi*, *kellingr*, *kettuhryggr* were used as surname or nickname but that the reasons for their use cannot be determined. The use of *kettuhryggr* was probably based on a comparison between a hunchback and a cat arching its back, but we have absolutely no means of deciding what lay behind the other cat-names: an individual may have looked like a cat, owned a cat, behaved like a cat.

It was not flattering to be called "cat", any more than it is today. In the *Orkneyinga saga* Earl Þorfinn urges Kálf Árnason to attack by saying: "You do not mean to lie her *sem köttr í hreysi* while I fight for both of us?" Then Kálf joins in.¹⁴ It is assumed that here the *hreysiköttr* was meant.

But when round about the year 1000 Snorri goði in Iceland calls two of his sons *kausi* "pussy" and his

¹² L. Larsson, *Isländska handskriften N° 645 4° i den Arnamagnæanska samlingen* (1885), 5¹⁵⁻¹⁶

¹³ C. R. Unger, *Heilagra manna sögur* (1877), II 5¹⁰.

¹⁴ Sigurður Nordal, *Orkneyinga saga* (1913-14), 70.

fosterson Þórðr *kǫttr* "cat", he had the domestic cat in mind. The house cat was known in Iceland then but not the *hreysikǫttr* or other kinds of wildcat. The *Heiðarvíga saga* contains a remark which Snorri goði is supposed to have made to one of his "kittens", when he had the boy with him at a killing for vengeance. A young son of the man they had killed came running out and Snorri said: "Does the cat see the mouse? Young shall strike at young (*ungr skal at ungum vega*)."¹⁵ But Þórðr *kǫttr* (or *kausi*) refuses.¹⁵ Snorri prophesies that his family will suffer for it, but the saga gives no account of any such consequence.

Heiðarvíga saga is badly preserved. Most of it comes to us only in the version given from memory by Jón of Grunnavík, but he had also copied some verses and individual words and phrases from the vellum before it was burnt. Snorri goði's words *Sér kǫttrinn músina* are recorded by him. They certainly stood in the saga and were part of the tradition about Snorri and "the cat" — "Catch him, puss!"

But twist it and turn it as much as we like, a cat never becomes *óneiss*. It is the household pet, it lies in wait and catches mice; the *hreysikǫttr* lies in its hole while others fight, it slips away. It is not possible to understand Sigrún's words as anything but scorn: Hǫðbrodd is as fearless as a cat! It is this ironical sense that Sijmons suggests in his additional note to Gering's commentary.

But other explanations have also been offered. Finnur Jónsson and Sophus Bugge point to the appearance of *kǫttr* as a *heiti* for giant and in the *Lexicon Poeticum* the word is glossed: "jættenavn *kattar sunr* jættesøn", with this phrase in *HH I* translated as "ikke bedre end en (modbydelig) jätte" — which elsewhere Finnur Jónsson

¹⁵ Kr. Kaalund, *Heiðarvíga saga* (1904), 46; Sigurður Nordal, *Borgfirðinga sögur* (Íslenzk fornrit III, 1938), 248-9. The text of the vellum, known from Jón Ólafsson's direct quotation of it, had Snorri speak to his son Þórðr *kausi*; but the reply, only known from Jón Ólafsson's re-telling of the saga from memory, comes from "Þordur föstre hans" (Kaalund's edition, *loc. cit.*), i.e. Þórðr *kǫttr*. Cf. pp. 154-5 below.

says gives "en fortræffelig mening".¹⁶ Bugge wants to explain both the nickname *køttr* and the *kattar sonr* of *HH I* by reference to the name of the legendary Irish king, Carpre Caitchenn, whose nickname means "cat-head"; Bugge also refers to *køttr* as a *heiti* for giants. The comparison with Irish is not convincing. But Bugge is right to point out that the sons of Snorri goði with their cat-names were living at just about the time when the Helgi poem was composed.¹⁷ And the phrase *kattar sonr* in the poem must have caught on. It occurs again in the *Stúfs þátr*: and Stúfr is a son of Þórðr *køttr*.¹⁸

A central element in this tale is a conversation between King Harald Sigurðsson *inn harðráði* and the poet Stúfr *inn blindi* in which they tease each other on account of the nicknames their fathers had: Sigurðr *sýr* "pig" and Þórðr *køttr* "cat". The king first asks his name and he replies "Stúfr"; this seems a curious name to the king—it means "stump" — and he goes on to ask whose son he is. Stúfr answers: *Ek em kattar sun*. The king asks which kind of cat his father had been. Stúfr told him to guess and laughed, and when the king asked him why he laughed, he told him again to guess the reason. The king replied that he thought Stúfr laughed because it had occurred to him to ask "which kind of pig my father had been" After this they became good friends and Stúfr had to entertain the king by reciting poems. This he did late into the night but only by reciting *flokkar*, although he said afterwards that he knew just as many *drápur*.

Did Stúfr know the Helgi poem, and did the phrase *kattar sonr* come from there? King Harald was himself a poet and could have known the Helgi lay as well as Stúfr. Sophus Bugge thought *HH I* was composed for Canute the Great in England.¹⁹ Alexander Bugge, on the

¹⁶ *De gamle Eddadigte* (1932), 180.

¹⁷ *Helge-digtene* (1896), 46-7.

¹⁸ *Stúfs þátr Þórdarsonar* is preserved in two versions, the longer as an independent tale. The two are printed side by side in Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Laxdæla saga* (Íslensk fornrit V, 1934), 280-90.

¹⁹ *Helge-digtene* (1896), 187.

other hand, tried to show that it was composed in honour of Magnús the Good in 1046.²⁰ There can be no question of proof in such a matter but Alexander Bugge demonstrated so many similarities of diction between the poem and the verse of the scalds of that time, especially that by Arnór Þórðarson jarlaskáld, that the theory is well founded, and it must, at any rate, be concluded that *HH I* belongs to that period and milieu. The poet of *HH I* was probably an Iclander: *h-* in *hniflungar* in stanza 48 must be a "hyper-Icelandicism" (cf. note 8 above).

Arnór composed poems in honour of both Magnús the Good and Harald the Stern. Whether *HH I* was composed by him or by one of his contemporary countrymen, he will certainly have recited it before the king at some time, and this is enough for the question we are concerned with: Did King Harald recognise the expression *kattar sonr* when Stúfr introduced himself? If he did, then the exchange between him and Stúfr had a special sarcastic edge to it.

A fresh doubt arises. How far can we trust the report of a saga in the case of "smart answers" like this? All we can say is that here we are dealing with historical characters. King Harald, the poet Stúfr, his father Þórðr kotttr, all existed. Stúfr visited King Harald after Magnús the Good was dead — Magnús is not mentioned in the *þáttr*. The splendid Helgi lay would still have had its novelty and relevance. The tale of Stúfr has two points: one is the conversation where he and the king make fun of each other; the other is the fact that Stúfr knows so much poetry. The *þáttr* is preserved in two versions, the shorter in *Morkinskinna* and related collections of Kings' Sagas, the longer as an independent tale, and the relationship between them has not so far been made entirely clear. The contents are on the whole the same, but the presentation is different; both, however,

²⁰ 'Arnor Jarlaskald og det første kvad om Helge Hundingsbane', *Edda I* (1914), 350-80, especially 379.

have the reply about *kattar sonr*. It seems probable, but it cannot of course be certain, that this ultimately comes from the account Stúfr himself gave of his visit to Norway. If this seems plausible, we must conclude that it offers evidence that *HH I* was composed by some older contemporary of Stúfr — just as Alexander Bugge attempted to demonstrate. But if the anecdote of the meeting between King Harald and Stúfr is a story-teller's invention, then it only shows that the *HH I* is older than the *þátttr*. The *Morkinskinna* compilation is reckoned to be from c. 1200; the independent *þátttr* must be somewhat older.

Another small problem of literary history is related to the episode in the *Heiðarvígá saga* in which Snorri goði sets the cat — his foster-son or possibly his son — on the boy whose father has just been killed. Þórðr kǫtttr would not respond to the urging that time. In the *Laxdæla saga* Þórðr kǫtttr is with the other sons of Guðrún Ósvífrsdóttir when they take vengeance for the death of Bolli; here the "avenger" is supposed to be the twelve-year old Bolli Bollason. The man who is killed is Helgi Harðbeinsson; his small son, Harðbein, ran out of the house, and Þórðr kǫtttr was on the spot and meant to cut him down at once — but Bolli came up and said the boy was not to be harmed. Harðbein was saved — and no more is heard of him in the saga.²¹

The episode in the *Heiðarvígá saga* is referred to the year 1008, and then Þórðr kǫtttr could not have been more than fourteen or fifteen years old. According to the chronology of the *Laxdæla saga*, as set out in the *Fornrit* edition,²² Guðrún's first marriage was in 989; she was divorced and remarried, which must have taken a few years, and Þórðr was the son of her second marriage, born after his father's death. He must thus in fact have been quite a youngster in 1008, so that the remark attributed to Snorri in *Heiðarvígá saga* — *ungr skal at ungum vega* — is

²¹ *Laxdæla saga*, ch. 64.

²² Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Laxdæla saga* (1934), lix.

appropriate. The vengeance on Helgi Harðbeinsson in the *Laxdæla saga* is put at a much later date. Þórðr appears as a grown man, while Bolli, born c. 1006-7, and described as a youth still beardless, has taken over the part of protector of the young boy.

Sigfús Blöndal discussed the relationship between the two texts and came to the conclusion that *Heiðarvígá saga* had borrowed from *Laxdæla saga*.²³ This is hardly possible, however, for the *Laxdæla saga* is, after all, at least 50-70 years younger than the *Heiðarvígá saga*. Blöndal appreciated this, but worked on the assumption that the loan was from a pre-literary *Laxdæla saga*. There seem no good grounds for following him in this: the account of the vengeance taken by Bolli Bollason on his father's slayer is perhaps the most literary chapter in the whole of this literary saga; it opens with a "survey from the battlements". — a man sees the band of avengers and describes their appearance to another man, who identifies them one by one, — a pure cliché in epic composition. In a note to the *Heiðarvígá saga* Sigurður Nordal mentions the passage in *Laxdæla saga* and adds: "His [Þórð's] behaviour towards the boy Harðbein Helgason is much at odds with his noblemindedness here" [i.e. in *Heiðarvígá saga*].²⁴

Blöndal discusses the curious fact that, according to the saga, Snorri goði had two sons and a foster-son, all with the nickname "cat". They were his eldest son, born c. 984, his foster-son (father of Stúfr), and an illegitimate son born we do not know when. But of these it is only about the foster-son that the sources tell us more than that he existed. Blöndal suggests as an explanation that the eldest son died young, and that the illegitimate son inherited his name. Now, the two sons have the form *kausi* as their nickname, while Þórðr, the foster-son, is called *kotttr*. There seems to be some confusion between

²³ In *Festskrift til Finnur Jónsson* (1928), 23-4.

²⁴ *Borgfirðinga segur* (1938), 249 note 2.

son and foster-son, *kausi* and *køttr*, in the *Heiðarviga saga* (see note 15 above). But surely the words, *Sér køttrinn músina*, were really spoken to the boy whose nickname was *køttr* — Þórðr, the father of Stúfr *kattar son*.

THE INFLUENCE OF LATIN ON THE NORWEGIAN LANGUAGE

BY BJARNE BERULFSEN

IN 1939 Professor Franz Blatt published an article on the influence of the classical languages on Danish.¹ It was a popular but none the less sound and instructive survey of the influence which Latin in particular has had on the Danish language, first and foremost on vocabulary, but also to a certain extent on syntax. Blatt covers a wide variety of subjects — trade, clothing, tools, religion, art, science, politics, and so forth — and his account covers the complete history of the Danish language. What he says concerning the Danish language applies also in its entirety to Norwegian. It is in fact practically impossible to distinguish between the Scandinavian languages in the question of the influence of Latin.

The subject offers a study of vast scope in both time and space. Latin influence can be shewn to have existed in periods before the Norwegians had any written literature, for which indeed the Latin alphabet was a prerequisite. The influence has varied with the changing prestige Latin has enjoyed. It was already in a strong position in one particular level of society around A.D. 1035 when the poet Þórarinn Loftunga declared that prayers to St Olav should be recited in Latin, "the book language" as he called it. Almost 250 years later the author of *The King's Mirror* impressed upon the would-be merchant the necessity of learning Latin, although this was not to be done at the expense of one's mother tongue. Latin as the language of scholarship was consolidated and its use extended during the era of learning, and in the academic field it has kept its position ever since. It

¹ In *Sprog og Kultur* 7 (1939), 153-64.

is still a powerful reality for the ordinary man, even in the de-Latinised Norway of today where the vocabulary and syntax of this universal language have been consciously resisted as "foreign" and "officialese".

Confronted with such a wealth of material it is necessary to restrict the scope of our treatment and to concentrate chiefly on the old and medieval periods. It is particularly the priesthood which will occupy our attention. In reality, of course, this means the intellectual upper class of the age, the educated men among whom Latin was most firmly entrenched. And even here the reader will certainly notice that the examples are to a great extent taken from a special literary genre, namely correspondence of the fourteenth century. This can perhaps be defended since the epistolary literature, however modest in nature and extent it may appear to be, gives a good representative picture of the whole situation.

Latin influence on Norwegian gained access through both oral and literary channels. The former, which is of course the older, was effected through early military and trade contacts with areas which bordered the civilised nations in the south. The noticeable result is a large number of loan-words of Latin origin, although most of these have entered Norwegian indirectly via Frisian, German or English. It is significant that many are of commercial character, e.g. *kaup*, *pund*, *vín*, *sekk*, *skrin*. The word *eyrir* (from *aureus*) is however only found in the Scandinavian languages. To this early period belongs the Latin suffix *-arius*, Old Norse *-ari*, which is found as early as c. 900 in Þorbjörn Hornklofi's poem on Harald Fairhaired in the word *leikari*. As we know, this is a word-forming element which is still productive in Norwegian.

The contact with the British Isles in the Viking period and down to about 1100 also meant at first that the Latin element was oral and indirect. In addition to the group mentioned above, the loan-words we now have are to a

great extent ecclesiastical, often words of Greek origin. The words *kristen*, *biskop*, *prost*, *prest*, *engel*, are those usually cited. But the encounter with Christianity also laid the foundations for Latin literary influence. Christianity drew Norway into the great European community whose linguistic medium was Latin. The scholars from Scandinavia who aspired, ultimately with success, to become the representatives of this culture in their own country had first to learn Latin. If we now move on to the first half of the fourteenth century, we can see from the letters written by the bishops of Bergen, Arne, Audfinn and Håkon, that they wrote elegant Latin, and it is said of their contemporary, Jón Halldórsson, that he could “svo mjúkt latínu at tala sem móðurtungu”

First among the individual fields in which Latin was bound to make itself felt in the written language was grammar. Professor Anne Holtsmark has pointed out that Latin scholarship can clearly be seen in the work of the Icelandic scholar of the twelfth century who composed the *First Grammatical Treatise*, and demonstrated that he must have been familiar with Donatus and Priscianus. Norway produced no such work but we know for certain that Norwegians studied Latin grammar. The Bergen bishop, Arne Sigurdsson (died 1314), left a respectable library which included an important section which he catalogued as *Grammaticales libros*. Under this heading he mentioned in particular *Donatus* and *flores gramatice metricos* and *deriuaciones minores* and a manual of the eight *partes oracionis*. It is not without reason that it is in the field of grammar that Latin terminology is best preserved, even in our primary schools today. We need think only of *nomen*, *pronomen*, *verbum*, *adverbium*, to mention just four of the eight *partes*.

The gateway to the great intellectual life of the Middle Ages stood open for the man who had learnt Latin grammar. Here the religious literature which was

studied and in part translated into Norwegian comes to mind. In addition legal literature, especially concerning canon law, became accessible, and this was an indispensable subject of study. On top of this we have works on rhetoric, together with manuals on letter writing, *ars epistolaria*, the so-called *summae dictaminum* which played such an important part in the latinisation of the mother tongue. If we turn our attention once again to Bishop Arne's library, we notice that all these branches of literature are well represented in some form or other. Among other things there we find a *summa dictaminum bernardi*. If we add to this the medical books — and it is established that such books existed in Norway in the fourteenth century — I think I have mentioned the most important of the written Latin sources which were able to influence the Norwegian language. We ought perhaps also to add mathematics, *compotum cum tabulis* and *compotum manuale*, as the titles of two books in Arne's collection read.

The influence of Latin on Norwegian can by and large be classified under the following four headings: (1) vocabulary, (2) morphology, (3) syntax, (4) style.

The scope of the influence of Latin on the vocabulary of an author can vary to a great degree. We may find longish sentences all in Latin which have, as it were, occurred to the writer by chance, or shortish standard phrases, or the influence may be limited to the use of single words which retain their Latin inflexion according to their syntactical position in the sentence. The homilies, the *Tale mot biskopene*, letters and documents are full of examples. There are several reasons for this use of Latin. Paul Th. Hoffmann is, I am sure, right when he points out that in ecclesiastical circles Latin was "die heilige Sprache. Die Sprachen der Heimat blieben profan . . . Lateinische Worte waren es, die . . . fremd klangen, die aber darum um so stärker in ihrer magischen beschwörenden Gewalt empfunden wurden."²

² *Der mittelalterliche Mensch* (1922), 168.

The same was true in legal works or in literature influenced by legal phraseology. Latin had a tendency to increase the respect for the written word, to give it a certain aura of solemnity.

Thus we are confronted by Latin as a kind of learned or academic convention. Of far greater importance, however, was the fact that we, in Norway, for a long time lacked adequate Norwegian terms for the new ideas — a fact which similarly explains the massive inundation of English words in Norwegian today. It is the international professional terminology of the manuals of letter-writing we meet when Bishop Håkon Erlingsson writes: “sendom ver yðr eftir ydru bode patentes literas nostras tenorem literarum vestrarum continentes”, or “so at ver sendim þo til ydar procura-tores ikki at sijdir plenum et speciale mandatum habentes ex parte nostra”.

The Latin form was particularly necessary in a number of legal terms which had come in from Latin and for which no suitable Norwegian word had yet been found. We can mention such technical expressions found in the documents as *concilium provinciale*, *prorogacio concilii*, *subsidium pape*, *subvencio pallii*, or *executor testamenti*, expressions which still flourish in modern legal works. We have a good example of the way in which Norwegian can, so to speak, stand powerless in the face of the foreign invader when it is stated in Bishop Arne's *Christian Law* that “Skipan sv sem menn gera a siþorstum daughum heitir testamentum”.

When it comes to individual Latin words and inflections there are so many both in religious and in other kinds of literature that we can take our pick. In religious writings we can find proper nouns such as *Maria*, *Helena*, *Petrus*, *Paulus*, or appellatives such as *judaicus*, *biblia*, *pater*, *sacramentum*, *sanctus*. An example of a word of commercial character is *petea* (“piece”), and names for various wares are used, such as *vinum*, sometimes

specifically *vinum de Reno*, which appears frequently as well as the earlier loan, *vin*. In the field of medicine we meet technical expressions such as *apotecharia* and the names of such Levantine plants and substances as *agrimonia*, *oleum*, *fenikulum*, *centaurea* and *cipressus*. For arithmetic and chronology Latin is used almost exclusively.

But otherwise Latin did not gain admittance without competition from the national language. Norwegian holds its own pretty well when it is a question of names for conceptions widespread among the general population. It is doubtful if more than one example of the word *petea* is to be found, for example, for we had, after all, the Norwegian synonym *stykki*. In a letter written about 1310 to Abbot Eirik of Halsna about punishment for a monk, Bishop Arne writes that “*per sætir honom fulla scriptt . . . sva at hann se minzster af allum brœðrom in capitulo coro et mensa*”, but a few years later the same bishop writes to the same abbot to say that a disobedient monk is to sit farthest out of all the learned brothers “*i kor, i capitulo ok at borde*”. The writer has now succeeded in clothing what was undoubtedly the international legal formula in Norwegian costume, except for the word *capitulum*. The reason for this may be that *kapituli*, which had been incorporated into the Norwegian system of inflections, was better known in the sense of “paragraph” or “chapter” (of a book) — we see, for example, in the *Marín saga* that *capitulum* and *kapituli* in this sense stand side by side in many places.

An example which well illustrates this kind of competition is found in a letter Bishop Audfinn writes to his colleague Salomon. “*Biðium ver mikilegha at per firir-later oss at ver gatom æi at sinni með mæire deliberacione bætr suarat yðru brefue*”. But, according to the *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* the Latin word has a series of dots underneath it and has been corrected to

umhughsan. In this case there was a corresponding word in Norwegian.

This was, however, not always the case. If we take another look at the religious terminology, we notice that people had been successful quite early in norwegianising *præpositus* as *prófastr* and *episcopus* as *byskup*, of course following models provided by Old English and Old German. On the other hand there were other professions which had less popular appeal and for which it was not felt to be so important to use norwegianised forms. We have already mentioned *executor* and we can add *procurator* and *notarius*, which have both remained in Norwegian without competition from other words. We never got Norwegian names for *sacrista*, *ostiarius* and *vestarius*, since those of the population whose only language was Norwegian needed no names for these positions. This was also the case with the title *cellarius*, which was very definitely Latin, whilst *kellari*, remodelled to suit Norwegian usage, was a very early loan-word used on every farm.

Loan-translations, of which there are many in Norwegian, were used in those cases where the easiest choice, the retention of the Latin word in its original form, was not opted for. As we know, the names of the days of the week are very old and often loan-translations. From the religious sphere we can mention *festingarhiminn* corresponding to *firmamentum*, *fyrirheitsjörð* to *terra promissa*, *hinn gamle úvinr* to *antiquus hostis* or *antiquus adversarius*, *allsvaldande* to *omnipotens*, *samvitska* to *conscientia*. The fixed formulas in correspondence, *patentes literæ* and *clausæ literæ*, are rendered by *opit bréf* and *læst bréf* respectively. The *dei gracia* and *eadem gracia* of the protocol correspond to *með guðs miskunn* and *með samre miskunn*. In the epistolary literature we meet the amusing translation *samblástr* for *conspiratio*, and we find *forsió* and *úforsió* for *providentia* and *improvidentia*. Norwegianised Latin expressions,

such as the verb *vyrðugast* corresponding to *dignari* and the phrase *vér úverðugir* for *licet immeriti*, which serve to give the epistolary style such an air of humility, also belong to the religious style.

There are examples of loan-translations to which popular etymology has assigned a different meaning. This is the case when, for example, the *agrimonia* of the medical books has become *agermâne* in Danish, and likewise when *abrotanum* is associated with the word *rót* (*radix*). It can scarcely be doubted that Bishop Håkon on one occasion, perhaps unconsciously, connects *guðrækin* with *devotus*. It is also Latin which to a large extent explains the extensive use of tautologies, particularly in the translated literature. For the tautologies were, to quote the Danish professor Vilhelm Andersen, "a suggestion to the reader that he should accept a particular expression as a translation of the foreign one".³ This is also a well-known feature in the literature of other countries. In his book *Fra Cicero til Copernicus* Franz Blatt relates how Marius Mercator, when he translated Nestorius's heretical sermons into Latin in the middle of the fifth century, used to make the translation as exact as possible by rendering a single Greek word with two Latin synonyms. Examples from the Norwegian epistolary literature are: *tíl samtals ok consilium, tilkallan ok krof* (= *vocacio*), *i ollum sinum greinum ok articulis, eina cedula æder rollo, ef so skal kalla*, as Bishop Håkon significantly expresses himself. The tautologies were no doubt often a necessity in legal writings when one wanted to be certain that the written word gave full expression to what was meant. It is for this reason that we find in receipts such modes of expression as that the debtors are declared to be *quittos et absolutos* which, rendered in Norwegian, becomes *kwitta ok lidugha*. We can mention here the expression *alle og enhver*, which still exists in Norwegian, from the Latin *omnes et singuli* or *universi et singuli*.

³ *Dania* I (1890-92), 89.

In many cases it was possible to fit a Latin noun into a Norwegian declension by a small alteration, or sometimes without any alteration at all. In a letter from Bishop Audfinn the *skipan herra Wiliams legati pawans* is discussed. Here *legati* is without doubt the genitive of *legatus*. But in the same letter he writes *skipan fyrenempndz legata*. Here we have a norwegianised *an*-stem. It was also easy for Norwegian to incorporate Latin feminine words of the first declension which in the nominative had the same form as the feminine *ōn*-stems. We can see that *bibliam*, *cedulam* and *peteam* have been adopted in their Latin form, but *kapella* and *náttúra* are declined on the Norwegian pattern. When, however, Bishop Audfinn inserts the word *persona* and Archbishop Eiliv the word *summa*, both in the nominative, it is impossible to decide which language has the upper hand.

Among the individual Latin words which have become established in Norwegian literature the nouns certainly predominate. The reason for this is probably that they did not fit into the Norwegian inflectional system as easily as the verbs. The endings of verbs such as *appellare*, *subportare*, *tractare*, *visitare* stood closer to the norwegianised infinitive ending *-era*, which with vowel reduction could become *-ere*, than the corresponding nouns stood to any of the Norwegian declensions. In this connection we may cite such instructive examples as “þo at han hafe appellerat a correcone vestra” and “med sira Arna prebendario varom sem visiterat skyldi af vaarre veghna”.

If a pure Latin noun was inserted into an otherwise Norwegian text, the case which its syntactical position demanded was of course used. We have already seen the accusative *bibliam*, *cedulam*, *peteam* as direct objects, and we can add *articulus*, nominative subject, the indirect objects *prebendario* and *notario* in the dative, and the objective genitive *testamenti*. One or two

complications arose here. Old Norse lacked an ablative case and Old Norse *til* and Latin *ad* governed different cases. No problem arose when the prepositions *i*, *af*, *með* were followed by a single noun. They were put into the ablative as they were after the corresponding Latin prepositions *in*, *ab*, *cum*: *i articulis*, *af consilio*, *med prebendario*. But if a Norwegian pronoun or adjective was used attributively, it was put into the dative: *j þesso transcripto*, *j vaaro consistorio*, *af þessarre cedula*, *með sinni scriptura*, *undir þvilikri forma*. There was, however, some vacillation. We find *i claustra* in the *Book of Homilies*; Bishop Håkon writes *af apotecharia* and likewise, *j testamentum sijt*. Here we should expect the ablative. It is not usual to put individual nouns into the genitive after *til*, though we can, in the Icelandic bishops' sagas, come across a combination like *til Laurentii*. When a Norwegian word is added we get a hybrid form, e.g. *til samtals ok consilium*, *til testamentum mins*, *til annars caudam*, where *annars* instead of *annarrar* is possibly due to the fact that the masculine *hali* was in the writer's mind as a translation of the feminine *cauda*. We have several parallels to this type of gender-creation; *i Credo varre* has arisen under the influence of feminine *trú* and *siina pater noster* under the influence of feminine *bæn*. It is by no means unlikely that complements of the type mentioned above were partly responsible for the disintegration of the Norwegian case-system and for the fact that *til* gradually ceased to govern the genitive.

Norwegian syntax has been affected to an equal degree by Latin, and it is probably in this field that Latin influence has made itself most strongly felt in the so-called "officialese" (*kansellispråk*) or learned style. Most people will feel this "officialese" to be typified by a broad, detailed, complicated, and to a certain extent obscure, sentence structure as opposed to the terse, pithy and laconic mode of expression which the description "popular style" conveys to the mind.

There are four places in particular where the learned style makes itself felt in Norwegian syntax: (1) in certain uses of the present participle; (2) in an extended use of the past participle; (3) in the use of the reflexive form of the verb in a passive sense; (4) in the use of the interrogative pronoun as a relative pronoun.

So much has been written on this subject by earlier linguists, first and foremost by Rektor Marius Nygaard, that I shall here simply illustrate the learned style by some individual examples in each group. Many of these usages still exist in the modern language.

We find attributive usage of the present participle in *framliðande aar, komande vetr*. We have an absolute dative on the pattern of the ablative absolute in the usual concluding formula of diplomas, *godom monnom hiaverandom*. The letters are full of examples of the present participle used predicatively and in apposition: "af swæinum yðrum sem nu nest ero komande", "later han so vars bœnastadar niotande verda", "A ydra konunghligha tighn trœystande . . . dirfumzst ver yðr dælla . . . med vaarom brefom mœda æftir vaarre skyldu kunnight gærande at . . ." If one compares translation with the original and the letters with the examples and models in the *summæ* which form the basis of them, it can readily be seen that the Norwegian usage of the present participle is often a direct imitation of the foreign idiom.

In this connection however we must not overlook another factor of a stylistic and psychological nature. First, neighbouring Latin words will often prompt the use of participles in this foreign way. Bishop Håkon writes, for example, to his colleague in Hamar: "sem per seer . . . reettazst vera þan iamfnan fyrir aughum hafuande ok honum fylghiande de quo scriptum est. miseraciones eius super omnia opera eius." And on another occasion: "Þoraren . . . er med oss seghiande sik aflœystan vera fyrir þa violenciam er hann hefver

gortt.” Notice also the Latin accusative and infinitive construction.

There is another peculiarity to be noted. It is a characteristic feature of the Latin of the Middle Ages that it has a passion for the sonorous, melodious word. This can be achieved, among other things, by giving preference to words extended by suffixes. It is easy to observe this at work in the religious literature. Thus *bœnastaðr* can be preferred to *bœn* and the adjectival and adverbial suffixes *-legr* and *-lega* can be used far more extensively. People write *heilagleg* for *heilag*, *eilifleg* for *eilif*, *oftlega* for *oft*, *ranglega* for *rangt*, etc. The suffix *-leiki* supersedes *-leikr* with the result that people send God's greeting *ok brodorlegghan kærleika* in letters. Bishop Håkon complains on one occasion of *vanmaat ok krankleik*, but on another of *vanmætte ok krankleika*. The cumulative form *vinaattoleghlæikren* coming from the same writer can also be noted. One still notices, even today, that many clergymen show a marked preference for the long, sonorous, melodious word, both in speech and in writing. It is for this reason that the Norwegian translation of the Bible contains the expression *sannelig sier jeg eder*, and, similarly, that Henrik Ibsen, with his ears open to the smallest nuance, has the “religious” merchant, Vigeland, go round saying *sandeligen* in *The Pillars of Society*.

It is here that the present participle, too, comes in with its somewhat drawling, sonorous rhythm. It is not by chance that it appears so often in a religious context, e.g. “er þat bœnastadr vaar . . . at þeer seet þæim vidr hialpande j sinni naud eptir því sem gud skytr hverium i hugh at gera takande af gudi ambunena . . .” It is also characteristic that the participle is so usual in connection with the verbs *þakka* and *biðja*, whether these constitute the finite predicate of the sentence or the participle itself: “Bidium ver at þer heilsir sira Gilsa ok sira Erlendœ . . . þakkande þæim firir alla luti.” “Sendu

ver yder litla aminning eit stykki klædess . . . bidiande at þer firirlitid ei þessa sending.” And used predicatively: “bidium ver at hann megði vars bœnastadar niotande verða”; — “Erom ver þui . . . ydra konunghligða tighn mykilegha bidiande”; — “þui erom ver gernsamlegha bidiande at . . .” The following preface is still sung in our churches: “Med dem vil også vi forene våre røster og *tilbedende* sige.”

While we are discussing the rhythmic aspect, we ought to mention the fact that the present participle has a sound which is very close to that of the Latin gerundive and the gerund. We need only listen to the sentence “kan her ænghin mader þesshaattar fa . . . þat nokorom godom manne se *gefuande*”. Compare also the following two examples from the epistolary literature: “scripsimus nos excusando” and “ver skrifuaðom yðr neest . . . so sem orllof bæidandezst”.

Many of these uses of the present participle have been banished from normal Norwegian prose of today, from the religious style too, and indeed even from business correspondence, which otherwise has generally, and with good reason, been considered the branch of written Norwegian which most bears the stamp of Latin and latinate “*officialese*”. Use of the past participle in imitation of Latin gained a rather stronger foothold. Text-books in the art of letter writing are the cause of such constructions as: “Þökkum ver yder mykilegha firir allan gooduilla oss iamfnnilega *teedan*”, which can be compared with letters written in Latin: “Pro innumeris curialitatibus vestris et benevolentibus nobis sepius *pre-ostensis* . . . gratiarum referimus acciones”, and which, incidentally, compete with the use of a relative clause: “þökkum ver yðr mykla vaalgerd ok hæfuersko er þer tedor oss nu nest”, or of a mixed construction such as “er þeer hafir oss iamlegha *teedan*”. Participles of this kind can hardly be said to be in very common use today. On the other hand such well-established phrases as

førnevnt, nedennevnt, vedlagt are fully accepted in the language. The expressions *fyrrefjndr, áðrrefjndr, optnefjndr* came into Old Norse from the Latin *predictus, antedictus, prefatus, sepedictus*, and became well established through the manuals. It is clear, incidentally, that they are to be found, particularly in standard expressions, first and foremost in connection with proper names. The following two sentences will help to illustrate this: “*bidium ver at þeer later Hakon fyrnæmfðan af yder finna hiollp*”, and “*hefr han þoo i Biorgvin dvallst siidan . . saker sinnar mædo sem aadr soghdum ver*”.

The dative absolute is also very much a living element in the epistolary literature, e.g. *undanteknum vicariis* (notice also the Latin noun), *os uspurdum*. We meet the cliché, *alt tatt i betraktning*, every day. The *summa dictaminis* of the Middle Ages created the Norwegian equivalent of the *narratio* of the letter: “*Bref ydart kom til vaar . . . j hveriu . . .*”, where, as we see an interrogative is used as a relative pronoun, a usage that one does one’s best to avoid in modern Norwegian.

With regard to the reflexive form of the verb we can see that there is already a tendency in Old Norse to use the passive in -s to render the incomplete action. It is particularly noticeable in the case of the verb *segja* or *segjast*: “*marght segizst her*”; — “*breflaust segizst af ordom herra Halkells*”; — “*Til sannenda segizst her*”; — “*Sagdezt her hoghlegha so*”. But on one occasion Bishop Håkon inserts a popular proverb, and then, instead of using *segizst*, he says “*seghia menn at vorm er vina senna*”.

The other effects which Latin influence has had on Norwegian syntax are more sporadic. When Bishop Arne refers to the worthy gentleman *godrar aminningar*, Bishop Erlend of the Faroes, or when Bishop Håkon writes to the king mentioning among other things “*brefe vyrduleges herra ydars moðurfóður Hakonar konungs*”

agætrar aminninghar’, they both use a genitive that was widely employed and which stems from the Latin, *bone memorie*, *inclitæ memoriæ*, *felicis memorie*, *felicis recordationis*. This construction is still found in modern Norwegian in the solemn *salig ihukommelse*.

A few more points in connection with syntax may be mentioned. In one or two letters from Bishop Håkon we find a somewhat unusual combination: “Hakon sendir sira Aaslake . . . q. g. oc sinum bodordom stadfastlegha at lyda.” — On another occasion he gives the priest Ketill the task of collecting the episcopal tithes and says he shall “þesso umbode fylgia so lengi sem ver finnum hans dygd oc holllostu oc oss fulla reikningh oc alla gera”. In both these sentences we see that the noun is a grammatical parallel to the verb in the infinitive, a usage which is quite un-Norwegian, though it can be often found in Latin. About this Franz Blatt says that “in Latin the infinitive was substantivised, partly under the influence of Greek”, and mentions among others an example from a Danish diploma “in compensacionem dampnorum et interesse”. In a document to which Bishop Håkon had access, the Dominicans in Bergen send King Eirik “salutem et insultus audaces rebellium brachii validioris robore perdomare, et nequissimas rebellium voluntates fervore luctantis iusticie cohibere”. We see that the construction is usual in epistolary protocol. Compare this with a letter in which members of the Swedish Council of State send their Norwegian counterparts “salutem et in domino feliciter vivere et valere”. It is worth considering whether this is not the origin of the substantival use of *velleva* (*lev vel*).

We ought perhaps also to call attention to one or two stylistic refinements which evidently depend on Latin models. It is likely, for example, that the almost completely dominant use of alliteration we sometimes meet in religious literature and also in the translated, romantic sagas is there to make up for all the stylistic effects in

the original which could not be translated easily into Norwegian. The inflectional endings of Latin seem to favour assonance more than Norwegian does, so the latter compensates by using alliteration.

This applies to a much greater extent to play on words, *paronomasia* or *annominatio*. From text-books in the art of letter writing and thence from papal letters the Norwegians picked up such subtleties as *affectum* — *effectu*, *quittum* — *quietum*; — “Cure tibi sit magis hominibus *prodesse* quam *preesse*; — “*iterum* et in *eternum*”; — “*perire* potius eligunt quam *parere*”. We have a good example of how apt a pupil Bishop Håkon was in a case where he deprives two priests of their benefices on account of their unsavoury mode of life in the following words: “Cum nos Haquinus . . . te domine . . . Erlinge . . . sepe sepius monuerimus super focaria tua, immo fornicaria, de cura et curia tua dimittenda . . . quamvis tu, fronte effronti ac animo infrunito, precipientis salubria monita ac precepta et perungentis fomenta contempseris . . .” And we meet intellectual expedients of this kind far more often than before in the Norwegian language, particularly combined with *correctio* or *epanorthosis*: “veniur þær sem helldr mega heita oveniur”; — “ny tiltøke er hællör ma fadoeme oc udøeme kalla”; — “han bæidizst orlof er hællör ma oløf kalla”; — “sakir ymisra tilfella, er hællör mæghi motefelli kalla”.

There is an interesting example in Håkon's correspondence of an attempt to transfer to Norwegian a word for which in Latin a new etymological interpretation was offered. Franz Blatt maintains that it is possibly etymological considerations which caused the spelling *honus* for *onus*, since one comes across the view that many an “honour” is “onerous”. This is a very plausible conclusion and we can also see that *honus* and *onus* are often placed together. Thus in a papal letter to the Archbishop of Nidaros we find “pontificalis honoris et

oneris gravitatem''. In a letter to a friar who has declined the post of abbot we find the pair transferred into Norwegian — though the word-play has been ruined in the process: "þeir þykkizst til þeirrar tignar eðr hælðr byrdar vsterkir''. The old literature shows clearly that the Norwegians were fully integrated in the common culture of Europe.⁴

⁴ I have treated this subject more widely in my book, *Kulturtradisjon fra en storhetstid* (1948), 318-51, where the sources for the examples quoted here will be found. The orthography of the quotations in this paper is that of the texts as they appear in the *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*.

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE DISCOVERIES AND THE CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE NORSEMEN

BY BJÖRN ÞORSTEINSSON

IN the last volume of the *Saga-Book* mention was made of Professor Gwyn Jones's translation of nine sagas of the Icelanders, *Eirik the Red and other Icelandic Sagas*. Now he publishes a book about man's conquest and failure on the North Atlantic in the Viking Age.¹ It deals with the Norsemen's "voyages of discovery and exploration to Iceland, Greenland, and the coast of North America, and their attempt to colonize all three".

The book falls into two main sections: the history itself, and the sources, but at the end there are a number of appendixes: a short essay on *Njáls saga* — "greatest of the Sagas" — and another about Straumfjörður in Vinland; a translation of the story of Þórarinn Nefjólfs son from *Óláfs saga helga*, and of a Greenland tale concerning Ungortok, the last Norse Greenlander. Also at the end is some account of the texts from which the translations are made, a bibliography and an index.

The *sources* take up about half of the book. This is a collection of translations of the most important early Icelandic writings which relate to Viking discoveries. The whole of Ari's *Libellus Islandorum* is there, the basic text for Icelandic history before 1100; there are those chapters from the *Landnámabók* which record the discovery of Iceland and the first settlements there; then come the Greenland sagas which tell of the coming of the settlers, the foundation of the bishopric at Garðar, and the finding of North America, Vinland the good.

Various other written sources exist concerning the

¹ *The Norse Atlantic Saga*. London: Oxford University Press. 1964. 246 pp.

Greenland voyages and settlement, both Icelandic and foreign ones, as well as archaeology, place-names and so forth, and the author makes mention of these in the history section. But, at present at any rate, our knowledge of the voyages to Vínland depends solely upon written sources.

I am not competent to judge how Professor Jones's translations will sound to an Englishman, but on the whole they are accurate and reliable. There is one misunderstanding worthy of mention. In *Eiríks saga* we read "Rak pá skip þeirra um haf innan" The translation on p. 174 runs: "Then their ship was driven away out and about the ocean." *Haf innan* means as little to the modern Icelanders as "the inner ocean" does to an Englishman, but the author of the *Eiríks saga* was a scholar and he had a good grasp of the cosmography of his time. Educated Icelanders of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries reckoned that a circle of lands lay around the North Atlantic: they comprised Norway, Finmark, the wastelands stretching from Bjarmaland to Greenland, Helluland, Markland, and Vínland, "which some men reckon extends from Africa" Ideas about this ring of land may be traced to the twelfth century in Scandinavia and it is this concept which should be brought out in the translation of "um haf innan" As will be shown below, this idea is of no small significance for our assessment of the value of the *Eiríks saga* as a geographical source. There are other instances of slight inaccuracy that may be counted regrettable, not least when every detail is made the object of such intensive discussion. It says in the saga: "Þaðan (i.e. from Helluland) sigldu þeir tvau dægr og brá til landsuðrs úr suðri og fundu land" This is translated: "Then they sailed with a north wind for two days, when land lay ahead of them" (p. 179). But the italicised phrase in the Icelandic must mean that they changed course from due south to southeast from Helluland, and this is far from adequately indicated by saying that "they

sailed with a north wind". Is it also so certain that *dægr* does not signify half a period of 24 hours, day or night, and that they "váru úti tvau dægr, áðr þeir sáu land" (*Grænlendinga saga*, ch. 3) does not mean: "They were at sea one day and night before sighting land", and not "They were at sea two days —" (p. 149)?

The expression "Norseman" is a little loaded as a generic term for all Atlantic seafarers of the Viking age, but they were all Vikings, whatever their origins. The last decade has brought the Viking age well into the limelight in the West, and much publicity has been given to this stirring period, although the quality of this has varied. The Kirk Douglas film, "The Vikings", must be one of the most pitiable productions of this Viking mania, while Gwyn Jones's book, on the other hand, is one of the most delightful. In the history section, he follows the history of Viking explorations in the light of the latest investigations. Here, despite its comparative brevity, we find a well-organised, thorough and attractively assembled survey of those events. The Viking age is the first great period of exploration in the history of the West. It was at this time that Europeans — in their thousands — first emigrated across the ocean and began regular voyages over the open sea. The Faroes and later Iceland were the most important departure points for these journeys.

Iceland.

The discovery and settlement of Iceland are subjects that have been treated by historians from the twelfth century onwards. Professor Jones's chapter on this subject is a little dated. Investigations in 1939 showed that what had previously been thought to be temple remains at Hofstaðir, near Mývatn, were probably remains of a hall, perhaps a building in which sacrificial feasts were held. It is consequently not entirely safe to give the picture of these remnants (p. 27) the title of "Norse temple". He has also overemphasised the lack

of timber in Iceland, because in fact drift-wood was plentiful and good in many places on the island up to very recent times. His assertion (p. 31) that "architecture and illumination were in the nature of things beyond their (the Icelanders') reach" must also be challenged. Nor was the end of the republic as dramatic an event as he would have it (p. 38). This part smacks too much of the views of the leaders in the struggle for independence in the last century. The agreement reached with the king of Norway in 1262, *Gamli sáttmáli*, became the Magna Charta of the Icelanders.

Greenland.

The occupation and settlement of Greenland is recorded in early Icelandic and Norwegian writings, in certain medieval documents, in antiquities and in Greenlandic oral tales of the *Kalatdlits*. Recent archaeological research has revealed that in many respects the Icelandic writings are reliable on the subject of ancient Greenland. They contain accounts of happenings in the first 150 years of the settlements, but for the period after that they have little to tell us. Some Greenlandic events in the years 1404-1409 are, however, recorded in the last of the medieval Icelandic annals. Then everything seemed to be going well in the *Eystribyggð* (Julianehåb Kommune). After that there are no certain reports of the Scandinavian inhabitants of Greenland. It has been suggested that they were overcome by *Skrælings* (*Kalatdlits*) or destroyed by English pirates; that they were decimated by famine or plague; that they degenerated, went to Canada and interbred with the Eskimo. Some reasons have been adduced for all these theories, although the theory of degeneracy can now be seen to be based on very weak foundations.

In the summer of 1962 Professor Jones took part in the excavation of *Þjóðhildarkirkja* in *Brattahlíð*. He has a personal knowledge of the topography, and he traces

the main outline of the history of the settlement on the basis of all the available sources. The Greenlanders set up a republic in the same way as the Icelanders did, and that form of constitution worked in accordance with its principles, just like everything else. It is wrong to say, as Professor Jones does, that "the Republic, like the white man in Greenland, could in theory go on for ever" It was inevitable that monarchic rule of some kind should supersede the Republic in Greenland, and this happened when it became a Norwegian province in 1261. There is on the other hand no satisfying scientific explanation as to why the white race disappeared.

Climatic deterioration and the reluctance of sailors to make the voyage must undoubtedly have played less of a part in bringing about the end of the settlement than Professor Jones thinks. The Greenlanders, like the Icelanders, tried to be self-sufficient — indeed, they had to be. They can hardly have disappeared because one small ship, which carried mostly luxuries, stopped running from Norway every other year. We may gather from the sources that shortage of iron was one of their most pressing problems, even though they worked bog-iron to some small extent. We hear of small sea-going ships in which they had to bind the planking together because of the lack of ship-nails. We see from the *Grænlendinga saga* that they went to Markland for timber, and they must have sailed there every now and then until towards the middle of the fourteenth century. The assertion on p. 52 that "timber, iron and corn could not in the nature of things be obtained from Iceland" is an exaggeration because contemporary documents show that the Icelanders were in fact exporting corn in the earlier part of the fourteenth century. On the other hand there does not seem to have been much traffic between Greenland and Iceland as the thirteenth century progressed, and after the Black Death came to Norway the sailings from there became very irregular. It was fateful that, just at this time, the Skrælings began to encroach on the Greenland settlements.

Professor Jones reckons that the worsening climate in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries played a large part in the extinction of the Greenlanders. There are no adequate reasons for accepting this explanation. It is usually estimated that the climate of the Northern Hemisphere got slightly colder after 1200 (the cold began at the end of the Bronze Age and reached its climax in Iceland between 1740 and 1850), but the figures which are quoted of the temperature changes in Greenland are very suspect. Recent researches in Iceland, by Páll Bergþórsson, the State Meteorologist, and others, lead to the conclusion that the last forty years have been the mildest since the Commonwealth period (930-1262). The climate got a little cooler about 1200, and the cold continued into the fourteenth century (the first cold period). The climate then became milder up to the end of the sixteenth century, when a period of severe weather began ("The Little Ice Age"), and this lasted until the end of the nineteenth century. Páll Bergþórsson estimates that average temperatures in the second cold period were 1.4°C. lower than in the years 1930-60, and 1.6°C. lower in the worst years of that time (1740-1840).² Professor Jones's assertion on p. 57 that "in southern Greenland annual mean temperatures (during the 'climatic optimum' of 1000-1200) were 2°-4°C. higher than now" does not seem to be adequately supported. On the same page it is said that "by c. 1430 Europe had entered a Little Ice Age", but in fact it did not begin for another 150 years.³ All statistics about temperatures in past ages rest on probabilities and are deductions rather than proved certainties. Lauge Koch has given more time than anyone else to scientific research in Greenland, and in his book *The East Greenland Ice* (Meddelelser fra Grønland

² My authority is a paper, not yet published, which Páll Bergþórsson read in June 1962 to the Conference on the Climate of the Eleventh and Sixteenth Centuries.

³ See e.g. D. J. Schove, 'European Temperatures A.D. 1500-1950', *Quarterly Journal of the Royal Meteorological Society* (1949), 175-9.

130, 1945), he discusses the Greenland ice. His conclusions about the end of the old Greenland settlement must carry full weight: "Thus it seems that the Norsemen were troubled by deterioration of the climate in the 13th century . however, before the extermination of the Norsemen, amelioration of the climate set in (after 1400 — see p. 354), so the Norsemen did not die out owing to a fall in the 'emperature, but more probably on account of a failing communication with Europe and the advance of Eskimos from the north" (p. 349; Gwyn Jones, p. 56 note).

Professor Jones rightly points out that there was not so much drift-ice in the Denmark Straits during the Viking age as there was about 1200, but all the same the sea was not free of ice and the coasts were uninhabitable. The tale of Snæbjörn galti and the settlement of Eirík the Red provide evidence for this. Gwyn Jones states rightly that Iceland lay at the limit of the habitable world, but it is questionable whether Greenland as a whole should be set outside the same pale.

East Greenland was and is uninhabitable, but southwest Greenland never seems to have afforded worse living conditions than the West Fjords of Iceland. As far as we know, the Greenlanders in Eystribyggð managed to live reasonably well through the first cold period (fourteenth century) and everything seems to have been in good order around 1400. Climatic conditions improved in the fifteenth century, but the population disappeared before the second cold period began about 1600. Vestribyggð, the settlement around Godthåb, on the other hand, was desolate about the middle of the fourteenth century, during the earlier cold period. As Professor Jones suggests, the sources indicate that the settlement was laid waste by Skrælings. The Eastern Settlements (Eystribyggðar) met a similar fate about 150 years later, when the Skrælings came southwards. They were hunters and, like Eskimoes in recent times, made little distinction

between farm animals and game; sheep and reindeer were equally welcome to them. Sheep-stealing was perhaps the worst crime which it was possible to commit in Iceland. It needs no great effort of the imagination to see that little friendship is likely to have existed between the Greenland farmers and the Skrælings who, with their very limited understanding of the nature of property rights, must have gone for the sheep-flocks when their hunting failed — and at other times as well. Thus it is wrong to say (p. 65) that “there was no compelling reason for head-on clashes between the south-moving Eskimo and the stationary Norsemen” Greenland stories tell of strife between the two groups of people in the country, and Professor Jones appends a translation of the tale of Ungortok, the last of the Greenlanders, to his book.

There were other dangers too. Niels Egede, the son of Hans Egede, the evangelist of Greenland, tells a story which he had from an *angagok* (medicine man) from Unartoq (Siglufjörður) in the Eystribyggð, about the destruction of the settlement there by pirates. This story appears to have no less value as a source than the tale of Ungortok, and Professor Jones’s criticisms on p. 70 are unjustified. Helge Ingstad connects the events told of by the *angagok* with the statement in a papal letter of 1448 concerning the attack made c. 1418 by heathen barbarians on Christianity in Greenland.⁴ The papal letter can, however, be shown to be written on the basis of false information, and all that it can tell us is, in effect, that about the middle of the fifteenth century it was known in Rome that the Christian situation in Greenland was an uneasy one because of the proximity of heathens. Now, it also happened that hardly a year passed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries without a large trading and fishing fleet sailing to Iceland from England. Sources also exist which confirm the inherently probable fact that they also sailed to Greenland — as Professor Jones himself maintains

⁴ *Landet under leidarstjerne* (1959), 524-32.

on p. 3 of his book. Collisions of various kinds occurred between the English and the Icelanders, and it is probable that similar collisions occurred in the fifteenth century in Greenland, and that strife of this kind contributed towards the destruction of the settlements. The *angagok* says that the Greenlanders who escaped the attack of the pirates fled to the Eskimoes.

The disappearance of the ancient colony in Greenland must have been the result of many factors. We lack all kinds of evidence, and the lack is most seriously felt in the field of Eskimo archaeology, where our knowledge is still no more than rudimentary. It is certain that the riddle of the fate of the Greenland settlements will not finally be solved until that archaeology is built on much more extensive and solid foundations than at present.

Vinland the good.

In his history of Hamburg (written *c.* 1170), Adam of Bremen says that many men had found an island out in the ocean which they called *Vinland*, because vines flourished there and fields gave crops without being sown. This information reached him from the court of the Danish king, Sveinn Úlfsson, and it is the earliest mention of *Vinland*.

When Ari the Wise wrote his *Íslendingabók* about 1130, *Vinland* was so well known in Iceland that, when he describes Eskimo dwellings in Greenland, he can say that they are the sort of people "who lived in *Vinland*, and whom the Greenlanders call 'Skrælings'" Every Ice-lander would know what he was talking about.

But the Greenlanders of Ari's day were not so knowledgeable about the location of the land as to make unnecessary the journey in 1121 of Eirík, Bishop of Greenland, "to look for *Vinland*". This much we know from Icelandic annals, though they unfortunately neglect to add whether he succeeded. Three years later a new bishop of Greenland was consecrated, and this suggests

that Eirík never returned from his voyage to Vínland. The latest search for Vínland started in 1961: and it still remains an undiscovered country, as far as conclusive evidence goes.

Two old Icelandic sagas, *Grænlandinga saga* (late twelfth-century) and *Eiríks saga rauða* (late thirteenth-century) tell how Vikings found lands to the west of Greenland about the year 990, and how they made several voyages of exploration to them.

According to the former, some forty-eight hours' sail to the southwest of Greenland brought them to Helluland. Nothing grew there, and the interior of the land consisted of glaciers and "it was like one slab of rock from the sea to the glaciers".

A day and a half further south lay Markland. "The land was level and wooded . . . with white sands in many places and the coast not steep." Twenty-four hours sailing to the southwest from Markland was Vínland. There the sun was up for at least 6 to 7 hours at the time of the winter solstice, and so it can be worked out that Vínland lay south of 50° N, but it is not certain how far south.

Such is the topography of the *Grænlandinga saga*: it is unpromising but, as will be seen later, it is not permissible to infer anything about the Vínland voyages beyond what is written in the text of this saga.

Those who discuss Vínland must remember that it seems to have disappeared from history early in the twelfth century. Not even the Greenlanders knew for sure what had become of it. Icelandic annals mention s.a. 1347 that "a ship came from Greenland, smaller in size than ones which ply to Iceland. It sailed into outer Straumfjörör (i.e. on Snæfellsnes). It had no anchor. There were seventeen men on board who had been to Markland and been driven here by the sea." This was hardly the only ship which went between Greenland and Markland in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Markland was one of the certain facts of geography which the Greenlanders, and thus the Norwegians and Icelanders, possessed in the Middle Ages: Vínland was not.

Until now no antiquities have been found in North America which can be *positively* attributed to Vikings or European seamen of the Middle Ages. In 1961, however, Helge Ingstad's curiosity was aroused by ruins found near the village of Lance-aux-Meadows at the northernmost tip of Newfoundland. Since then investigations have been carried out on the ruins and on various objects found there, but nothing has so far come to light which proves a definite link with European seamen of the Middle Ages. While things are in this state, it is impossible to assert that Vínland has been found, or indeed any of the other places that are mentioned in medieval accounts of journeys to America once Markland was left behind.

Our knowledge of Viking voyages to North America still rests entirely on written accounts, and of these the most important are the Sagas of Icelanders. In them, however, significant differences are to be found. Right up to 1956 scholars' opinions as to the value of these texts as authorities were varied and tentative, and the conclusions they drew reflected this uncertainty. In that year, however, Jón Jóhannesson published the most notable study of the origins of the Vínland sagas which has ever appeared.⁵ In it he produced valid reasons to show that the *Grænlendinga Saga* was an older and more dependable source than the *Eiríks saga rauða*, which most people had previously regarded as the main source on the Vínland voyages. This essay marks an epoch in this field of study.

Professor Jones traces the history of the Vínland voyages in accordance with Jón Jóhannesson's conclusions: Bjarni Herjólfsson was the first white man to find North America (about 990), and not Leifr Eiríksson about the year 1000, as was previously thought, — and so forth.

⁵ See the translation of this paper, 'The date of the composition of the Saga of the Greenlanders', in *Saga-Book XVI* 1 (1962), 54-66.

But this does not solve all the difficulties. Jón Jóhannesson's essay was the beginning of the study of these sagas, but he did not live to finish the work and much remains to be done. His most significant conclusions were these: that the author of *Eiríks saga* used the *Grænlendinga saga* as his chief source, but that he treated it very freely, rearranging it and altering it in various places to fit in with his predetermined aim. For example, he makes Eirík the Red get into rough seas and be driven about the "inner ocean" in order to display his knowledge of geography: while in the *Grænlendinga saga* it is Þorsteinn Eiríksson who spends a whole summer tossing on the sea, not knowing where he was going. An excellent example of the author's method is seen in the chapter about Þorfinn Karlsefni's trading with the Skrælings. In the *Grænlendinga saga* Þorfinn and his men exchange food for furs. "Now the Skrælings carried away their (newly acquired) wares in their stomachs, while Karlsefni and his companions kept their bags and their furs." In the *Eiríks saga* the description is embellished further. The settlers pay for the skins with finery. The trading of Greenlanders with the Skrælings and of Norwegians with the Lapps could doubtless provide authority for such a description; but the trading of the Skrælings with the settler Þorfinn requires other terms. Food was easier for him to barter with than finery, stuff he is in any case unlikely to have had with him.

The two sagas differ chiefly in their handling of the story of Leifr heppni. Gunnlaugr Leifsson, monk of Þingeyrar (died 1219), wrote a history in glorification of the proselytizing monarch, Óláfr Tryggvason. In it he makes Leifr the discoverer of Vínland and the man who converted the Greenlanders to Christianity. Gunnlaugr had greater respect for the Church than for strict veracity, and he is reckoned a rather unreliable historian. He sets Leifr up as a champion of Christianity, and it may be that Leifr quickly made himself a supporter of the faith in

Greenland. The account in *Eiríks saga* of the church of Þjóðhildr tends to bear this out: the ruins were found at Brattahlíð in 1961 and their position in relation to the remains of the old farm is in close accord with the reports of the saga. Gunnlaugr Leifsson passed over in silence the discoveries of the heathen, Bjarni Herjólfsson. People seem to have been quick to believe the stories about Leifr as a missionary, so it was necessary to rewrite the *Grænlandinga saga* to suit the new wisdom, and to make it pleasanter and more edifying reading for Christians. This endeavour becomes clear, for instance, in the tales of the behaviour of Freydís Eiríksdóttir in Vínland. In the *Grænlandinga saga* she is the most evil creature one can find in all the Old Icelandic literature: she herself kills defenceless women when men refuse to perform her wicked work. But in the *Eiríks saga* she is a heroine endowed with the appearance of a fertility goddess, as she presses forward in battle and puts the Skrælings to flight.

Professor Jones's contention (p. 83) that both sagas contain original material is more than doubtful. It is impossible to argue with any certainty that the author of *Eiríks saga* had much such material at his disposal. His main sources must have been the work of Gunnlaugr Leifsson, the *Grænlandinga saga*, and the general geographical knowledge common to educated men of his day. Jón Jóhannesson suggests that the author of *Eiríks saga* invented the story of Þorbjörg lítilvölva. This is not to say that the story is not a source of some value for the history of Norse culture, even if it bears no relation to the true biography of Guðríðr Þorbjarnardóttir. When the author worked in this way we cannot put much confidence in his story about Þórhallr veiðimaðr and Bjarni Grímólfsson. He had to have some Bjarni in the saga. Their ship drifts to the Irish coast, just as Eirík the red's did when he was blown round the "inner ocean", but sagas written to elucidate such absurd geography are obviously fantasy.

The *Grænlandinga saga* mentions five successful expeditions from Greenland to Vinland, but in *Eiríks saga* these are made into two, that of Leifr and a second large expedition to effect a settlement in Vinland under the leadership of Þorfinnr Karlsefni. This voyage is a far more splendid venture than the journeys of exploration in the *Grænlandinga saga*, and the narrative is, moreover, ornamented with poetical place-names and adventures. In it Freydís Eiríksdóttir saves the voyagers from a Skræling attack and they praise her achievement: therewith the author frees the people of Brattahlíð — and more especially Leifr heppni, explorer and evangelist — from a family disgrace.

Information about the voyages of Þorfinnr and the Greenlanders to North America about the year 1000 must have been passed down in the family descended from Þorfinnr. Snorri Þorfinnsson, born in Vinland, was the great-grandfather of Brandr Sæmundarson (died 1201), bishop of Hólar. It was in Brand's time, perhaps even under his direction, that the *Grænlandinga saga* was written. It has all the appearance of being a trustworthy narrative — it is a little primitive in its presentation and construction — and it must be the basis of our knowledge of the Vinland voyages. This saga seems to belong to the pre-lapsarian period of saga-writing, written before the Fall which the composition of history as entertainment and as propaganda betokened.

Professor Jones is the first to make the *Grænlandinga saga* the basis of an account of the voyages to Vinland. His book marks a notable stage in the study of the subject. There is much in his book that is pertinently observed and excellently expressed; but his way of following the text of the *Grænlandinga saga* and expanding the narrative afterwards with excerpts from *Eiríks saga* cannot be accepted as sound as long as it is not made clear that the additions are probably nothing but thirteenth-century inventions.

For a very long time men have tried to identify the lands which the Vikings found in North America but they have not exactly reached the same conclusions. It is generally agreed that Helluland is the southern part of Baffin Land and Markland is the Labrador Coast and even the northern part of Newfoundland, while Vínland has been placed anywhere between the northernmost tip of Newfoundland and New York — or even farther to the south.

About A.D. 990 Norsemen found the Labrador coast and probably reached a point south of the 50° parallel (i.e. the St. Lawrence estuary or White Bay in Newfoundland). They saw wide lands, ever more fertile, stretching away to the south and they called this Vínland, either as an advertisement or because a German on board (Tyrkir — probably from Thuringia) thought the land looked like the wine-producing districts of south Germany. The name was enough to cause legends about the isles of bliss to be attached to it. Adam of Bremen tells of the vines there and of cornfields that are self-sown. Towards the end of the twelfth century, when the *Grænlandinga saga* was composed, the Icelanders knew very little of the geography of Vínland. It is equally clear that the author of the *Eiríks saga*, writing a century later, also knew very little about it, even though he may have been reasonably well informed about the geography of Greenland and the route to Markland. What Vínland geography we find in the *Eiríks saga* must, in fact, have been built up on the basis of the meagre information given in the older *Grænlandinga saga*. The author of *Eiríks saga* thus appears to have made two places, Hóp and Straumfjörðr, out of the Leifsbúðir of the older text. The changes made by the author of the *Eiríks saga* were some inspired by Christian piety and some by a desire to bring his descriptions into line with the concepts of classical geography. According to the accepted world-picture of his time, the outer ocean lay like a belt around all the lands of the world, and the

various continents and countries were disposed within this circle.⁶ An Icelandic description of the world preserved in a manuscript from c. 1300 says that waste lands lie from Bjarmaland to Greenland, after which come Helluland, Markland and, farthest south, Vinland. It says that some people think that this projects from Africa. In order to abide by the classical geographical scheme, medieval geographers in Norway and Iceland were obliged to make the Atlantic a kind of inland sea, arrange the newly discovered lands around its edges and make them connect with the old known world of Europe and Africa. The author of the *Eiríks saga* was a man of learning who took the opportunity of correcting old misconceptions in the light of new knowledge. With his grasp of geography he saw that Vinland could not be as far north as the *Grænlandínga saga* would suggest — four to five days' (some 108 hours') sail to the southwest of Herjólfssnes. He made his Vinland voyagers first sail north past Vestribyggð and Bjarneyjar (Disco). From there they sail south. The author of the saga knew something of the disposition of the lands of western Europe, and in consequence he must doubtless have realised that, if Vinland was connected to Africa, then the distance to be sailed to Vinland by men starting from Disco (about 70° N) must have been at least as great as the distance between Trondheim and Portugal. This was not to be covered in a mere five days or so, as in the *Grænlandínga saga*. The author of the *Eiríks saga* thus finds it essential to make enormous increases in the distances given in the older saga, his principal source. His Vinland voyagers find long beaches in Markland which they called Furðustrandir, Marvelstrands, — "it was such a long business sailing past them" (Jones, p. 179). After a rather hard winter in Straumfjörðr the expedition continues in the following summer "south around the coast . . . They sailed a long way and on until they

⁶ See Jón Jóhannesson, 'Um haf innan', *Saga* 1960, 17-28.

came to a river, which fell down from the land into a lake, and thence into the sea." And it is only at this point in the second year of the expedition that the author sees fit to allow that they have reached Vínland.

To some extent the author of the *Eiríks saga* seems to have thought of his work as a text-book in the geography of the lands to the north and west of the Atlantic. He locates the lands to the west not only by describing their relative positions from north to south and the course followed from Greenland to Vínland but also by attempting to bring them within the frame of the general world-picture of the west European geographers of his time. He must have known that Ireland lies farther west in the ocean than Norway, and he must have concluded that the distance between Markland and Ireland was therefore much shorter than that between Greenland and Norway. He describes the voyage from Bjarneyjar as 24 hours south to Helluland and then 24 hours southeast to Markland. In the *Landnámabók*, a thirteenth-century work known to the author of the *Eiríks saga*, it says that Hvíttramannaland is located westward in the ocean near Vínland the good, and that it is reckoned to take 6 *dægr* (72 hours) to sail there from Ireland. On the other hand, the same source gives 7 *dægr* (84 hours) as the sailing time between Norway and Iceland. The author of the *Eiríks saga* says that Hvíttramannaland lies opposite Markland, but it is obvious that the relative position of these countries was, naturally enough, obscure to him and his contemporaries in general.

All in all, it seems that the author of the *Eiríks saga* had a clear idea of the courses to be sailed, but that on his map the distances between lines of longitude did not increase at all as one followed them southward. Because of this he concludes that it was not much of a step from Ireland westward over the Atlantic, and he illustrates this conclusion in three *exempla*. In these matters and as far as the geography of Vínland is concerned, the *Eiríks saga*

appears to contain no more than the inferences and inventions of a learned man.

Carl V. Sölver brought the map of Sigurður Stefánsson (died 1595), rector of the school at Skálholt, into the discussion concerning the geography of the lands west of the Atlantic.⁷ He reckoned that the Icelanders' old knowledge of the relative location of the lands was revealed in it. The original map is lost, but a seventeenth-century copy dates the original to 1570. Sölver rightly suggests that this should be 1590. It appears certain that Sigurður knew some sixteenth-century map of the western hemisphere, probably that by Ortelius (1570), but his arrangement of the topography of America doubtless depends on his knowledge of the *Vínland* sagas. A peninsula is shown on the map running due north from the land west of the Atlantic, on the same latitude as England, and this is named *Promontorium Winlandiæ*. This peninsula could have been inserted in accordance with the description in the *Grænlandinga saga* of the ness "which ran north from the land" (i.e. *Vínland*), and the name invented by Sigurður Stefánsson. It is hard to see what independent value the map can have. On the other hand, it does preserve the intelligent inference of an educated man of the sixteenth century as far as the location of *Vínland* is concerned. His inference is just as valid today.

If the *Vínland* of the *Grænlandinga saga* is indeed Newfoundland, then many people will argue that it is necessary to alter that country's climate to bring the descriptions into line with the facts. Research into the soil and the results of pollen analysis may perhaps prove one day that the climate there was milder c. A.D. 1000 than it is now. But it is not even certain that we need to reckon with any great changes in the climate as far as the question of name-giving is concerned. It is much more important, as Professor Jones remarks on p. 86, that "In land-naming as in other ways Leif was his father's

⁷ *Vestervejen* (1954), 56 ff., 92 ff.

son'' The name Greenland was a carrot which Eiríkr the red dangled in front of the Icelanders to lure them to that country; it was the first of the "Go west, young man!" type of advertisement. The *Fóstbræðra saga* (ch. 22) tells us that "drinking parties were rare in Greenland". This is one of the most melancholy sentences in all the old Icelandic writings. What name would sound so sweetly in the ears of parched Greenlanders as "Wineland the good"?

However this may be, the most important single result of these observations is that the *Eiríks saga* must be dismissed from the discussion of the Vinland problem, and we must restrict ourselves to the *Grænlandinga saga* alone. But if anyone should still want to find the Straumfjörðr and the Hóp mentioned in the *Eiríks saga*, he ought to begin his search to the north of Faxaflói in Iceland. That should save him from crossing the brook to fetch water.

THE CATHEDRAL PRIORY OF ODENSE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

By PETER KING

AS an English foundation, which preserved the native institution of a cathedral priory in alien surroundings, the priory of St Knud in Odense is of special interest to English medievalists.¹ There are, however, difficulties in writing its history. It is not as rich in records as other Danish religious houses. The Odensebog preserved in Upsala² is a late medieval collection of documents, roughly set out for a fair copy which, if it was ever made, has disappeared. It contains a number of early documents, but no other historical information. More can be gleaned from the numerous official documents, papal, royal, and episcopal, which refer to the priory, and from the notes which Cornelius Hamsfort, the Odense antiquary, made in the sixteenth century. The single leaf in the Copenhagen state archives, giving the privileges of Pope Paschal II³ may be from an early "Liber Authorizatus".⁴ In 1469 the bishop of Slesvig was shown a book belonging to the monks, on the last 14 folios of which were copies of their privileges, and the records of the priory.⁵ This book is no longer in existence.

There is a certain amount of information in the chronicles of the Odense bishops which were compiled

¹ I should like to express my thanks to Dr Niels Skyum-Nielsen for his help and advice on every aspect of this article. My errors, however, are my own.

² Stephanus MS — Cod. Ups. D.G. 39. I have used the photocopy in Copenhagen Royal Library. All the contents of the Odensebog are in print.

³ Printed in *Diplomatarium Danicum* (abbreviated *DD* hereafter) I, 2, No. 42.

⁴ See Kr. Erslev, *Repertorium Diplomaticum Regni Danici Mediaevalis* I. 1; IV, 39 n. 1.

⁵ *ibid.* 2 1., II, No. 2627.

at various times by Cornelius Hamsfort.⁶ Hamsfort had certain Lutheran prejudices about the medieval church and sometimes misunderstood his materials, but he was a careful scholar, and his word can be trusted on facts, if not always on interpretations. His chronicles were largely based on the public diplomas. For the early part of his story, however, he quoted facts found "in membrana et diplomate anno Christi 1439 scripto",⁷ and in which he found the names of the bishops. It was suggested by Erslev that this is a reference to the Odensebog.⁸ If this were so, however, Hamsfort would have had no reason to choose the year 1439, since the book contains a number of dated documents subsequent to that year.⁹ Moreover the word "membrana" implies a single leaf. It seems more likely that Hamsfort saw a single piece of parchment out of a book, with the episcopal annals of Odense on it, and the last entry dated 1439.

St Knud's priory owed its foundation to a bishop of Odense. Nothing is known of the early life of Bishop Hubald, but Hamsfort tells us that he was an English Benedictine.¹⁰ He had been consecrated soon after 1086 by Asser, bishop of Lund, and must have remained some time in that city, since at his death he was a member of the confraternity of the cathedral chapter.¹¹ He is first recorded at Odense as bishop around 1095.¹²

Hamsfort insisted upon the fact that Hubald was

⁶ *Scriptores Rerum Danicarum* (abbreviated *S.R.D.* hereafter) VII, 216-243; I, 266-334. Six unprinted chronicles in Copenhagen Royal Library, Kallske Sml. 668 8vo, referred to as MS chronicles hereafter.

⁷ *Series Episcoporum Otthoniensium*, in *S.R.D.* VII, 218. In the unprinted MS chronicle IV he says "ex veteri membrana et quodam diplomate circa annum 1439 dato"

⁸ Erslev, *Repertorium* IV, 123 n. 1.

⁹ On pp. 13-14 (1471); 23 (1449); 32 (1449); 15 (1444); 50 (1447); 64-5 (1459).

¹⁰ *Series Episcoporum Otthoniensium*, in *S.R.D.* VII, 218; *Chronologia Secunda*, *S.R.D.* I, 271; MS chronicles IV, VI.

¹¹ *Necrologium Lundense (Corpus Codicum Danicorum Medii Aevi I)*, 328.

¹² M. C. Gertz, *Vitae Sanctorum Danorum*, 134.

Odense's first bishop.¹³ There had been missionary bishops active in the city before,¹⁴ but no permanent episcopal institutions had been created. Hubald was interested in the reform of the Danish church.¹⁵ As an English Benedictine it was natural for him to consider providing his cathedral with a monastic chapter. Such chapters were well known in England, though extremely rare elsewhere.¹⁶ The foundation of a Benedictine cathedral chapter¹⁷ is a strong indication of English influence.

King Erik Ejegod was encouraging the veneration of his murdered brother Knud as a martyr, and a number of Englishmen, including Hubald, were trying to spread the cult and obtain papal recognition. In 1095 the dead king's relics were translated into a stone church dedicated to St Alban and St Knud. On the advice of Hubald,¹⁸ King Erik applied to Evesham in England for a community of monks who would serve the new church and tend the shrine. Evesham had had an earlier connection with Denmark,¹⁹ and, with the permission of King William II, twelve of its monks arrived at Odense²⁰ around 1095-6.²¹ The inscription placed inside Knud's tomb²² may have been composed by one of them. It gives the names of the murdered king's companions; four of these are spelt according to Anglo-Saxon sound laws.²³ The reference

¹³ MS chronicle VI. See also the obscure verse "Hubalkus quorum primus regimen populorum", *Series Episcoporum Otthoniensium*, in *S.R.D.* VII, 218. The verses, however, contain little of historical value.

¹⁴ On the early bishops see H. St. Holbeck, *Odense Bys Historie* (1926), 31-4.

¹⁵ *Series Episcoporum Otthoniensium*, in *S.R.D.* VII, 219.

¹⁶ Monreale in Sicily is one of the rare examples, probably also imitating English practice. See M. D. Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England* (1950), 619.

¹⁷ That Hubald intended the monks to form the cathedral chapter from the first is made clear by the papal confirmation of 1117: "ut in loco sedis uestre religiosorum monachorum cetus adunaretur" *DD* I, 2, No. 42.

¹⁸ *DD* I, 2, No. 42.

¹⁹ M. D. Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England*, 163.

²⁰ Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum* (2nd edition, 1817-30) II, 37.

²¹ On the date see Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England*, 164 n. 1.

²² Gertz, *Vitae Sanctorum Danorum*, 60-2.

²³ H. G. Leach, *Angevin Britain and Scandinavia* (1921), 78.

to the king's brother "nomine et gratia martyrii Benedictus" echoes the opening of St Gregory's *Life of St Benedict*.²¹ The author of the inscription could well have been an English Benedictine, either Hubald himself or one of the newly arrived monks.

It is probable that the community at first depended largely on the generosity of Hubald, whose endowments were to be confirmed by the pope and archbishop of Lund.²⁵ The first royal gifts seem to have been made by King Niels in 1107.²⁶ Ten years later Niels was claiming to be the founder of the house.²⁷

In an agreement²⁸ confirmed by King Erik,²⁹ Evesham defined its rights as the mother house. The document declared that Odense derived its foundation from Evesham and stood in relation to the English house as a daughter to a mother. A monk of Evesham who went to Odense with the permission of his abbot, must obey the prior, and take his place in chapter and elsewhere with the other brethren. But if such a monk came without the permission of his abbot, he was not to be received. Evesham promised to act in the same way towards visitors from Odense. Mutual arrangements were made for suffrages for the dead. The election of a new prior of Odense needed the permission of the king of Denmark and the bishop, and could take place either in Evesham or in Odense, but the abbot of Evesham must confirm the election. This agreement was solemnly renewed in the same terms by Bishop Riculf of Odense in 1135-9,³⁰ after a visit from one of the Evesham monks.³¹

²⁴ "Fuit vir vitae venerabilis, gratia Benedictus et nomine . . ." *Dialogues* II, Prolegomena (*Patrologia Latina* 66, 126).

²⁵ *DD* I, 2, Nos. 42, 77.

²⁶ *ibid.* Nos. 34, 35.

²⁷ *ibid.* No. 42.

²⁸ *ibid.* No. 24 (undated). See also L. Weibull, 'S:t Maria i Evesham och s:t Knut i Odense', *Scandia* XIII (1940), 196-205, in which all the relevant documents are analysed.

²⁹ W. Holtzmann, 'Urkunden zur Geschichte des Domklosters von Odense', *Schriften des Vereins für Schleswig-Holsteinsche Kirchengeschichte*, 2 Reihe, 9 Bd. (1930-5), 63.

³⁰ *DD* I, 2, No. 66.

³¹ *ibid.* No. 67.

It was natural that the new monastery should become influential. The only other monasteries in Denmark in 1095 were All Saints, Lund, and St Michael's, Slesvig. King Valdemar, in a diploma of 1180, declared that the priory of Odense was especially dear to him since it contained the relics of a royal saint who was a member of his family.³² In the early twelfth century the priory must have preserved the best traditions of English Benedictinism, and as such it influenced the foundation of other houses. King Valdemar stated, in the diploma quoted above, that many monks and nuns had made their profession there. There seems to have been a link between Odense and the monasteries of Sorø and Ringsted. Sorø was a small house for Black monks, founded about 1142-5, whose first prior had previously been prior of Odense.³³ In Ringsted, Benedictines were introduced in 1135.³⁴ In 1144-5 the prior of Odense had previously been prior of Ringsted.³⁵ Probably from 1157 there was a Benedictine nunnery in Odense directed by the monks.³⁶ In 1193 the nuns recognised that the monks had founded their house.³⁷ At some unknown date, probably during the reign of Knud VI, the nuns moved out of the city to Dalum.³⁸

So important a house as that at Odense naturally attracted the attention of the great. Already in 1139, Archbishop Eskil confirmed the property and rights of the priory, particularly mentioning the right of the monks to form the cathedral chapter and elect their bishop.³⁹ In 1144-5 a synod assembled at the priory attended by King Erik Lam, Cardinal Hubald and papal legate, Arch-

³² G. J. Thorkelin, *Diplomatarium Arna-Magnaeaeum* (abbreviated *Dipl. AM* hereafter) I, 261.

³³ *Liber Donationum Monasterii Sorensis*, in *S.R.D.* IV, 466.

³⁴ *DD* I, 2, No. 65.

³⁵ *ibid.* No. 86.

³⁶ J. Hansen og K. Mortensen, *Dalum Sogns Historie* (1959) I, 1, 43-4.

³⁷ *Dipl. AM* I, 285.

³⁸ *Dalum Sogns Historie*, 44.

³⁹ *DD* I, 2, No. 77.



FIG. I.—The seal of the Cathedral Priory of Odense
(see p. 198, note 52). Reproduced by kind
permission of Dansk Rigsarkiv, Copenhagen.



FIG. II.—St Knud: a statue in wood from Næstved (see p. 199, note 54).
Reproduced by kind permission of the National Museum, Copenhagen.

bishop Eskil and other bishops.⁴⁰ Erik Lam visited the cathedral of St Knud in 1141 and made generous gifts at the altar.⁴¹ In 1147, after his abdication, he returned to the priory to take up the monastic habit.⁴²

It was natural that the priory should make enemies. Its position in the diocese had no parallel in Denmark or northern Germany. Moreover the frequent outbursts of civil war after the death of King Niels in 1134 provided opportunity for the invasion of monastic properties. The confirmation granted by Archbishop Eskil stated that the brethren were being persecuted by evil men.⁴³ One of their enemies was the provost of St Alban's, whose church was next to theirs. It was in St Alban's, then a modest wooden chapel attached to his place, that St Knud had been killed. When the new stone church was ready the relics of the king were moved there, with those of St Alban.⁴⁴ The old church was left without its treasures. Nevertheless it remained a place of special devotion to St Alban.⁴⁵

In 1142 King Erik Lam wrote to Livo, provost of St Alban's, ordering him to stop disturbing the monks. He stated that the monks were right to claim the church as their own, but ordered that in future it should be free of St Knud's, which would receive compensation.⁴⁶ It is unlikely that the agreement stopped bad feeling. It is possible that the extraordinary story of the theft of relics from the priory was current among the clerks of St Alban's.

According to Matthew Paris,⁴⁷ the Danes, in one of their raids on England, took the relics of St Alban from his abbey and brought them to Odense. Egwin, a monk

⁴⁰ *ibid.* No. 86.

⁴¹ *ibid.* No. 81.

⁴² *Series Episcoporum Otthoniensium*, in *S.R.D.* VII, 219.

⁴³ *DD I*, 2, No. 77.

⁴⁴ E. Jørgensen, *Helgendyrkelse i Danmark* (1909), 18.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁶ *DD I*, 2, No. 71. See also A. Köcher, 'Biskop Livo af Odense', *Dansk Historisk Tidsskrift* IX, 2 (1924), 338-342.

⁴⁷ *Gesta Abbatum Sancti Albani* (Rolls Series, 1867) I, 12 ff.

of St Albans, after a vision from the saint, made his way to Odense and became a monk of the priory. Within a few years he had become sacrist. He took advantage of his position to steal the relics out of their shrine, and sent them to England in a sealed box which, he pretended, contained books. On receiving news that his parcel had arrived safely, he asked leave to return home. On his arrival in England he sent a message to the monks at Odense, informing them that their reliquary was empty.

The story contains many improbabilities. Matthew Paris put it into the middle of the ninth century, when there was no priory at Odense. It is difficult to see how a monk of St Albans would have been received in a daughter house of Evesham. The relics of St Alban were most likely taken from Ely in 1070, when St Knud was plundering in England.⁴⁸ Knud placed them in St Alban's church in Odense. This was done, according to the inscription commemorating his death, "shortly before" his martyrdom in 1086.⁴⁹ There is no lack of evidence that the relics remained in Odense and that they were moved, with those of the holy king, into the new stone church. In 1183 Knud son of Prizlav desired to be buried in the priory church and made gifts "Deo sanctisque eius martiribus Kanuto et Albano quorum reliquie in eadem ecclesia requiescunt".⁵⁰ In the fifteenth century the dowager Queen Dorothea made a gift to "St Alban's arm" in the priory church, and the printed breviary of Odense states that the cathedral church had the relics of St Alban.⁵¹ It also seems likely that the monks emphasised their possession of these relics by depicting them on the priory seal. This shows in most examples⁵² St Knud, holding in his right hand a

⁴⁸ R. Vaughan, *Matthew Paris* (1958), 202.

⁴⁹ *Vitae Sanctorum Danorum*, 60-2.

⁵⁰ *Dipl. AM I*, 272.

⁵¹ E. Jørgensen, *Helgendyrkelse i Danmark*, 18 and n. 2.

⁵² See e.g. fig. 1 (reproduced by permission of the Dansk Rigsarkiv, Copenhagen), described by H. Petersen, *Danske Geistlige Sigiller* (1886), No. 532. I am here most grateful to Miss Thelma Jexlev of the Dansk Rigsarkiv for her help and advice.

sceptre, and in his left an object described by H. Petersen as a monstrance.⁵³ It is far more likely that the king is here shown with the relic with which he was always associated, and which seems also to be shown on a late medieval carving of Knud from Næstved.⁵⁴

There may be further confusions in Matthew Paris's story. In the late eleventh century Ywar, the sacrist of Peterborough was in Denmark and probably at Odense, collecting the relics belonging to his abbey which had been taken away in 1070.⁵⁵ The Egwin of the story sounds like a confusion with St Egwin of Evesham, who was venerated at Odense.⁵⁶ But Matthew Paris quotes as witnesses Englishmen who had lived long in Denmark. They were Odo, the treasurer and butler of King Valdemar II, John of St Albans, the goldsmith, and his son Nicholas, who had long been in charge of Valdemar's mint.⁵⁷ Clearly, Matthew's story was known in Denmark, and most probably circulated among the Odense monks' Danish enemies.

After the second half of the twelfth century, Odense priory seems to have been in difficulties. The privilege granted to it by Archbishop Eskil in 1171 repeats earlier complaints that the monks are troubled by persecutors.⁵⁸ In 1174 King Valdemar found it necessary to appeal to Evesham to come to the aid of its daughter.⁵⁹ The links between the two houses seem to have been long neglected. Already in 1139 Archbishop Eskil affirmed the right of the monks to elect their own prior,⁶⁰ without mentioning the rights of Evesham, although these had been defined

⁵³ *Danske Gejstlige Sigiller*, No. 536.

⁵⁴ Fig. II (reproduced by permission of the National Museum, Copenhagen). I am most grateful to Dr F. Lindahl of the National Museum for her information on the iconography of St Knud.

⁵⁵ W. T. Mellows, *The Chronicle of Hugh Candidus* (1949), 82.

⁵⁶ *Helgendyrkelse i Danmark*, 19.

⁵⁷ *Gesta Abbatum Sancti Albani*, 19.

⁵⁸ *Dipl. AM* I, 253-4. It is possible that the scribe was simply following the wording of the confirmation of 1139.

⁵⁹ 'Urkunden zur Geschichte des Domklosters von Odense', 64. (See n. 29 above.)

⁶⁰ *DD* I, 2, No. 77.

a few years earlier by Bishop Riculf.⁶¹ In 1174 the connection with the mother house was renewed. Brother William, a monk of Evesham, was sent to Denmark and installed as prior of Odense by the king. Valdemar then solemnly confirmed the earlier regulations about the subjection of Odense to Evesham.⁶² It seems probable that a thorough reform of the monastery followed⁶³ which culminated in 1180 with the solemn confirmation of all its properties by King Valdemar⁶⁴ and Archbishop Absalon.⁶⁵

The earliest agreement between Evesham and its daughter had expressed the hope that, although the two houses were separated by long distance, they would always be one and the same in spirit.⁶⁶ The relation between the two was confirmed by Pope Alexander III in 1179.⁶⁷ But it was impossible for Evesham to direct the fortunes of so distant a dependency for very long. The last renewal of links between the two houses in 1191-1205 was of quite a different nature. Modelled on the compact between Evesham and Malmesbury, it was concerned with suffrages for the dead and mutual visits, but contained no mention of the subjection of one house to the other.⁶⁸ A papal bull of 1226, confirming the possessions of St Knud's and the right of its monks to elect their prior without outside interference, makes no mention of the ancient rights of Evesham.⁶⁹ The part played by the English house in the foundation of the Danish one seems to have been forgotten in the late Middle Ages, and is not mentioned by Hamsfort.

The endowments increased rapidly and from the first

⁶¹ See above, p. 195.

⁶² 'Urkunden des Domklosters von Odense', 63-4.

⁶³ 'S:ta Maria i Evesham och s:t Knut i Odense', 202-3. (See n. 28 above.)

⁶⁴ *Dipl. AM* I, 261.

⁶⁵ *ibid.* 263-6.

⁶⁶ *DD* I, 2, No. 24.

⁶⁷ 'Urkunden des Domklosters von Odense', 64-5.

⁶⁸ 'S:ta Maria i Evesham och s:t Knut i Odense', 203-4. On the date of this arrangement see *DD* I, 5, p. 9.

⁶⁹ A. Krarup, *Bullarium Danicum*, No. 205.

Hubald distinguished the possessions of the priory from those of the bishopric.⁷⁰ In Eskil's confirmation of 1171, the bishop of Odense was forbidden to convert anything belonging to the monks to his own use, or create a prebend out of their property without their consent.⁷¹ The same document confirmed annual payments made to the convent in Jutland, Sjøælland, Laaland, and other islands.⁷² Such annual payments were often granted by the kings. In 1107 Niels granted the 20 marks a year paid to him, probably in Odense, and 20 marks of tribute from Jutland.⁷³ It appears that of the 20 marks from Odense, 4 were, for a time, diverted to St Alban's church. When the priory abandoned its claims over the church, the whole 20 marks were once more paid to the monks in compensation.⁷⁴ In 1141 Erik Lam also granted the monks the 30 marks a year from the island of Sild due to him.⁷⁵ The tribute from Sild and Odense was later set aside to provide clothing for the monks, and according to the royal confirmation of 1180, did not go through the hands of any royal official, but was paid directly to the priory's representative.⁷⁶ In 1245 the pope confirmed various dues, known as "St Knud's penny" in Fyn, Jutland, Thorslund, Alsø, Ærø, Lange-land, Laaland, Falster, and Bornholm.⁷⁷

Among the valuable privileges enjoyed by the monks was one-sixth of the fishing rights in Lønborg,⁷⁸ granted by King Niels.⁷⁹ Like all medieval landlords, the priory derived much profit from its mills. In 1175 King Valdemar declared that the citizens of Odense might bring

⁷⁰ *DD I*, 2, No. 42.

⁷¹ *Dipl. AM I*, 253-4.

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ *DD I*, 2, No. 35.

⁷⁴ *ibid.* No. 71. See also A. Köcher, 'Biskop Livo af Odense', 339. (See n. 46 above.)

⁷⁵ *DD I*, 2, No. 81.

⁷⁶ *Dipl. AM I*, 261-3.

⁷⁷ *Bullarium Danicum*, No. 346.

⁷⁸ Possibly the Lønborg river in Fyn, see Holbeck, *Odense Bys Historie*, 46.

⁷⁹ *DD I*, 2, No. 35.

their corn only to the monks' mill.⁸⁰ In 1193, in exchange for one of their estates, the Odense nuns were allowed to use the mills of St Knud for one hour every week without payment.⁸¹ In 1288 the king confirmed that the monks' mills were free from every royal exaction, and that no one could interfere with the free flow of water by damming up or fishing in the millstreams.⁸²

The priory also had extensive rights over its men. King Niels allowed it every royal right in its possessions, except wreck and the fine for not following the host. The church should have the goods of outlaws on its lands, but not the fine for coming back into the king's peace. The monks could have half the goods of those who died on their properties without heirs, but any man who had no heir could leave them all his land and half his money, the other half to go to the king.⁸³ In 1288 the monks were freed from all royal exactions whatsoever,⁸⁴ and they and their servants were also exempted from paying toll in the Sound.⁸⁵

The church which the English monks were given in 1095-6 was still unfinished when the relics were transferred to it.⁸⁶ The building, with the land on which it stood and space for the monastery, must have been given to the community by Erik Ejegod. The earliest mention of this land, however, is in 1226, when Pope Honorius III confirmed "locum ipsum in quo prefatum monasterium situm est".⁸⁷ No other royal gifts of land are recorded. In 1147 Bishop Riculf endowed the monks with his own estate at Geltofte.⁸⁸ Most of the other estates were granted by laymen. In 1183 Knud, son of the Wendish chieftain Prizlav, granted two *mansi* in

⁸⁰ *Dipl. AM* I, 255.

⁸¹ *ibid.* 285.

⁸² *DD* II, 3, No. 327.

⁸³ *ibid.* I, 2, No. 32.

⁸⁴ *ibid.* II, 3, No. 324.

⁸⁵ *ibid.* II, 3, No. 326.

⁸⁶ *Vitae Sanctorum Danorum*, 129.

⁸⁷ *Bullarium Danicum*, No. 205.

⁸⁸ *DD* I, 2, No. 99.

Tandslet, and his other lands and properties in Als.⁸⁹ In 1239 Ostrid, the knight's man, gave to St Knud's all his property in "Haustedt" with its mill and fish-pond, arable and meadow, wood and heath.⁹⁰ In 1180 it was estimated that St Knud's owned about 30 *mansi* in Fyn,⁹¹ but there is no complete list of its possessions to date, in any diploma. The priory naturally acquired much land in its neighbourhood. In 1245 it had recently obtained the estate of Bjørn near Odense, with its farm buildings and bath-house, the three fields and the wood.⁹² Typical of the smaller gifts from Odense citizens is that of a tene-ment in the city given by the widow of Aril Kremer in 1423.⁹³

The laity were encouraged to be generous by the offer of a share in the suffrages of the community, through burial in the priory grounds. Archbishop Eskil, in 1139 and 1171, confirmed the monks' right to administer the last sacraments to their benefactors and bury them in their cemetery, saving the rights of the parish priest.⁹⁴ The gift of Knud, son of Prizlav in 1183, was made after he had been assigned his burial place before the altar of Our Lady in the priory church.⁹⁵

Like all medieval religious houses, St Knud's had appropriated a number of churches. In 1314 the rector of Fraugde resigned. The bishop of Odense shared the patronage of the church with a number of laymen. These resigned their rights to him and he thereupon granted the church to the priory.⁹⁶ At the request of the king, it was annexed to the school at Odense to clothe the master and provide the books. It was a condition that a per-

⁸⁹ *Dipl. AM* I, 272.

⁹⁰ W. Christensen, *De ældste danske Arkivregistraturer* (1910), V, 1, 238. 'Havstedt' is possibly Hauge-Stige, Lunde Herred, see index, *ibid.* V, 2, 1186.

⁹¹ *Dipl. AM* I, 265.

⁹² *Bullarium Danicum*, No. 346.

⁹³ Erslev, *Repertorium* III, No. 6001.

⁹⁴ *Dipl. AM* I, 245-6, 253-4.

⁹⁵ *ibid.* 271-2.

⁹⁶ *DD* II, 7, No. 206.

petual vicar should be found, to serve the church and exercise cure of souls.⁹⁷ In the time of Prior Hennekin (1277-86), St Knud's claimed the church of Stenløse to provide bursaries for the young monks who were sent to France to study.⁹⁸ The claim was not realised until 1316 when, on the resignation of its rector, Erik Menved and the other patrons granted the church to provide books and sustenance for the student monks abroad.⁹⁹ In 1335, following complaints from the parishioners of Ubberød that they could get no priest because of their poverty and the meagre endowments of their church, the bishop of Odense, who had the advowson, annexed it to the priory, on condition that a priest should be found.¹⁰⁰ In 1349 Bishop Niels confirmed the church of Særslev to the convent, to uphold the school in Odense.¹⁰¹ By 1360 the brethren also held the church of Aasum.¹⁰² In 1369 the monks were involved in a dispute with the patrons of the church of Marslev, over the allegiance of a neighbouring hamlet, whose inhabitants, because of some disagreement, had ceased to attend service in Aasum and were going to Marslev instead. The bishop firmly assigned them to Aasum,¹⁰³ and his decision was confirmed at a provincial synod in 1374.¹⁰⁴ In 1377 a papal judge delegate ruled that the church of Rise in Ærø had belonged from ancient times to the monks of St Knud, though unlawfully occupied for three years by a priest of the archbishopric of Bremen, apparently with the support of the Danish king.¹⁰⁵

As the chapter of the cathedral church, the monks claimed the right to elect the bishop of Odense. In 1139

⁹⁷ *DD* II, 8, No. 133.

⁹⁸ *ibid.* II, 2, No. 289.

⁹⁹ *ibid.* II, 7, Nos. 406, 424.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.* II, 11, No. 224.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.* III, 3, No. 119.

¹⁰² Erslev, *Repertorium* II, No. 2604.

¹⁰³ *ibid.* No. 2864.

¹⁰⁴ *S.R.D.* I, 313.

¹⁰⁵ Erslev, *Repertorium* II, No. 3182.

Eskil confirmed their "prima vox" in the election.¹⁰⁶ In 1171 he again guaranteed them "precipuum vocem in electione vestri pontificis, utpote qui cathedrali ecclesie inservitis".¹⁰⁷ It is not unusual, in the twelfth century, for a cathedral chapter to allow other prominent ecclesiastics in the diocese to take part in these deliberations.¹⁰⁸ It is more than likely that the later claim of the provosts of Odense to take part in the elections of bishops was based on the informal practice of earlier times.

The first serious trouble occurred in 1246. The monks complained that, during the episcopal election, Niels, provost of Odense, invaded the chapter-house with layfolk and forced the monks to elect him. The archbishop of Lund was also obliged, by threats, to consecrate him, although Niels was a man of evil life, who gave a bad example to his flock.¹⁰⁹ The action of the primate, and the fact that the provost of Odense was a royal appointee, seem to suggest that the king was behind this interference with the election process.¹¹⁰ The Odense election dispute was one of the matters submitted to Simon of Alvernia, the papal legate to Denmark, in 1247.¹¹¹ Niels seems to have remained in possession.¹¹² In the second half of the thirteenth century relations between Church and State in Denmark were severely strained. Nothing is known of episcopal elections at Odense during this period. It is significant that in 1286 Erik Klipping declared that neither he nor his successors had any right to interfere in the election of bishops of Odense.¹¹³ It would be unwise, of course, to take such a promise from a medieval ruler literally. The document was issued

¹⁰⁶ *DD* I, 2, No. 77.

¹⁰⁷ *Dipl. AM* I, 253.

¹⁰⁸ I am most grateful to Miss V. Flint of University College, Dublin, for information about episcopal elections in the twelfth century.

¹⁰⁹ *Bullarium Danicum*, No. 378.

¹¹⁰ See Niels Skyum-Nielsen, *Kirkekampen i Danmark 1241-1290* (1962), 37-8.

¹¹¹ *ibid.*

¹¹² *Series Episcoporum Otthoniensium*, in *S.R.D.* VII, 222.

¹¹³ *DD* II, 3, No. 215.

when an election at Odense was pending. The choice fell upon Gisico, a Dominican, who appears to have been a friend of the king.¹¹⁴

On the death of Gisico in 1300 there was another disputed election. The chapter was divided. The "maior et sanior pars" seems to have voted for the Franciscan, Peter Pagh. But the provost of Odense and his clergy insisted on taking part in the proceedings, and forced the election of a Dominican, Peter Pigard.¹¹⁵ The monks appealed to the pope, who decided, in 1304-5, in favour of Peter Pagh, but it was some time before the latter was able to obtain possession.¹¹⁶

The most important dispute, however, broke out on the death of Peter Pagh in 1339. In the election which followed the provost of Odense once more attempted to take part, as did the prior of Dalum (corrupted, according to Hamsfort, by the provost).¹¹⁷ The prior of Dalum was a secular clerk, who lived in the neighbourhood of the nunnery, and looked after the nuns' business affairs.¹¹⁸ It is more than likely that the monks of St Knud had originally performed this function, and that the prior of Dalum claimed his rights as their successor. Neither he nor the provost were able to make good their claim and the monks elected the Franciscan, Niels Jon- sen.¹¹⁹ In September 1348 Bishop Niels assembled a synod of his clergy to settle the electoral rights of the monks and pronounce upon the legality of the events of his election. Eight of the oldest parish priests of the diocese, some over 60 and others over 70 years of age, declared that, in their recollection, no provost of Odense or prior of Dalum had any rights in the election of

¹¹⁴ *Series Episcoporum Otthoniensium*, in *S.R.D.* VII, 225. See also N. Skyum-Nielsen, *Kirkehampen i Danmark*, 283.

¹¹⁵ *DD* II, 12, 197-8.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.* See also *S.R.D.* VII, 226-7. Both these accounts are from Hamsfort.

¹¹⁷ *Series Episcoporum Otthoniensium*, in *S.R.D.* VII, 230.

¹¹⁸ J. Hansen og K. Mortensen, *Dalum Sogns Historie* (1959) I, 1, 49.

¹¹⁹ *Series Episcoporum Otthoniensium*, in *S.R.D.* VII, 230.

bishops, and that none but the monks of St Knud might participate.¹²⁰ A declaration to this effect was drawn up by the bishop,¹²¹ and the prior of Dalum was obliged to renounce all his claims.¹²² After the synod of 1348, the electoral rights of the monks were not seriously questioned, as long as the Odense chapter remained Benedictine.

The declaration of Bishop Niels mentions that those who had usurped the election rights were "theotonici clerici".¹²³ The disputed election had taken place during the Danish interregnum when the country was ruled by the counts, Gerard and John. This aspect of the affair must not, however, be exaggerated. Bishop Niels was himself a German from Slesvig.¹²⁴

The bishop of Odense's rights to enforce discipline were bound to be resisted by a monastic chapter. In 1139 and 1171 Archbishop Eskil had allowed the monks of St Knud virtual autonomy. The bishop of Odense was not allowed to correct their faults unless his intervention was desired by the prior and community. Then he might enter the chapter-house and, together with the brethren, give judgement according to the Rule of St Benedict.¹²⁵ In the archbishop's confirmation of 1171 the bishop was also prohibited from appointing the obedientiaries.¹²⁶ It seems unlikely that the bishop was ever called upon to perform disciplinary functions, but the documents referring to his relations with the priory are concerned with external matters. In 1348 and 1365 the bishop confirmed the monks' sole right in episcopal elections.¹²⁷ Bishop Peter Pagh (1301-39) occupied some land they claimed

¹²⁰ *DD* III, 3, No. 63.

¹²¹ *ibid.* No. 64.

¹²² *ibid.* No. 65. See also *Dalum Sogns Historie* I, 1, 57.

¹²³ *DD* III, 3, No. 64.

¹²⁴ *Series Episcoporum Otthoniensium*, in *S.R.D.* VII, 230.

¹²⁵ *Dipl. AM* I, 245-6, 253-4.

¹²⁶ *ibid.* 253-4. In twelfth-century English cathedral priories the bishops usually appointed the prior, and all or some of the obedientiaries. See Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England*, 626-7.

¹²⁷ See above, p. 206, and *S.R.D.* I, 311.

as theirs,¹²⁸ and in 1369 Bishop Erik Krabbe decided in their favour the dispute about Aasum parish church.¹²⁹

There is little information about the internal discipline of the priory in the Middle Ages. Presumably there was a high standard of observance at the beginning. King Valdemar in 1174 seems to imply this — “*celestem Deo laudem et gloriam de sterili exempti mundo feliciter adquisierunt*” — as well as suggesting that there had been a falling away in his time.¹³⁰ A reform from England seems to have come some time after 1174.¹³¹ In the early fourteenth century the nobles of Fyn were using the priory as a hunting-lodge. In 1315 the king ordered that visitors should board at the monastery at their own expense, and keep horses and dogs elsewhere than on the monks' property.¹³² After this the records are silent until the fifteenth century.

Although more was written about the spiritual state of the monastery in the fifteenth century, all this evidence is unsatisfactory. The strictures of Brother John of Cismar are couched in general terms,¹³³ and he had his special axe to grind. After the monks had been expelled, their friends in Rome stated: “*longo tempore cum odore bone fame deo servierant*”.¹³⁴ This was partisan pleading on the other side. When the monks' arguments were answered point by point, this one was left without a reply.¹³⁵ But no firm conclusion can be drawn from this silence.

Brother John of Cismar first came to Denmark in 1457 to effect a reform of the Danish Benedictine houses, and more particularly to persuade them to join the Bursfield

¹²⁸ *DD* II, 6, Nos. 267, 269.

¹²⁹ See above, p. 204.

¹³⁰ 'Urkunden des Domklosters von Odense', 64. (See n. 29 above.)

¹³¹ 'S:tta Maria i Evesham och s:t Knut i Odense', 202-3. (See n. 28 above.)

¹³² *DD* II, 7, No. 259.

¹³³ See below, p. 209.

¹³⁴ *Acta Pontificum Danica* (abbreviated *APD* hereafter) IV, No. 3104.

¹³⁵ *ibid.* No. 3156.

congregation, to which his own monastery of Cismar belonged. Such a work could not succeed without the co-operation of the authorities. He was unfortunate in being able to interest neither the king, nor the nobles, nor a majority of the bishops.¹³⁶ Nothing was accomplished in 1457, owing to the unsettled state of the kingdom, and John left. During his absence the bishop of Roskilde began to reform the Benedictine Skovkloster in his diocese, and this work was accomplished on Brother John's second visit in 1458. The monks of the Skovkloster who opposed the reform left and settled in other religious houses — "*de quibus tres ad monasterium sancti Kanuti recepti, indisciplinatis indisciplinatus conuersantur*" as Brother John commented sourly.¹³⁷ In 1460 John arrived in Denmark on his third visit, with the object of reforming St Knud's. By harbouring refugees from the Skovkloster it had become a centre of opposition to reform. Moreover success at so important a monastery would have an encouraging effect — "*hoc attentius est considerandum, quod tam insingni (sic) loco reformato posset non solum tota Dacia reformari, sed et omnia regna et territoria domino nostro regi subdita*".¹³⁸

John arrived at a difficult time for Odense. Christian I of Denmark was trying to obtain the right to nominate all high ecclesiastics in his dominions, as the German emperor was able to do after the Concordat of Vienna. By a papal privilege Christian was able to appoint the prior of Odense and, on the resignation of Prior Jacob Geeth, he had nominated Gregers Tyggesen. Meanwhile, however, the monks had elected Bent Andersen. When the king's wish was made known they seem to have gone through a second form of election for the benefit of the royal nominee. But the bishop of Odense

¹³⁶ On the mission of Brother John, with the text of his letters, see W. Christensen, 'Et Bidrag til Dansk Klosterhistorie i Christiørn I's Tid', *Kirkehistoriske Samlinger*, 4 Række, 5 Bd. (1897-9), 84-125.

¹³⁷ *ibid.* 114.

¹³⁸ *ibid.* 107.

refused to confirm him. Both parties appealed to the pope, who confirmed each claimant in turn.¹³⁹ By May 1459 Bent Andersen had resigned his rights to Jens Redh, and Gregers Tyggesen had been able to obtain a second papal confirmation.¹⁴⁰ The dispute was still raging when Brother John came to Denmark, and was only finally settled by the death of Gregers Tyggesen, whereupon, in 1463, Jens Redh obtained papal confirmation.¹⁴¹ To add to the confusion, in 1460, when Brother John came to Odense, the bishopric of Odense itself was in dispute between Mogens Krafse and Peder Axelsson Thott, so that there was no episcopal authority to effect a reform.¹⁴²

John's greatest difficulty in reforming Odense was lack of influential support. The Danish bishops were "dumb dogs".¹⁴³ The nobility of Fyn were already more interested in schemes to suppress the priory altogether.¹⁴⁴ At Brother John's request, King Christian appointed a commission to investigate the whole problem.¹⁴⁵ To this commission Brother John was able to send his lengthy memoranda, but there can be little doubt that the king had thus begun the leisurely proceedings which were to end in the suppression of the priory. Meanwhile, his failure at Odense compromised all Brother John's other schemes.

A Benedictine cathedral chapter was so unusual outside England that there were bound to be special difficulties. It was medieval liturgical practice for all the churches in a diocese to follow the Use of the cathedral church. This was felt to be difficult when the cathedral was also a Benedictine monastery. In 1431 the Bridgettines of Maribo petitioned to be allowed to follow the Use of Lund, since that of Odense was unsuitable for their

¹³⁹ *APD* III, Nos. 2092, 2098, 2099.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.* No. 2162.

¹⁴¹ *ibid.* No. 2276.

¹⁴² 'Et Bidrag til Dansk Klosterhistorie', 94, 112-3.

¹⁴³ *ibid.* 113.

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.* 102.

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.* 94.

order.¹⁴⁶ The papal bull of 1474 also mentioned the inconvenience of making the secular clergy conform to the liturgical practice of a Benedictine monastery.¹⁴⁷ This in itself would not have been sufficient reason for suppression. The nobility of Fyn, however, wanted a secular cathedral at Odense so that their sons in the Church could obtain prebends and dignities there. Brother John had commented on the unworthiness of this motive,¹⁴⁸ but they made no secret of it. The papal bulls of the period set out their complaint: how they sent their sons at great expense to be educated abroad, and how these sons returned home only to find that there was no hope of promotion in their native diocese, so that they must seek it elsewhere.¹⁴⁹ Karl Rønnow, who became bishop of Odense in 1474, and who was a patron of the New Learning, also desired a secular chapter at his cathedral, so that he could surround himself with learned men.¹⁵⁰ Finally King Christian was in favour of the idea because of the increased patronage which he would enjoy. When he made his journey to Rome in 1474, the establishment of a secular chapter at Odense was one of the questions he had noted for discussion with the Curia.¹⁵¹

The priory was suppressed by a bull dated 21 April 1474. The monks were to go to other houses of their order. Those who, through age or sickness were too old to be moved, were to receive pensions and be suitably housed near the cathedral. A secular chapter was to be set up, with a provost at its head, a dean who would have cure of souls in the cathedral, a cantor who would rule the choir, and a number of canons who would hold prebends. The provostship was to be in the king's gift, the other two dignities and six of the prebends in that of

¹⁴⁶ *APD* II, No. 1592.

¹⁴⁷ *APD* IV, No. 2582.

¹⁴⁸ 'Et Bidrag til Dansk Klosterhistorie', 106.

¹⁴⁹ See e.g. *APD* IV, No. 2582.

¹⁵⁰ *Series Episcoporum Otthoniensium*, in *S.R.D.* VII, 237.

¹⁵¹ *APD* IV, No. 2515.

the bishop. Patronage of the other prebends and of minor benefices was to be held jointly by the bishop and chapter.¹⁵² The prelates charged with carrying out the bull finally decided on 15 prebends with vicars choral for each dignity and canonry. The chapter had been organised by 1477, and the work was duly approved by the pope.¹⁵³

It is remarkable that the monks of Odense, scattered in various places, with king, nobles and bishop against them, continued to work for their restoration. Nothing could be accomplished during the lifetime of King Christian, but the opportunity came after his death in 1481. The monks were able to win over the widowed queen, Dorothea, and she brought up the question on her visit to Rome in 1488.¹⁵⁴ The arguments on both sides can be read in the various contradictory bulls which now began to be issued by the Holy See. The monks declared that they had led exemplary lives in Odense before their expulsion. Without being cited or given the opportunity to state their case, they had been driven out and robbed of all their possessions and privileges. Deprived of their home they had had to run hither and thither to the scandal of many, and St Knud had worked no miracles in the cathedral since their departure. The priory had been protected by a papal bull of Paschal II and many other privileges which forbade the monks to be moved.¹⁵⁵ The case for the secular chapter, with which Bishop Karl Rønnow associated himself, was that the change in 1474 had been made by the king after long deliberation and with the approval of the pope. It was quite untrue that the monks had been expelled; on the contrary they had gone willingly, realising that it was better for the church of St Knud, as a public instrument

¹⁵² *ibid.* No. 2582.

¹⁵³ *ibid.* No. 2692.

¹⁵⁴ *Series Episcoporum Otthoniensium*, in *S.R.D.* VII, 237; *APD* IV, No. 3104.

¹⁵⁵ *APD* IV, No. 3104.

issued by them showed. A decent portion of the revenues had been assigned to the older monks, and the rest had gone to various religious houses. To change arrangements made fourteen years before would cause the utmost confusion at Odense and give a bad example in the kingdom.¹⁵⁶

Pope Innocent VIII delegated the case to the bishop of Lübeck and the abbots of St Peter Næstved (Skovkloster) and St Mary Sorø, giving them authority, if they found the facts as the monks had stated them, to suppress the secular chapter and restore the Benedictines.¹⁵⁷ At the first hearing in Odense on 9 May 1489, the judges delegate met in the presence of King Hans and listened to the proctors for both sides. All the parties then agreed to ask the archbishop of Lund to act as arbitrator. The latter, however, refused to act, and the abbot of Sorø, apparently on his own authority, decided to conclude the case himself.¹⁵⁸ This action was of doubtful legality and increased the confusion. Upon the appeal of the seculars, new judges were appointed by the pope in 1490.¹⁵⁹ But by this time a settlement had been made.

In December 1489 both sides agreed to the arbitration of King Hans. His decision was that the monks should return and have back their privileges and properties. Pensions were to be paid to the dignitaries and canons of the suppressed secular chapter, and these were to keep their houses as long as they lived, except the actual claustral buildings.¹⁶⁰ The restoration received papal approval in May 1490.¹⁶¹ An important condition laid down by the king was that the monks should follow the

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.* No. 3156.

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.* Nos. 3104, 3118. The "*Summa Processus in causa Ecclesiae Otthoniensis sancti Canuti ordinis s. Benedicti*", which is found in two manuscripts in the Royal Library, Copenhagen, Gml. kgl. Sml. 2491 4to and 1129 fol., is not an independent account but a résumé of the legal documents.

¹⁵⁸ *S.R.D.* VIII, 475-6.

¹⁵⁹ *APD* IV, Nos. 3186, 3202.

¹⁶⁰ *S.R.D.* VIII, 476-8.

¹⁶¹ *APD* IV, No. 3211.

Rule of St Benedict to the letter. If they were negligent in this respect the king would have the right to expel them and replace them with Benedictines of the Strict Observance.¹⁶² It was now impossible to resist reform, and no doubt the experience of the last fourteen years had been chastening. In 1492 Odense joined the Bursfeld congregation.¹⁶³ Under the stricter régime the monks served St Knud's until the Reformation.

¹⁶² *S.R.D.* VIII, 476-8.

¹⁶³ 'Et Bidrag til Dansk Klosterhistorie', 87-8.

"LAPLAND SORCERERS"

By R. I. PAGE

MY starting point is Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*, Act IV, scene iii. Antipholus of Syracuse is in Ephesus for the first time in his life. The Ephesians mistake him for his twin brother (also called Antipholus) of whose existence he is unaware since the two were parted as babies. As a result, complete strangers greet him by name, a woman he has never seen before claims him as husband, a goldsmith gives him a chain for which he will take no payment, saying that Antipholus has ordered it, and so on. As a good Shakespearean hero, Antipholus has no alternative but to take refuge in soliloquy.

"There's not a man I meet but doth salute me
As if I were their well-acquainted friend,
And every one doth call me by my name:
Some tender money to me, some invite me,
Some other give me thanks for kindnesses . . ."

So the list of strange occurrences continues, ending with:

"Sure these are but imaginary wiles,
And Lapland sorcerers inhabit here."

The last line is immediately striking to anyone who knows the prose literature of mediaeval Scandinavia, for Lapland sorcerers play a considerable part in it. The people called *Finnar* commonly appear in the rôle of magicians. I am not concerned here with the nationality of these people, whether they were or were not Lapps.¹ The sagas show that they dwelt in the mountainous areas

¹ There is some disagreement about this. Cleasby-Vigfusson translates *Finnar* as "the Finns and Lapps". Fritzner agrees. Zoëga claims that they are "not identical with the modern Lapps or Finns". H. Koht ("Var 'Finnane' alltid Finnar?", *Maal og Minne* (1923), 161-75) argues that *Finnar* came to mean "magician", without distinction of race, because of the eminence of the *Finnr* nation in that field. For an up-to-date discussion see *Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for nordisk Middelalder* IV (1959), under *Finnar*.

of northern Norway, bounded on north, east and west by the ocean,² so even if they were not Lapps, they may fairly be called Lapland sorcerers.

Their exploits are often recorded in the *Íslendinga sögur* and *konunga sögur*. In *Vatnsdæla saga* (and in a somewhat variant version in *Landnámabók*), for example, Ingimundr Þorsteinsson speaks with a wise woman described as *Finna ein fjölkunnig*, who is telling the fortunes of the company at a feast. She tells him he is to travel to Iceland, which surprises Ingimundr because that is one land he has resolved never to visit. Later he finds he has lost a prized amulet with the image or mark of Freyr on it, and is told it has made its way to Iceland and is hidden at the place he must settle. Three *Finnar* are employed to find it. They go to Iceland in spirit. The journey takes three days, during which time they live apart, giving instructions that their names are not to be spoken. Then they reappear, complaining of the difficulty of the imposed task, but having identified the spot where the amulet lies.³ *Ágrip* tells of Haraldr hárfagri's son, Rognvaldr or Ragnarr, by a Lapp woman called Snjófríðr, *dóttir Svása finnkonungs*. He took after his mother, and was called *seiðmaðr*, *þat er spámaðr*.⁴ *Heimskringla* tells that Snjófríðr died, but her body did not decay over a period of three years, while Haraldr, distracted, watched over her, leaving his kingdom to take care of itself.⁵ From the same source we learn that Gunnhildr, who later married Eiríkr blóðøx, studied sorcery with two *Finnar* who practised a number of useful arts — they hit whatever they aimed at, and could kill at a glance.⁶ Presumably because of her education Gunnhildr has an unsavoury reputation in the sagas: she

² *Egils saga*, 36. Saga references are to the *Íslensk Fornrit* texts unless otherwise stated; the numbers refer to pages.

³ *Vatnsdæla saga*, 29, 33-6. See further D. Strömbäck, *Sejd: Textstudier i nordisk Religionshistoria* (1935), 67 ff.

⁴ Finnur Jónsson, *Ágrip af Nóregs konunga sögum* (Altnordische Sagabibliothek 18, 1929), 3.

⁵ *Haralds saga ins hárfagra*, 126-7.

⁶ *ibid.*, 135-6.

is suspected of being the shape-shifter who, in the form of a swallow, twittered outside Egill's window at York, and almost stopped him composing the poem which was to save his life. The early Norwegian laws too show the *Finnar* in a bad light. Christians are forbidden to consult them for magical purposes, or to put trust *á finna eða fordæðor*.⁷

Of course, in the non-historical sagas the *Finnar* play a considerable part. In *Hrólfs saga kraka* Hvít, daughter of the Lapp king, turns her stepson Björn into a bear, so causing his death.⁸ Örvar-Oddr, in his saga, is given three magic arrows which ultimately came from Gusir, king of the *Finnar*.⁹ They fly back to the bowstring of their own accord, and hit whatever they are aimed at. In *Sturlaugs saga starfsama* a *Finnr* is chosen to do battle with the sinister Svipuðr. After the fight has gone on for a time without result the two contestants vanish, and their places are taken by two dogs. These fight also without result, until they in turn disappear and are replaced by two eagles. One eagle tears the other to pieces and then flies off, leaving the onlookers undecided as to which of the original contestants has won.¹⁰ In *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinsonar* the hero does battle against two kings of the *Finnar*. One, Flóki, can shoot three arrows simultaneously, each hitting its mark. Hálfðanr chops off his hand. It flies into the air, whereupon Flóki holds up the stump, the hand alights on it and becomes at once united to it. Later Hálfðanr cuts at Flóki with his sword. Flóki blows against it and the sword is twitched from Hálfðanr's hand. Meanwhile, Flóki's brother king, Fiðr, has turned into a walrus, and crushed fifteen men beneath him.¹¹

⁷ R. Keyser and P. A. Munch, *Norges gamle Love indtil 1387 I* (1846), 350-1, 389.

⁸ Finnur Jónsson, *Hrólfs saga kraka og Bjarkarímur* (1904), 50.

⁹ R. C. Boer, *Örvar-Odds saga* (Altnordische Saga-bibliothek 2, 1892), 14.

¹⁰ Guðni Jónsson, *Fornaldar sögur Norðurlanda* (1950), III 127-8.

¹¹ F. R. Schröder, *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinsonar* (Altnordische Saga-bibliothek 15, 1917), 127-8.

Tales of Lapland sorcerers were not confined to *mediaeval* Scandinavia. They also formed part of later folk-lore in both Norway and Sweden. There existed, for example, a belief in what is called *finnskot* or *lappskot*, the power of the inhabitants of Finnmark to harm cattle far to their south by shooting at them small projectiles (*finnkula*) carried by the wind.¹² Hence the recorded prayer: *For Nordenvind og Finskud bevar os milde Herre Gud*. Thus the Scandinavian farmer explained the sudden onset of cattle diseases whose symptoms included lumps or swellings under the skin. A remedy against attack of this kind was to throw a knife into the wind, for this would kill the sender of the shot. In Österbotten a sudden whirlwind was called *lappkvidan* or *lappilin*, presumably controlled by Lapps. Belief in the magical powers of the *Finnar* spread overseas, at any rate to the Orkneys. Orkney folk-lore records semi-amphibious creatures called Fin-folk or Fin-men. H. Marwick connects them with the *Finnar*, with the cautious comment, "These Fin-men were regarded in Orkney as somewhat supernatural beings."¹³ As a literary figure the Lapland sorcerer with his baleful influence is not confined to the mediaeval phase of Scandinavian writing. He appears in modern texts: in, for example, Jonas Lie's folk-type tale *Jo i Sjøholmene* (in the first series of *Trold*), and as a background figure of popular suspicion in the same writer's *Finneblod* (in *Fortællinger og Skildringer fra Norge*). More recently Knut Hamsun has suggested the mystery and perhaps the evil which gather round the figure of the wandering Lapp. For example, a Lapp is the apparent cause of the first dramatic incident of *Markens Grøde*. Inger, the hare-lipped wife of the peasant Isak, is with child. The Lapp, Os-Anders, comes to her house, apparently sent by

¹² N. Lid, 'Um finnskot og alvskot', *Maal og Minne* (1921), 39; also the same writer's *Folketru* (1935), 29.

¹³ H. Marwick, *The Orkney Norn* (1929), 41. There is, of course, the popular etymology that these people are called Fin-folk "because they wear fins", W. T. Dennison, *Orkney Folklore and Traditions* (1961), 17.

a rival. He carries something in a sack. Inger catches sight of what it is, breaks into a sob and sinks to the threshold. It is a hare. Sure enough, when Inger's girl-child is born, it too has a hare-lip. She kills it.

Clearly readers of Scandinavian literature, mediaeval or modern, are not surprised by the phrase "Lapland sorcerers". What is surprising is Shakespeare's use of it. Where did he get it from? Shakespeare had small Latin and less Greek, and enough of the fashionable vernaculars to use them in his plays. But his knowledge of Old Norse was surely slight. However, early Scandinavian reports of Lapland sorcerers were not kept in the decent obscurity of an unfashionable dead language. Several mediaeval Latin accounts, deriving directly or ultimately from Scandinavia, survive. Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*, completed between 1073 and 1075, describes Norwegian Christianity, admitting that it does not exist among those:

qui trans arctoam plagam circa oceanum remoti sunt. Eos adhuc fertur magicis artibus sive incantationibus in tantum praevalere, ut se scire fateantur, quid a singulis in toto orbe geratur. Tunc etiam potenti murmure verborum grandia cetæ maris in litora trahunt, et alia multa, quae de maleficis in scriptura leguntur, omnia illis ex usu facilia sunt.¹⁴

Book IV of Adam's history was first printed in E. Lindenbruch's edition of 1595, so Shakespeare, at the date of *The Comedy of Errors*, could scarcely have known its contents, at least directly. The *Historia Norwegiae*, a text of unknown provenance written about A.D. 1200, has a chapter *de Finnis*, which describes their way of life and includes an account of their magical practices.

Sunt namque quidam ex ipsis, qui quasi prophetae a stolido vulgo venerantur, quoniam per immundum spiritum, quem gandum vocitant, multis multa praesagia ut eveniunt quandoque percunctati praedicent.¹⁵

Gandum is clearly ON *gandr*, a word of varying meaning,

¹⁴ G. H. Pertz, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores VII* (1846), 382.

¹⁵ G. Storm, *Monumenta Historica Norvegiae* (1880), 85.

usually connected with the sorceries of the *Finnar*. The only manuscript of the *Historia*, a fifteenth-century one from the Orkneys, remained unpublished until its discovery in Scotland in the mid-nineteenth century, so again Shakespeare would not have had access to its material. The Lapland sorcerers were not in the sources of Shakespeare's plot. Ephesus was a noted centre of witchcraft from New Testament times,¹⁶ and the reference to Lapland is Shakespeare's addition. Where did it come from?

An approach to this problem is suggested by the *New English Dictionary*. That work is inconsistent in its treatment of geographical names, but its entry under *Lapland* illustrates the word both as attributive adjective and proper noun. For the first recorded appearance of *Lapland* it quotes (with the date *c.* 1590) Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, I i, "Like . . . Lapland Gyants, trotting by our sides". *NED* notes that Lapland is "the fabled home of witches and magicians". The extensive list of quotations given from the seventeenth century consists mainly of references to magic, principally that of controlling the winds, though E. Seaton's more detailed examination of the material from that century shows the wider range of sorcery attributed to the Lapps — shape-shifting, moving objects across great distances, employment of familiars, shooting of *lappskot*, and so on.¹⁷ The *Faustus* reference to Lapland can be little earlier than that in *The Comedy of Errors*. Indeed, it may even be later, for neither play can be precisely dated.¹⁸

The derivatives of *Lapland* are given widely differing dates in *NED*: *Lappian* 1599, *Lapponian* 1607, *Laplender*

¹⁶ R. A. Foakes, *The Comedy of Errors* (1962), 113-15; G. Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, I (1957), 10.

¹⁷ E. Seaton, *Literary Relations of England and Scandinavia in the Seventeenth Century* (1935), 275 ff.

¹⁸ *Doctor Faustus* is usually thought to be earlier than *The Comedy of Errors*, but for discussions of the dates of the plays which allow possible precedence to Shakespeare's comedy see W. W. Greg, *Marlowe's Doctor Faustus 1604-1616* (1950), 5-10, and Foakes, *Comedy of Errors*, xvi-xxiii.

1637, *Lapp* 1859, *Lappish* 1875, *Lapponic* 1890. Several of these can be antedated, and the *NED* date for the commonest, *Lapp*, is pure fantasy. *Lapland* can easily be put back a single year by reference to the title-page of the 1589 edition of R. Hakluyt's *The Principall Navigations, Voiages and Discoveries of the English Nation* . . . , which names Lapland along with Srikfinia (*sic*), Corelia and the Bay of St Nicholas. This suggests a second approach to the problem, through the literature of the discoveries of the Elizabethan age, the journeys into Russia from bases on the White Sea, and the chartering of the Muscovy Company in 1555.

This travel literature, and the maps which accompany it, are a rich source of material for antedating *NED*.¹⁹ In the case of the word *Lapland* there are sufficient examples of its appearance before 1590. On the *Generall Carde . . . of the Sea Coastes of Europa . . .* in Anthony Ashley's translation of *The Mariners Mirrour* (undated, but usually assigned to 1588) *Lapland* is the name given to the northern part of Finland, divided by a channel from *Finmarken*. G. Best's map in *A True Discourse of the Late Voyages of Discoverie* (London, 1578) marks *Lapland* to the north of Norway. However, *Lapland* is not the only name for this country. When Hakluyt is writing on his own account he calls it *Lapland*: when he is quoting earlier writers, right back to Willoughby's diary of 1553, he uses a variety of other terms. Thus, early sources give such alternative forms as *Lap(p)ia*, *Lapponia*, *Laponie*, *Lappa* (and *Finlappia* sometimes for an adjacent area in north Russia), while the people are variously

¹⁹ For instance, *NED*'s first example of *tundra* is dated 1841: but G. Fletcher's *Of the Russe Common Wealth . . .* (London, 1591), fos. 76v-77r, has the passage, "The whole countrey in a manner is eyther lakes, or mountaines, which towardes the Sea side are called *Tondro*, because they are all of hard and craggy rocke" (reprinted in E. A. Bond, *Russia at the Close of the Sixteenth Century* (1856), 100). A reference, dated 1574, to hides "callid laishe hides", quoted in T. S. Willan, *The Early History of the Russia Company, 1553-1603* (1956), 135, either antedates *NED*'s *losh* (1583) or, less likely, gives a sixteenth-century reference for *NED*'s *lasch*, recorded there only in a fifteenth-century example.

called *Lap(p)ians*, *Lappones*, *Lappies*. Anthony Jenkinson's map of 1562 shows *Lappia* to be Finno-Russian Lapland, the Norwegian and Swedish territory being called *Biarmia*.²⁰ Other names include the curious *Pilapilanter* of Roger Barlow's *A Brief Summe of Geographie*, written in 1540-1.²¹ This name is taken from Barlow's Spanish original, but there are parallel forms in early Danish maps.²² Michael Lock, writing in 1575, says that "The countrie of Russia stretcheth to the North Sea, where the sea-coast extendeth from the Lappe estwards to Dwena".²³ This is presumably a case of the name of the people being used for the territory, and is the first example I have found of the word *Lapp* in English.

The records of the Muscovy Company were destroyed in the Great Fire of London, but a good deal of original material concerning the venture survives. Some of this, including accounts of the pioneer exploration of Willoughby and Chancellor and of later travels by such people as Richard Johnson, Stephen Burrough and Anthony Jenkinson, is preserved in Hakluyt. Other sources are official documents — examinations of the High Court of Admiralty, State Papers on foreign affairs, and the like —, private records, and independent contemporary publications. Many of these give quite detailed descriptions of the inhabitants of Lapland, the *Laplanners* as they are called at least as early as 1609.²⁴ We read of their material condition, their appalling poverty, the goods they trade in, the tribute they pay the kings of Denmark and Sweden and the Russian emperor, but there is seldom mention of their magical skills. This contrasts with the treatment of the Samoyeds farther to the east. They are rarely spoken of without a discourse, often lengthy and

²⁰ E. D. Morgan and C. H. Coote, *Early Voyages and Travels to Russia and Persia* (1886), cxx.

²¹ E. G. R. Taylor, *A Brief Summe of Geographie* by Roger Barlow (1932), 45.

²² F. Nansen, *In Northern Mists* (1911), I 226 and refs.

²³ Bond, *op. cit.*, viii.

²⁴ W. Phillip, *A True and Perfect Description of Three Voyages . . .*, reprinted in C. T. Beke, *A True Description of Three Voyages by the North-East . . .* (1853), 243.

detailed, on their evil, idolatrous and improper practices. The magical powers of the Lapps, at least those of Russia, did not strike the Elizabethan traveller and merchant. I know only one exception to this. In 1588 Dr Giles Fletcher, civil servant and uncle of the dramatist John Fletcher, went on an embassy to the Russian court. He later wrote an account of the country and people so unflattering as to make the Muscovy Company take steps to suppress it, for they feared its effect on their trade. In his 1589 edition Hakluyt mentions the existence of Fletcher's account, but it was not published until 1591, then suppressed on the petition of the Muscovy Company,²⁵ to reappear in abridged form (but with the Lapp material) in Hakluyt's 1598-1600 edition and again (also with the Lapp passage) in *Purchas his Pilgrimes* in 1625. In a chapter "Of the Permians Samoites, and Lappes", Fletcher writes, "The opinion is that they were first termed *Lappes* of their briefe and short speach" To this popular etymology, which presumably related *Lapp* to the German dialectal *lappe*, *lapp*, NHG *laffe*, glossed by Grimm as *homo stolidus*, *ineptus*, I shall return later. Fletcher continues,

For practise of witchcraft and sorcery, they passe all nations in the world. Though for the enchaunting of shippes that saile along their coast (as I haue heard it reported) and their giuing of winds good to their friends, and contrary to other .
by tying of certein knots vpon a rope is a very fable.²⁶

It is strange that the only early traveller to mention Lapp magic should reject the belief — that they trafficked with the winds — that was to become so popular in the next century. Many later writers claiming first-hand knowledge of the Lapps confirm them as sorcerers. To take two at random. John Scheffer published his *Lapponia* in Frank-

²⁵ Both Bond, *op. cit.*, cxxii, and *DNB*, under *Fletcher*, describe the book as "quickly suppressed". However, a number of copies escaped, for *STC* lists five, and D. Ramage, *A Finding-list of English Books to 1640 in Libraries in the British Isles* (1958), a sixth. On the basis of figures available for other sixteenth-century publications D. Hamer estimates (in a letter to the author) that "at least a hundred copies must have been sold".

²⁶ Fletcher, *op. cit.*, fo. 77.

furt in 1673, and the following year an English translation was published at Oxford under the title *The History of Lapland*. This has a chapter "Of the magicall Ceremonies of the Laplanders" in which Scheffer quotes the common opinion that this people is "addicted to magic". He lists the practices attributed to them and describes different sorts of magical drum that he has seen. He tells how the Lapps predict success in hunting, heal the sick, propel magical darts, shoot at their enemies over great distances and send against them familiars in the form of flies, etc. A. C. Brooke's *A Winter in Lapland and Sweden* (1827) states, "Formerly witchcraft was exercised to a great degree among them", and tells of the use of magical drums to accompany incantations and ceremonies.²⁷ The work of modern Lappologists has confirmed the strong element of shamanism in Lapp religion.²⁸

It is unlikely that Shakespeare's reference to Lapland sorcerers derives from published travellers' tales. For the most part, as has been seen, these ignore Lapp magic, while Fletcher, though recording it, suggests that he does so partly from accounts already current in England. Nor do pre-1590 English treatises on witchcraft — as far as I have read them — mention Lapland as a haunt of sorcerers. Where, then, did Shakespeare get his knowledge of Lapland magic from? The answer probably is: from the works of certain late mediaeval and early modern geographers.

The earliest references that I have found in English to Lapland sorcerers (though Lapland is not named in them) are from the fourteenth century. In 1387 John of Trevisa completed his translation of Ranulph Higden's *Polychronicon*, written in the first half of the same century. Trevisa's text, following the original very closely at this point, gives the following account of *Wyntlandya*:

²⁷ *op. cit.*, 160.

²⁸ See, for example, B. Collinder, *The Lapps* (1949), 146-53.

Wyntlandya, þat ilond, is by west Denmark, and is a barayne lond and of men mysbyleued; þei worschipped mawmetrie, and selleþ wynd to schipmen, þat seilleþ to hire hauenes, as it were i-closed vnder knottis of prede; and as þe knottes beep vnknette, þe wynde wexeþ at her owne wille.²⁹

In 1398 Trevisa finished a translation of a thirteenth-century compendium, the *De Proprietatibus Rerum* of Bartholomaeus Anglicus. Book XV, chapter 172, "Of Wynlandia", has a similar description:

Vvinlandia is a countrey besydes the mountaynes of Norway toward the easte, and stretcheth vppon the clyfe of ocean: . . . The men of that countrey ben strange and some what wyld and fiers: and they occupien them selfe with wytchecraft. And so to men that saylle by their costes, and also to men that abyde with theym/for defawte of wynde, they proffre wynde to saylynge/and so they selle wynde. They vse to make a clewe of threde, and they make dyuers knottes to be knytte therin. And then they commaunde to drawe oute of the clewe vnto three knottes or mo/or less/as they woll haue the wynde more softe or stronge. And for theyr mysbyleue fendes moue the ayre and areyse stronge tempeste of softe, as he draweth of the glewe more or lesse knottes.³⁰

Trevisa's version of the *Polychronicon* was popular throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It was printed by Caxton in a modernised text in 1482, and by Wynkyn de Worde in 1495. Another edition followed in 1527, and the text was a source of quotations right through the sixteenth century. The translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus's book was printed (with omissions) by de Worde in 1495, in full in 1535, and again, entitled *Batman vppon Bartholome, his Booke De Proprietatibus Rerum*, with Stephen Bateman's comments and additions in 1582. This last book Shakespeare is said to have known. Yet all these have, instead of *Lapland*, the name *Wyn(t)landia*, perhaps for *Finlandia*, possibly influenced by ON *Vindland* and *Vinland*. There seems no connection with the Lapps by name until the mid-sixteenth century, when the works of a group of

²⁹ C. Babington, *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden Monachi Cestrensis* (1865-86), I 323.

³⁰ *Bartholomeus de Proprietatibus Rerum* (London, 1535), fo. ccxxviii r.

geographers and historians, writing in Latin, popularised this material throughout Europe.

In 1532 the Bavarian geographer Jacob Ziegler published in Strassburg a collection of essays on different parts of the world. One of them, *Schondia*, deals with Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland, and the lands politically attached to them: Iceland, Greenland, the Faroes and Shetland. In a preface Ziegler records his sources, a group of Norwegian and Swedish bishops whom he had met in Rome, where they were living at the time of the election of a successor to Pope Adrian VI in 1523. Since his sources were oral and presumably firsthand, Ziegler forms the first link in a chain of related accounts. For his description of the *Lapones* Ziegler seems to have been indebted to *Ioannes Gothum Episcopus* (called in the preface *Ioannes Magnus Vpsaliensis*), that is, Iohannes Magnus, archbishop of Uppsala, brother of the more famous Olaus Magnus, but himself an amateur of Scandinavian antiquities. The account of the *Lapones* gives an etymology for their name to which that of Giles Fletcher seems related, *Vocant uero Germani Lapones, eos qui parum idonea rei præsenti dicunt et faciunt*.³¹ Ziegler tells of the appearance, education, clothing, way of living, housing, trading and fishing of the Lapps, their culture of the reindeer, and ends with details of their idolatrous practices, which leads naturally to an account of Lapp witchcraft: *incantatores sunt perefficates*. He tells how they tie three magical knots on a thong. If one is loosed there arise mild breezes, if two brisker winds, if three an open storm. The Lapps also make small leaden darts, which they shoot over great distances. The enemy they strike dies of a cancerous disease within three days.

Ziegler's lead was followed in 1544 by the Rhinelander, Sebastian Muenster, who published in Basel the first edition of his *Cosmographiae Universalis Libri Sex*. This

³¹ J. Ziegler, *Quae intus continentur . . . Schondia . . .* (Argentorati, 1532), fo. xciii r.

work, probably the most influential of the day in its field, was to go through several editions within a few years. Muenster's map shows *Lappn̄land* as Finno-Russian Lapland, divided by a river from *Finmarc*. Book IV has a chapter, "Laponia", giving a detailed account of the people which owes much to Ziegler, a debt which Muenster acknowledges elsewhere. While not a word-for-word transcription, it follows Ziegler's original closely, gives the same etymology for *Laponia* and a similar account of Lapp customs. Muenster deals more cautiously with the sorcery. *Dicuntur præterea incantatores esse perefficaes*, he says, putting the responsibility presumably on Ziegler, and to the report that the Lapps practise the magical arts he adds, *quod alij negant*.³²

Olaus Magnus, brother and successor as archbishop of Uppsala to Ziegler's informant Iohannes, issued his *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* in Rome in 1555. The work proved popular, and soon passed through several editions in different European towns, the editions differing slightly in pagination and chapter numbering. In Book III Olaus Magnus has several chapters on northern magic, some connected specifically with the Lapps, some not. Chapter 16 of the first edition is entitled *De Magis, et maleficis Finnorum* (clearly referring to our *Finnar*, since he equates *Finlandia* with *Lapponia*). He tells how the *Finni* sell winds, using three knots to control their strength, and how this unhappy people is misled by a belief in second sight. In the following chapter, *De magicis instrumentis Bothniæ*, he describes other magical practices: shape-shifting, blunting swords, killing by means of *lappskot*, etc. Olaus Magnus uses material from several sources, but his wording here, though often different from that of Ziegler and Muenster, occasionally echoes theirs closely enough to make it clear that he either took material from or shared a source with them. Of course, he could have got the same information from his

³² S. Muenster, *Cosmographiae Universalis Lib. VI* . . . (Basileæ, 1552), 849.

brother Iohannes, but the closeness of wording of part of the passage on Lapp magic suggests that he derived it from a written source, presumably either Ziegler or Muenster, with alterations to suit his more ecclesiastical temperament.

Neither the *Short Title Catalogue* nor Ramage record a translation of Olaus Magnus's history into English before 1640. The first English version seems to be that of 1658, but the book was certainly popular early on the Continent, appearing in French in 1561, Dutch in 1562, Italian in 1561 and 1565, German in 1567, while there were numerous editions, both complete and abridged, in Latin. Muenster also was not translated into English in the sixteenth century, though three abridgments of his work appeared, none containing the material on Lapp magic.³³ Ziegler's *Schondia* was extensively used, with acknowledgment, in R. Eden's *The Decades of the Newe Worlde or West India . . .* (London, 1555). This travel book inspired by the new discoveries mainly west across the seas also contains a section "Of the north regions . . .", in which Scandinavia is described on the authority of *Ziglerus*. Eden's text is more a close paraphrase than a translation. Dealing with the Greenlanders he says, "it is sayde that they (as also the people of Laponia) doo rayse tempestes on the sea with magical inchauntmentes, and brynge such shyppes into daungeour as they intende to spoile . . ." Opposite the marginal note "Lapponia and Gronlande" he adds, "the Lapones consent with them in the lyke magical practises and doo neyther imbrase the Christian religion nor refuse it" Finally, in a section headed "Laponia", defined as "beinge thextreme lande of Scondia knowen towarde the north pole", he states, in a close translation of Ziegler and with a reference to the

³³ R. Eden, *A Treatyse of the Newe India . . .* (London, 1553), and *A Brief Collection and Compendious Extract of Straunge and Memorable Thinges, gathered oute of the Cosmographie of S. Munster* (London, 1572); G. North, *The Description of Swedland, Gotland and Finland . . . chiefly out of S. Mounster* (London, 1561).

authority of "John a bysshoppe of Gothlande", "They are furthermore experte inchaunters. They tye three knottes on a stryng hangyng at a whippe . . .", and so on through the traditional account of Lapp sorcery.³⁴

This is the first English reference I have found to the sorcerers of Lapland, by name. It was repeated in R. Willes's augmented edition of Eden's work, *The History of Trauayle* . . . (London, 1577). Presumably Fletcher referred to the Ziegler-Muenster-Olaus Magnus-Eden account when he wrote, "the enchaunting of shippes that saile along their coast (as I haue heard it reported)" Fletcher's etymology, "they were first termed *Lappes* of their brieft and short speach", depends on a connection with German *lappe* (which leads to the Ziegler-Muenster reference to the Germans) and ultimately on Ziegler's specific statement about *eos qui parum idonea rei praesentī dicunt* Fletcher did not get this from Eden's paraphrase, for Eden blurs the point about briefness of speech (which connects Ziegler and Fletcher at this point) in the translation, "For the Germaines, caule all suche Laponas, as are simple or vnapt to thynges". Olaus Magnus omits the etymology, so Fletcher presumably consulted either Ziegler or Muenster.

Thus the Elizabethans knew of Lappia, Laponia and at last Lapland through the reports of travellers from the time of the first English exploration of the area in the Willoughby-Chancellor voyage, through the subsequent trade in fish, oil, tallow, wax, hemp and numerous other commodities, and through the maintenance of supply stations at Vardø and elsewhere on the Norwegian coast. They knew of the sorcerers of Lapland from the works of geographers, their translators and adaptors, from the first half of the sixteenth century onwards. Yet the Lapland sorcerer was not a source of literary inspiration until the 1590s, after which he continued a popular figure for over a century. Perhaps the increased importance of the

³⁴ *op. cit.*, fos. 268r-272v.

northern sea route to Russia in the 1580s,³⁵ and the diplomatic activity which involved embassies in both directions between the English and Muscovite courts, together with the proposed marriage of the Czar to Lady Mary Hastings, led to an increased interest in the northern Russian ports, and so in the Lapps. Shakespeare responded to a fashionable interest in Russia with the Muscovite masque of *Love's Labour's Lost*.³⁶ Perhaps the "Lapland sorcerers" of *The Comedy of Errors* reflect the same interest.

The immediate source of Shakespeare's phrase is probably Eden. It is well known that, at some time or other, Shakespeare read either *The Decades of the Newe Worlde* or *The History of Trauayle*, for, when late in his working life he wrote *The Tempest*, he used Eden's material. Eden recounts the story of Magellan's voyage down the American coast to the straits which now bear his name. He captured two giant natives by a trick, and "when they sawe how they were deceaued they rored lyke bulles and cryed vppon theyr greate deuyll *Setebos* to helpe them" If, as is usually assumed, Shakespeare took *Setebos* from Eden, and used it as the name of Caliban's dam's god who is powerless against Prospero's art,³⁷ he may also have used Eden's account of Lapp magic for the earlier play.

Finally, two excursions into the Lapland of the 1590s. Commentators have worried over Marlowe's "Lapland Gyants". The phrase "is curious, considering the diminutive size of the Lapps", and Marlowe is writing "contrary to fact"³⁸ Yet it was a commonplace that in

³⁵ Willan, *op. cit.*, 157 ff.

³⁶ R. David, *Love's Labour's Lost* (fifth edition, 1956), xxx-xxxi.

³⁷ Richard Farmer was the first to point this out. Malone printed Farmer's note in his first edition of Shakespeare's works, and in his second (published posthumously) added the observation that several of the names of characters in *The Tempest* may derive from Eden's book. The passage in question is Eden, *Decades*, fo. 219v.

³⁸ E. G. Sugden, *A Topographical Dictionary to the Works of Shakespeare and his Fellow Dramatists* (1925), 299; F. S. Boas, *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* (1932), 64.

early times northern Scandinavia was peopled by giants. To take a single example, Olaus Magnus entitled the fifth book of his *Historia* "De Gigantibvs", and in several places refers to the *Gigantes septentrionales*. As evidence of their former existence in the extreme north, specifically in *Finmarchia*, *Biarmia*, *Scricfinnia*, *Helsingia*, he cites, quoting from Saxo Grammaticus, the colossal stone monuments of those areas, which could not have been made by men of human size. More curious than Marlowe's is the allusion to Lapland in Nashe's *The Terrors of the Night or, a Discourse of Apparitions*, published in 1594. Nashe turns from the subject of dreams to that of the powers of darkness in general. He speaks of Iceland and the spirits, resembling the dead in form, which haunt that dark country, conversing with the inhabitants as though they were alive. Near Hekla are heard dreadful yells and groans, which make some people suspect the volcano to be the entrance to Hell. Winds are easily bought and sold — and Nashe uses the phrase "Three knots in a thred", showing he refers to the Lapland material. He then describes the glaciers in Iceland, diverging to an account of the bottomless lake *Vether* and the deafening crack made by its melting ice at the thaw. Over the ice-bound surface no bird can fly, for it immediately freezes to death, nor can any man stand on its ice. Finally, Nashe relates all this material to "*Island . . . one of the chiefe kingdomes of the night*".³⁹ This passage, too, disturbs the commentators, who cannot understand how the (Lapland) sorcerers with their three knots got to Iceland, and how lake Vättern got there too. The source is probably Olaus Magnus's *Historia*, though much confused and garbled. His chapters on Scandinavian witchcraft include one *De Mago ligato*, about a magician bound by enchantment on an island in lake Vättern. An admirable wood-cut with the lake named WETERLACVS may have caught Nashe's eye. After describing the magician's plight this chapter

³⁹ R. B. McKerrow, *The Works of Thomas Nashe* (reprinted, 1958), 359-60.

compares the situation of his captivity to the description of the *Plutonium* in Strabo's *Geographica*:

Huic propositum est vallum quadratum ambitu fere semiuigero: quod nebulosa, et crassa caligine plenum est, vt vix solum discerni possit ad septum appropinquantibus. Aer innoxius est, purus ab illa caligine in tranquillitate ventorum: nam caligo intra ambitum manet. Si verò animal introrsum progrediatur, statim moritur Passeres etiam subito moriuntur.

The last sentence may be the source of Nashe's "incomprehensible wonders of the bottomlesse Lake *Vether*, ouer which no fowle flies but is frozen to death". Olaus Magnus's chapter has a cross-reference to an earlier account of the lake, in book I, 27 (the volume is admirably indexed), which describes the noise made by the thawing ice. Shortly after, in book II, 2 and 3, Magnus speaks of the volcanoes of Iceland (with a wood-cut showing *Mons Hekla*), adding, *Ibique locus esse creditur pœne, expiationisque sordidarum animarum*. He then tells of the spirits who take on themselves the forms of the dead, *vt tanquam viuentes accipiantur ab ignaris mortis illorum*. The elements of Nashe's Iceland, described "as I haue read and heard", can thus be easily found in Olaus Magnus's *Historia*. It is likely that Nashe's description resulted from a hasty reading of, or careless note-taking from Olaus Magnus's work, and he thus joins Shakespeare and Marlowe as another of the writers of the early 1590s to find inspiration in the minor, transient, but interesting literary theme of Lapland and its sorcerers.

SCANDINAVICA
FOR THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY COMMON
READER

BY SUSIE I. TUCKER

WHEN we consider the appeal of the classics to the eighteenth-century scholar and of the Latin lands to the traveller on the conventional Grand Tour, it is also interesting to see what sort of knowledge about Scandinavia was available to the educated non-specialist reader who gained his general knowledge from reading cultural magazines.

We have long recognised that an introduction to Norse mythology, legend and poetry, was one of the springs of the Romantic movement¹ and a study of the northern languages one of the foundations of comparative philology. The eighteenth century began to see the truth of the latter proposition though its critics could hardly foresee the former. Internationally, the North was always to be reckoned with, for it was still playing power-politics. Milton, in his sonnet to Cyriack Skinner, could plead with his friend to forget what the Swedes intended, and his very coupling of Sweden with France shows that Sweden was a major power, as she still was in the next century. So Dr Johnson could choose Charles XII of Sweden as a glaring example of the Vanity of Human Wishes; and in 1774, fifty-six years after the King's 'dubious' death, young Mr Nathaniel Wraxall² visited the tombs of Gustavus Adolphus and Charles XII and made it his business to enquire into the tradition.

¹ F. E. Farley, *Scandinavian Influences in the English Romantic Movement* (Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature, Vol. IX, for Harvard University, 1903). I have tried to avoid repeating comments made in this work, however independently arrived at.

² N. Wraxall, Junior, *A Tour through some of the Northern Parts of Europe* (third edition corrected, 1776), 106-11.

Despite Voltaire's opposite belief, he tells us, he was converted to the view that Charles "was put to death by those about him, and did not fall by a shot from the walls of Fredericshall as is commonly supposed".

But what of the general background of knowledge and interest? For this, we may look at the information offered by *The Gentleman's Magazine*, *The Monthly Review* and *The Critical Review*.

In 1758, the *Monthly*³ devoted a long article to *The Natural History of Iceland*, "translated from the Danish original of Mr N. Horrebow". The *Review* welcomed the book, because "Few islands in the known world have been more talked of, and yet less known, than Iceland: notwithstanding its inhabitants were celebrated for their learning, among the ancient inhabitants of the North, and some of their poems, then considered masterpieces, are still preserved in the library of the University of Upsal."

However, it was the natural curiosities of that "land of ice and fire" that impressed the more southerly reader — "Vulcanoes on the borders of the Frozen Zone"! The *Review* complains that the public desire for a "genuine and particular account of Iceland" has been thwarted by previous accounts that were both defective and false. Horrebow had lived in Iceland for two years and done his work in a scientific spirit — he has determined the exact latitude of Bessested⁴ (the Governor's residence), gives dimensions, and discusses geological details of soils and mountains. The *Review* quotes passages describing the heaths and plains of the interior, the pasturage and lakes, the variety of fine fish, the 'Jokeler',⁵ the crevasses (not yet so named) in the ice-fields. Then follows an account of the depopulation

³ *Monthly Review* XVIII (1758), 193 ff.

⁴ Proper names naturally occur in their Danish forms.

⁵ Cf. "A Jokul is a mountain continually covered with snow lying under another mountain that rises higher, and is not covered with snow" (*The Gentleman's Magazine* XXVIII, 23).

caused by the plague of the fourteenth century and the more recent smallpox. The increasingly urbanised Englishman must have been surprised to read that trading 'towns' consisted of three or four dwelling-houses besides the shop, warehouse and kitchen. The ordinary turf house is described in its primitive simplicity — the half-dozen rooms, the skin or bladder in the windows instead of glass, the one outer door. "When the walls are green, they appear like so many hillocks."

Horses were small, sheep plentiful, along with goats and cattle. People laid in smoked meat for winter use and made saltless butter, and cheese. Other food was mainly milk and whey. It was mere calumny to accuse the Icelanders of addiction to brandy. They were robust up to about fifty, but liable to consumption, fevers and leprosy.

Fishing, especially for cod, was the principal employment, and details are given of the still familiar practice of drying the fish on the beach. There was no agriculture.

The reader learns how eiderdown was collected and how whales were caught for their oil, and of the great advantage derived from seals. Many a modern visitor would agree that "the only troublesome insect . . . is the gnat, which is sufficiently so".

There are notes on the unequal lengths of day and night, the frequency of the Aurora and the rarity of thunder, on the lack of timber — even of fir and pine — and on the hot springs. Earthquakes and eruptions are rare: but a vivid account is given of a recent outburst of 'Mt Krafle' and the lava-stream that reached as far as Mývatn. The *Review* considers that the chapter on Hekla contains nothing remarkable, "that celebrated vulcano having for many years ceased to emit flames, so that it now makes but a mean appearance". Unfortunately Hekla still had daggers under its cloak for use in more modern times, and the fiery energy of Iceland was not dormant later in the eighteenth century.

*The Critical Review*⁶ recounted from Pennant's *Supplements to Arctic Zoology* a description of "the eruption of fire" in Iceland⁷ in June 1783 when some twenty villages were destroyed, 220 lives lost by fire and 21 by water, when twelve rivers dried up and two new islands appeared. The rain was so impregnated with salt and brimstone that the hair and skin of cattle were destroyed, the grass covered with soot and filth, and some people, especially the old and chesty, were killed by the poisonous air.

Late in the century, the *Critical*⁸ considered a translation of Dr von Troil's *Letters on Iceland*. This book had an initial interest for English readers, since he went to Iceland with Mr (afterwards Sir Joseph) Banks, who kept a journal but did not publish it.⁹ From the review we learn that Icelandic houses could be built of lava, and that the people were honest, serious and sullen, and "did not laugh". (We may doubt whether Lord Chesterfield would have felt at home there, despite their conformity to his standards in this last point.) There is a detailed description of the Great Geyser, and a comment on basaltic formations.

In 1797 this *Review*¹⁰ quotes from the *Transactions* of the Royal Society of Edinburgh a vivid and scientific "Account of the Hot Springs in Iceland" by Joseph Black and J. T. Stanley — the Great Geyser's colours were now "the purest and most beautiful blue", now "green like that of the sea" and now white as the jets "broke into 1,000 parts".

From 1755, any reader could have had plenty of information about Norway. In that year and the next,

⁶ *Critical Review* 64 (1787), 35-7.

⁷ At Skaptárjökull. See K. Gjerset, *History of Iceland* (1922), 343.

⁸ *Critical Review* 49 (1780), 360-6. The original Swedish was reviewed by the *Monthly* in 1778 (LIX 506-9) and the translation in 1780 (LXIII 187-98).

⁹ See Beatrice White, 'Ultima Thule', in *Essays and Studies of the English Association* (1961), 82.

¹⁰ *Critical Review* 21 (New Arrangement; 1797), 197-202.

*The Monthly Review*¹¹ published long extracts — over 40 pages in all — from a translation of Bishop Erik Pontoppidan's *Natural History of Norway*, originally written in Danish. The *Review* thinks he could not suppose foreigners much acquainted with the great variety of the inanimate and living productions of nature in Norway, since the country "is seldom visited but by traders and seamen". (Times change: most eighteenth-century tourists distrusted mountainous country.) The book, with its plates, is expensive, so the *Review* gives generous treatment to passages concerning Pontoppidan's attempt to explain the Northern Lights, his comments on the Norwegian climate, including that by-word the rain at Bergen, the effect of the Gulf Stream on the western coasts, though the Bishop might not have recognised it under that name, the nature of the soil, avalanches, minerals, the strange formations at Torg-hatten, and the Maelstrom. The reviewers were grateful to Providence that they had been allotted "a more secure and comfortable situation". Details of agriculture, horticulture and forestry follow, with a note on reindeer living on mosses. Later extracts concern beasts, birds and fishes. This leads to a discussion of some strange fauna: the bishop reports that people are half inclined to believe in Mer-men, including one reported by a minister of 'Sundmoer' who saw one and described it as grey in colour — "the lower part like a fish, with a porpoise's tail. The face resembled a man's, with a mouth, forehead, eyes, etc. The nose was flat and pressed down to the face, in which the nostrils were very visible." And the sea-serpent and the kraken? It seems the peasantry believed in both, and the Bishop was inclined to bring forward evidence to support them, and the *Review* was willing to suspend judgment.

The "rational inhabitants" were industrious, handy and ingenious, excellent wood carvers, polite, faithful,

¹¹ *Monthly Review* XII (1755), 447-62, 493, 506; XIII (1756), 35-49.

brave and hospitable; on the debit side were quarrelsomeness, litigiousness and obstinacy.

There are comments on food and local costume and on houses so constructed that "many a farmer mows a pretty load of hay from the top of his roof".

The reviewers were disappointed that the Bishop had said nothing of the language of Norway.

English readers must have been surprised and envious to read that "Every person is at liberty to pursue the game", especially in the mountains, which is "no unfair presumption of the thinness of inhabitants" — and that in Norway a nobleman lost the privileges of his rank if he failed to reside on his land.

The book included a note on the use of 'skies', introducing the word over 100 years before the *NED* dates it — the people "have skies, or long and thin pieces of board, so smooth, that the peasants wade through snow with them as swiftly as ships under full sail . . . In war . . . a party of these skie-men are equal to light troops."

In 1786, *The Gentleman's Magazine*¹² gave a full account of a 'curious Foreign Article' — the *Diplomatarium Arna-Magnæanum exhibens Monumenta Diplomatica quae collegit, et Universitati Havniensi Testimento reliquit, Arnas Magnæus; Historiam atque Jurem Daniae, Norwegiæ, et Vicinarum Regionum, illustrantia* . . . It was edited by 'Grimus Johannes Thorkelin' of the University of Copenhagen and the first two volumes had recently been published. The *Magazine* announces "the first appearance of this grand collection of charters and other writs" with much pleasure, since "it is hitherto unexampled; for Rhymer's *Fœdera* only exhibits historic writings, whereas this contains private deeds of all kinds". The *Magazine*, pointing out that by its nature the work admits of no extracts, stresses its "vast utility to Northern history . . . on such monuments the truth of later history chiefly rests".

¹² *Gentleman's Magazine* LVI Pt. 2 (1786), 773.

The *Magazine* lists Thorkelin's works to date, to help readers appreciate their extent and their minute accuracy. They include such items as the edition of the twelfth-century *Jus Ecclesiasticum Islandiae* (1775), the *Jus Publicum Norwegiae* (1777), the *Analecta quibus Historia, Antiquitates, Jura, Regni Norwegeci illustrantur, cum glossario* (1778), the edition of *Vafþrúðnismál* of 1779. The antiquarian's appetite is further whetted by a reference to a geographical lexicon of the middle ages *ad mentem et linguam Islandorum Scriptorum* now in the press, and to an edition of the laws of the Icelandic Republic ready for the press — "works both curious and important".

The *Magazine* proceeds to turn its review into an onslaught on the lack of encouragement to historical studies prevalent in our own country. In Denmark a Thorkelin's scholarly research receives every support, but "in Great Britain the best and most curious manuscripts are allowed to rot in silence". In Denmark, over 200 Icelandic histories have been published and Professors, Judges, Antiquaries, even the King himself, encourage the work. But here no Irish or Welsh manuscripts have been published, no legacies are bequeathed to help such studies, there are not enough libraries, and it has been left to Mr Thorkelin, now in London, to publish an Icelandic and English history of the Kingdom of Northumbria from the eighth century to the tenth. It was thanks to Danish royal interest that the "precious History of Snorro Sturlason" was being completed and the Elder Edda already in the press. The article concludes with a forthright attack on a one-sided concern with the ancient classical world. Our writers shun the history of the Heptarchy "from the confusion of their own ideas concerning so many small kingdoms: but the history of the Grecian republics has the same disadvantages, and yet we know it perfectly. We know all we can know about Greece and Rome: — when shall we know anything about our own early history?"

They naturally went on to welcome¹³ the *Antiquitates Celto-Scandicae, sive Series Rerum gestarum inter Nationes Britannicarum insularum et gentes septentrionales*, by the Rev. James Johnstone, Member of the Royal Societies of Edinburgh and Copenhagen. This consisted of passages culled from Snorri, *Landnámabók*, *Egils saga*, *Njála*, *Orkneyinga saga*, *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, *Speculum Regale*, etc. But though mainly a compilation from works already printed, the reviewers considered it "a valuable accession to English history, by throwing its connection with that of the Northern nations into one point of view".

The Orkneyinga saga had been noticed by *The Critical Review*¹⁴ in 1781 — it had been published in Copenhagen "on account of its being the most ancient document of the history of Orkney; and because the British antiquaries seemed not to be in possession of it".

In the same year, *The Gentleman's Magazine*¹⁵ had reviewed Johnstone's *Anecdotes of Olave the Black, King of Man . . . (with) XVIII Eulogies on Haco King of Norway by Snorro Sturlson [sic] Poet to that Monarch*. The tone of this review is strikingly different from that of the same periodical in 1786 already quoted. Why, in effect, should we bother about battles less interesting to us than those of the cranes and pigmies, recounted in language unredeemed by Homeric or Addisonian elegance?

The reviews of Norse literary works or English imitations of them cannot have given the reader much inducement to read further and enjoy — with a few notable exceptions. Mallet's *Remains of the Mythology and Poetry of the Celtes, particularly of Scandinavia* — to give it the title of its first English translation — betrays in that title a regrettable but common ethnological con-

¹³ *ibid.* 1061.

¹⁴ *Critical Review* 51 (1781), 467-8.

¹⁵ *Gentleman's Magazine* LI (1781), 522.

fusion of the time,¹⁶ but the book was a mine of information. For *The Monthly Review*¹⁷ its second volume was discussed by no less a person than Goldsmith, who also remarks that the learned on this side of the Alps have laboured at the Antiquities of Greece and Rome, but almost totally neglected their own. He gives a summary of *Gylfaginning*, describing its contents as "allegories, as extraordinary as an imagination the most fruitful of wonders could possibly conceive, on the formation of the earth, and the creation of man". He reveals an interest in comparative mythology — Thor is a northern Mithras — but it is surprising to read from the pen of a poet and novelist the cold comment that "nothing . . . can be more ridiculous than the system of Physics that runs thro' the whole Edda". He is particularly disconcerted by the shining mane that scatters light, and the wolves that chase sun and moon. As late as 1781 this *Review*¹⁸ was calling the system of northern mythology "wild and monstrous" and unsuitable for modern poetry, despite its occasional "sublime or magnificent image": and was sticking to its critical guns in 1784¹⁹ when it reiterated that "Scandinavian mythology is little adapted to the purposes of modern poetry. The images that it exhibits are for the most part incomprehensibly wild and uncouth."

Most of the myths are a "tissue of the most absurd and preposterous fictions", though the writer admits that "men of great name hold opinions diametrically opposite". Such myths may be "useful as illustrations of character or as objects of archaeological enquiry",

¹⁶ In 1770, the *Monthly* XLIII, 93, noted that the translator of Mallet's *Northern Antiquities* "proves that the Teutonic and Celtic nations were ab origine two distinct people, though M. Mallet had considered them as one". The *Review* quotes at length information about the northern religion before it was too much accommodated to the Christian system to be interesting. The specimens of poetry were trifling and nothing like as good as Mr Macpherson's translations from the Erse.

¹⁷ *Monthly Review* XVI (1757), 380. The original French title was *L'Introduction à l'histoire de Dannemark*.

¹⁸ LXV (1781), 426.

¹⁹ LXXI (1784), 99.

but they are "intractable materials" for poetry. The writer obviously thinks little of other people's "Runic hobby-horse, even though it were the wolf Fenris that is to break his chains at the general conflagration and swallow the sun".

The age of enlightenment could hardly be expected to swallow Fenrir. No great advance in appreciation had been made since the lukewarm reception the *Monthly* had given Percy's *Five Pieces of Runic Poetry*, in 1763²⁰: though all had been previously published, and "known to some few of the learned" they "are rare and singular enough to excite the curiosity of the English Reader if it be not already sufficiently gratified with specimens of this kind of poetry". The reviewers quoted Percy's opinion that the Scandinavians had "an amazing fondness for poetry, a quality less known than their valour, ferocity, contempt of death and passion for liberty". Readers were told that the North, in its isolation and because of its late conversion to Christianity, had preserved more of the old poetry than other nations, and that Iceland spoke the old tongue in the greatest purity — "Hence it is that such as study the originals of our own language have constantly found it necessary to call in the assistance of this ancient sister dialect."

The *Review* does not think Percy has made the best choice of poems, but quotes *The Incantation of Hervor* at length.

To the modern reader, it is surprising to find a footnote taking Percy to task for keeping "dwarfs" as the rendering of *duergar*—"the ancient Scandinavians did not mean human creatures short of stature, but a kind of inferior demons . . . something like our fairies".²¹ Surely this

²⁰ XXVIII (1763), 281-6.

²¹ The reviewer was not being aberrant. Standard dictionaries support him. Bailey gives only "A person of a very low stature". Dyche and Pardon "a person, tree, etc., that is much shorter than is common or usual". Johnson is aware of other possibilities but they are no help for Norse myth — "An attendant on a lady or knight in romance" (as in Spenser).

is another glimpse of eighteenth-century limitations.

In the *Monthly*'s²² comments on Mathias's *Runic Odes* it quoted with disapprobation some lines from *The Twilight of the Gods*, complaining that the translator improperly gives the Norns the attributes of the Parcae. What the critic does not see is the yawning void between the style of *Völuspá* and the current conventional Latinised diction at its worst. There is some lack of dignity in

See Odin's offspring, Vidar bold
His sanguine course unfaultring hold.
Nought he fears the wolfish grin
Tho' slaughter's minions round him din —

but the real period piece follows:

No more this pensile mundane ball
Rolls thro the wide aerial hall;
Ingulphed sinks the vast machine

The *Critical*²³ objected to the obscurity of these lines, finding the whole thing strange — the myth, the personages, the ideas. Its comments on the diction are a fine example of unawareness, of the man in the glass house throwing stones. The translator must "have recourse to the Norse tongue and plead . . . his close imitation of the original, as he will not otherwise reconcile us to his *pensile mundane* balls and *murk* curtain" — (and his "printless majesty of walk", which, one suspects, derives from the printless foot of Shakespeare's elves and is the more inappropriate here). Still, the *Monthly*²⁴ was willing to commend sublimity in the *Völuspá* even if it misprints it *Volupsa*, in its picture of chaos, *Ragnarøkr* and the renewal of the world. Readers would get a good idea of the fierce courage of the North, and they could be further instructed if they looked at Ragnar's *cygnea*

²² *Monthly Review* LXV (1781), 426-7. Dr Farley does not relate the style of the odes to that of contemporary diction.

²³ *Critical Review* 52 (1781), 62.

²⁴ *Monthly Review* LVII (1777), 174, review of Jerningham's *Rise and Progress of the Scandinavian Poetry*.

oratio in Percy, as *The Gentleman's Magazine*²⁵ told them.

A later version by Johnstone of this much-rendered poem was reviewed by the magazine²⁶ which thought it a "spirited recital" and that it would be interesting and curious to "those who are versed in Islandic lore, and fond of Northern Literature".

The change to a more sympathetic attitude to this literature is manifest in the long and knowledgeable review of Part I of the *Edda Sæmundar* published at Copenhagen in 1787, provided by *The Gentleman's Magazine* in 1788.²⁷ We now read of the "singular and sublime mythology" of the "Prosaick Edda", and the reader learns that he will find in this publication a well-written account of a mythology that has striking resemblances to the Greek. There is a life of Sæmund with notes on the dating of the poems, which contrast in "simplicity of phraseology" with the "distorted conceits and violent metaphors" of twelfth- and thirteenth-century poems. The scenes and persons are never Icelandic. The poems contain the pagan creed of Scandinavia, and their leading features are certified by Jornandes, Bede, Adam of Bremen, and Saxo Grammaticus. The reviewer proceeds to give a summary of the thirteen poems, and recalls that *Vegtamskviða* was finely handled by Gray — always the critics' standard — and that from his imitations "the English reader may form an idea of this Edda". The reviewer thinks the alleged connection of the Æsir with Troy inconsistent with Snorri's history, and the Trinitarian presentation of Odin "an absurd and ignorant interpolation".

In 1786 the *Magazine*²⁸ reviewed a new edition of the *Poems* of Mr Gray with notes by Gilbert Wakefield, and

²⁵ *Gentleman's Magazine* LI (1781), 430.

²⁶ LIII Pt. 2 (1783), 603. (The *Critical* offered moderate approval, 54, 319.)

²⁷ LVIII Pt. 1 (1788), 137.

²⁸ LVI Pt. 2 (1786), 591.

thought it regrettable that none of these concerned the translations from the Norse. Their subject and their superior merit would have deserved such annotations, and much light could have been thrown on them "from two very valuable, curious and entertaining works . . . Bartholinus de Causis . . . and the Introduction to the History of Denmark, translated with considerable additions and improvements, by the ingenious Dr Percy". The critic makes the interesting point that even so correct a writer as Mr Gray was inaccurate in the line,

'Tis the drink of Balder bold,

for "in the Northern mythology, Balder is always distinguished by the epithet of good . . . (for) none of his qualifications were of a warlike nature" — he was mild, beautiful and eloquent. "It is scarcely requisite to say that the epithet used in the translation is unwarranted by the originals."

And yet Baldr was also thought of as a warrior, and his very name possibly justifies Gray.²⁹ Did Saxo Grammaticus preserve the original version of the legend after all? Verse 37 of *Lokasenna* supports such a reading of Baldr's character — Frigg wants a fighter to deal with Loki.³⁰

The less common reader was informed where he could obtain information about Icelandic writers by the *Critical's*³¹ account of *Finni Johannaei Episcopi Dioceseos, Skalholtinae in Islandia, Historia Ecclesiastica Islandiae* . . . which contained anecdotes of such men of learning as Ari, Sæmundr, Snorri, "Ólfr Hvítaskald", Brother Eysteinn, Torfæus, Arni Magnæus, Brynjólf Sveinsson.

More remote information occasionally appeared. The

²⁹ See Alexander Jóhannesson, *Isländisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (1956), 626.

³⁰ Cf. the discussion of the duality in the character of Baldr by G. Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North* (1964), 106 ff.

³¹ *Critical Review* 44 (1777), 225-7.

*Critical*³² described a note on 'Berserkagæng' from the *Memoirs* of the Royal Academy of Sciences at Stockholm for 1785. The author imputed the fury not to the devil but to some "inebriating decoction" — *agaricus muscarius* for preference. More comfortably, one could read about chess-playing in Iceland in the same *Review*.³³

In 1771 *The Gentleman's Magazine*³⁴ had an item of interest to sporting readers — an account of the Icelandic falcon held in such "high esteem among the northern princes". It is a "noble and stately bird" which the article describes in full detail, so that we can hardly regret that the accompanying plate is not coloured. We are told, on the authority of Mr Brunnich in his *Ornithologia Borealis*, how the Icelanders, authorized so to do, capture the falcons with bait and net, and then bring them to 'Bessested'. They arrive there about midsummer on horseback, with ten or twelve birds perched on a cross, which they hold rested on the stirrup. The best birds are selected and sent to Copenhagen.

The *Critical*³⁵ also brought home the fact that the Norsemen reached America, Forster's *History of Discoveries and Voyages* affording a description of Iceland, Greenland and probably of Newfoundland and the Labrador coast. The *Review* quotes the account of 'Winland' and introduces its readers to Herjolfr, Bjorn (i.e. Bjarni) and Leifr, and holds that some parts of the American coast had been seen by the Normans before the reputed discovery — this raises startling ethnological and chronological problems until we recall that the eighteenth century meant *Norsemen* sometimes when it said Normans.

Nearer home, *The Gentleman's Magazine*³⁶ points out to English readers that Yule celebrations still indulged

³² *op. cit.* 64, 67. Art. 12 of the *Memoirs*.

³³ *Critical Review* 68 (1780), 284.

³⁴ *Gentleman's Magazine* XLI (1771), 297.

³⁵ *Critical Review* 62 (1786), 335-7.

³⁶ *Gentleman's Magazine* LXV Pt. 1 (1795), 295.

in by Lincolnshire people were really a festival of the winter solstice and of Thor — which was the original justification of excessive eating and drinking!

The eighteenth century still hardly knew where to place the Scandinavians: it had not discovered the North to be a wonderful holiday resort; it was unsure of its response to Icelandic poetry. But it was growing rapidly in knowledge of history and geography, and the sublimities (and barbarities) of the heroic legends were gradually forcing a breach in the smooth and rational complacency of the period. The North was far from being the only surprising factor, but it played an honourable part.

The *Critical Review*³⁷ must have the last word. In 1798 it reviewed A. S. Cottle's *Icelandic Poetry, or the Edda of Sæmund* (1797), and commented on the remarkable difference between Runic mythology in Verstegan and Saxo on the one hand and the Eddas on the other. "In the antiquary and the historian, it appears like the meagre and barbarous idolatry of savages: in the Eddas it is a wild and magnificent system, calculated powerfully to impress an unenlightened people, and which may take place in poetry, of the tame fictions of Greece and Rome . . . The historian will find in it the creed of his ancestors: and the poet will acquire a variety of images peculiarly adapted for poetry by their novelty, their strangeness and their sublimity."

³⁷ *Critical Review* 22 (New Arrangement; 1798).

A NOTE ON THE FOLKTALE MOTIF OF THE HEADS IN THE WELL

By JACQUELINE SIMPSON

IN discussing the figure of Mímir in a previous paper,¹ I had occasion to refer to two English and one Norwegian stories in which there appear three bodiless heads emerging from a well or river. After the completion of this article my attention was drawn, through the kindness of Dr K. M. Briggs, to a detailed study by Warren E. Roberts² of the widespread folktale³ of which these three stories are examples. The basic plot is the testing of the kindness of two girls by some supernatural being who assigns tasks to them, and in one comparatively small sub-group of versions the place of this being is taken by a head or heads (usually three) which rise from a well, river, or lake. The girl is asked to wash, comb, kiss, or handle them gently, or (in some Swedish versions) to feed them with apples; she is rewarded by wealth, often in the form of gold or gems dropping from her hair or mouth, by increased beauty, by a fortunate marriage, or by flowers springing up in her track. Corresponding punishments (lice in the hair, reptiles in the mouth, monstrous ugliness, etc.) are inflicted on her unkind step-sister.

Warren E. Roberts assigns thirty-six tales to this, his "Heads in the Well Group"; but eleven of these⁴ either omit or obscure the crucial motif and are therefore in-

¹ 'Mímir: Two Myths or One?', *Saga-Book XVI* 1 (1962), 41-53.

² Warren E. Roberts, *The Tale of the Kind and the Unkind Girls* (Fabula, Supplement-Serie B: Untersuchungen Nr. 1, 1958).

³ Type 480 in A. Aarne and S. Thompson, *The Types of the Folktale* (1928, second revision 1961). The tale is variously known as 'The Kind and Unkind Girls', 'The Spinning Women by the Spring', 'Frau Holle', or 'Toads and Diamonds'.

⁴ One Norwegian, two Swedish, three Danish, two German, one Finnish, one English, and one Czech.

cluded in the group conjecturally or on other grounds. The distribution pattern of the remaining twenty-five examples,⁵ in which the motif is clearly present, is interesting: two English,⁶ one Scottish,⁷ one of Welsh gypsy origin,⁸ six Irish,⁹ three from the United States,¹⁰ seven Swedish,¹¹ two from Swedish areas in Finland,¹² and three Norwegian.¹³ In addition to these, I am informed by Miss Briggs of the existence of an unpublished English gypsy version. The examples are thus limited to two areas, Great Britain (with offshoots in Ireland and the United States closely resembling the English versions), and Scandinavia; despite the large number of Scandinavian versions, it is the opinion of W. E. Roberts that the group is more likely to have originated in England and spread from there to Scandinavia than vice versa.¹⁴ He considers that it probably arose by the

⁵ These figures are based on the appearance or non-appearance of Roberts's motif V C 3 or 8 (combing, washing or feeding the heads) in his tabular analysis of variants on pp. 13-70. However, on p. 119 he speaks as if only seventeen versions have heads, while "the remaining versions show wide diversity in this element" As so many versions are inaccessible in manuscript collections, I have been unable to resolve this apparent contradiction; since, however, the figures in the table on pp. 13-70 hold good when cross-checked against those of another table on 87-8, it seems most likely that a slip on p. 119 is the explanation.

⁶ George Peele, *The Old Wives' Tale* (1595). *The History of the Four Kings of Canterbury, Colchester, Cornwall and Cumberland*, in R. H. Cunningham, *Amusing Prose Chapbooks* (1889).

⁷ R. Chambers, *Popular Rhymes of Scotland* (1870), 105-7.

⁸ J. Sampson, 'Welsh Gypsy Folk-Tales', *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* N.S. IV (1910-11), 40-7.

⁹ *An Lóchrann* (July-August and September 1910), 6-7, 3. Irish Folklore Commission Archives, MS 140, 43-77; MS 242, 554-63, and MS 243, 1-4; MS 212, 214-30. R. Fowler, *The Western Island* (1945), 64-70. M. Ó. Tiománaidhe, 'Gunóg', *Béaloideas* I (1927-8), 355-6.

¹⁰ B. Lowrimore, 'Six California Tales', *California Folklore Quarterly* IV (1945), 155 no. 2. B. M. Dobie, 'Tales and Rhymes of a Texas Household', *Publications of the Texas Folklore Society* VI (1927), 42-5. L. Roberts, 'Folk-Stories for Telling', *Mountain Life and Work* XXVII 1 (Winter 1951) 25-8.

¹¹ W. Liungman, *Sveriges Samtliga Folksagor* (1949), I 130-1, and 165. G. O. Hyltén-Cavallius and G. Stephens, *Svenska Folk-Sagor och Äfentyr* (1844), 123-9, and 445 n. 3. *Västsvenska Folkminnesarkivet*, Liungman no. 32, p. 1. E. Wigström, *Skånske Visor, Sagor och Sägner* (1880), 46-9. *Uppsala Landsmåls- och Folkminnesarkivet*, no. 3053.

¹² O. Hackman, *Finlands svenske Folkdiktning* (1917), I 189-90, no. 80a var. 3 and var. 4.

¹³ *Norsk Folkeminnesamling* (Manuscript Collection), Hans Ross no. XXII 4, and P. Chr. Asbjørnson no. VI 178. P. Chr. Asbjørnson and J. Moe, *Norske Folke-Eventyr* (1842-52), no. 55.

¹⁴ *op. cit.*, 120-1.

substitution in England of the Three Heads for the old woman encountered near a well in another group of variants whose main area of diffusion was France. The question of the ultimate origin of the motif of the Heads forms no part of his enquiry, but it is undoubtedly interesting, in view of the similarity with Mímir on the one hand and with the Celtic material on the other, that it should be so clearly limited to areas of British and Scandinavian influence. It would seem that in these areas alone the notion of a head associated with a well was familiar enough to replace the old woman, fairy or witch who appears in the great majority of versions of this folktale.

Finally, it is perhaps worth noting that in one Swedish version¹⁵ the Heads bestow on the girl not merely the usual shower of gold but also an increase of wisdom. As such a reward is very rare in this folktale (there are only two other instances of it in over nine hundred examples studied by W. E. Roberts), it is tempting to see in it a last faint recollection of the connexion between these heads and Mímir, the giver of wisdom. A similar distant echo of ancient mythology may linger in the title given to this tale in Scotland. According to Chambers, it is called "The Well at the World's End". Admittedly, the same title is also given to Scottish variants of the quite unrelated story, "The Frog King", and there is no means of proving which of the two tales has the better claim to it. If in fact it belonged to the former tale, it might conceivably be derived from some recollection of the mythological Well of Mímir under the root of Yggdrasill — a location which could be very properly described as "at the world's end".

¹⁵ Hyltén-Cavallius and Stephens, *op. cit.*, 445 n. 3.

BOOK REVIEWS

ÍSLENZKAR BÓKMENNTIR Í FORNÖLD I. By EINAR ÓL. SVEINSSON. *Almennu Bókafélagið, Reykjavík*, 1962. viii, 533 pp.

Dr Einar's work, of which this is the first volume of three, promises to be the most detailed and authoritative account of Old Icelandic literature that we possess. The present volume covers the Eddaic poetry and includes introductory chapters on the Viking Age, the settlement of Iceland and early social history. The chapters on metrics, word-usages and kennings are admirably lucid and informative. They cover not only Eddaic, but also the main scaldic practices.

The word "kenning" is applied very widely both by medieval and modern critics. As in an earlier paper,¹ Dr Einar distinguishes four types of kennings. The first type are those which Sigurður Nordal² denotes as *sérkenningar* and Snorri³ apparently as *viðkenningar*, albeit in an obscure passage. In kennings of this type, a man may be distinguished from others by allusion to his parentage, work, social position, etc., e.g., *Jarðar burrr* (Þórr), *Sygna ræsir* (prince of Sogn-men, king of Norway). Such expressions have little to do with poetry, and hardly differ from those of common speech. If I speak of "Jack's father", I cannot feel that I am using a kenning, for this may be the only way in which I can designate the man of whom I speak.

In one passage,⁴ while discussing the kenning, Snorri wrote:

... if we name Óðinn or Þórr or Týr, or one or another of the gods or elves, and to each one that we mention, we add the name of a property of another god, or allude to some of his deeds, then the latter becomes the owner of the name, and not the former, whose name was given. Just as when we say Victory Týr, or Hanged Men's Týr, or Cargoes' Týr, these are names for Óðinn.

If this designation of the kenning had been followed by Snorri and his successors, it seems that the pure kenning must fall under Dr Einar's fourth class. In kennings of this class, the meaning of the basic word is altered fundamentally by its determinant. Thus silver may be called "snow of the arm" (*arms fön*), and gold "fire of the arm" (*handar bál*). The imagery may be developed, and silver may become "snow of the falcon's foreland" (*hauka ness drífa*), and gold "fire from the hawk's shore" (*hauka strandar hyrr*). A further refinement may be achieved by allusion

¹ *Skírnir* CXXI (1947), 5 ff.; reprinted in *Við uppsprettarnar* (1956).

² *Snorri Sturluson* (1920), 104 ff.

³ Finnur Jónsson, *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar* (1931), 188.

⁴ *ibid.* 86.

to a myth or legend, as in *Óðs beðvinnu augna regn* (the rain of the eyes of Óðr's consort, gold). Unless the listener knows that Freyja was the consort of Óðr and that she wept tears of gold, he cannot hope to understand kennings of this kind, and Dr Einar aptly calls them "learned" kennings (*lærdómskenningar*).

Examples of kennings of the fourth class may be found in the poetry of the *Edda* and in Old English, although these are generally rudimentary. They are occasionally found in prose and poetry of other peoples, and a few examples of "learned" kennings have been seen in Greek⁵ and in Irish rhetorics.⁶ But it is the frequent occurrence of kennings of the fourth class in the poetry of the scalds which chiefly distinguishes its diction and gives it its strongest æsthetic appeal. It is perhaps a pity that the medieval prosodists of Iceland did not reserve the term "kenning" for the fourth class and apply different terms to other forms of circumlocution.

Dr Einar's chapter on metrics is valuable for many things. He examines the older theories of S. Bugge, E. Sievers, A. Heusler and other scholars, extracting from each that which is of lasting value. It is clear from Dr Einar's exposition that the most valuable treatment is that of Heusler. But Dr Einar also points out (p. 115) certain weaknesses in Heusler's theory, which seems in some ways too rigid.

When he comes to the more elaborate, scaldic measures (pp. 127 ff.), Dr Einar considers in a detached and unbiased way how far they may develop from native tradition, and how much they may owe to Irish and other foreign influences. As is proper in a standard handbook of this kind, he presents the evidence and refrains from drawing conclusions.

In a chapter on the preservation of the Eddaic lays (pp. 177 ff.), Dr Einar shows how weak are the arguments of D. A. Seip,⁷ who believed that the ultimate ancestor, both of the *Codex Regius* and of the *Arnarnagnæan* manuscript, was Norwegian. In fact, much of Seip's argument was based on simple scribal errors. Not a few of the peculiarities, which Seip traces to Norwegian, are also to be found in Icelandic writings, such as laws and diplomatic documents, which could never have been known in Norway.⁸ In spite of such objections, the value of Seip's keen observations cannot be overlooked.

We may be satisfied that the lays of the *Edda* were written down and preserved in Iceland, but questions of their ages and original

⁵ See Ingrid Wærn, *The Greek Kenning* (1954), especially 16-17.

⁶ I have alluded to such kennings in *Skírnir* CXXVIII (1954), 51 ff.

⁷ Expressed in many papers; see especially *Maal og Minne* (1957), 81-207.

⁸ See H. Kuhn, *Acta Philologica Scandinavica* XXII (1952), 65 ff.

homes are more difficult to answer. Students are often dismayed to read that one authority dates a lay about A.D. 900, while another puts it about A.D. 1250, and much of the argument has been subjective and lacking in substance.

It is improbable that any of the extant lays were composed before the period of syncope, *c.* A.D. 700, for if so they would be impossible to scan, or to read aloud, as Dr Einar observed (p. 207). A regular ending of the third and sixth lines of the *Ljóðaháttir* would be destroyed, for before the syncope *gest* would be *gasti*. Dr Einar concludes tentatively that no extant lay is older than the ninth century.

Loan-words used in the lays may give some guide to their ages. If, as many suppose, *dreki* and *kálkr* were borrowed from Old English, they were probably introduced in the Viking Age.

The word *gjall*, since it derives from the Irish *geilt* (*gealt*), must have been introduced in the ninth or tenth century. It must, however, be admitted that loan-words found in lays of the *Edda* can tell us little about their ages.

Word-forms show even less. The use of *v* before *r* (*vindandin forna*), which occurs occasionally in lays of the *Edda*, might show that these lays were composed before the eleventh century, but might suggest only that they were composed in a dialect other than Icelandic, in which *v* was not lost before *r*.

Sadly little can be learnt from the themes of the mythological lays or their diction. Some have maintained that such lays were not composed in the years following the Conversion, say A.D. 1000 to A.D. 1150, and that all the mythological lays must have been made before the first date or after the second. This conclusion was based largely on the rarity of pagan allusions in dateable scaldic poetry of the first Christian generations. But much of the scaldic poetry of that period which now survives was made for the Christian kings, Ólafr Tryggvason and Ólafr the Saint. Humbler fragments, such as those of Hofgarða-Refr (*c.* 1030-40),⁹ show no lack of pagan allusion.

In some of the Eddaic lays, gods are mocked or derided affectionately. This can tell nothing about their ages. Even Greeks of the pagan age could poke fun at their gods, and Christians at their saints, as Dr Einar observes (p. 217), and it may be added that atheists were not unknown in the pagan age.¹⁰

The influence of one poem on another may sometimes suggest that one is older than the other. Thus, a part of the *Hávamál*

⁹ Dr Einar gives a date 1140 (p. 218). I suspect that this is a mechanical error.

¹⁰ I have discussed this question in *Myth and Religion of the North* (1964), 263 ff.

(str. 76) appears to be older than Eyvindr Skáldaspillir's *Hákonarmál* (c. 960), in which it appears to be plagiarized. The *Völuspá* seems, similarly, to influence the *Þorfinnsdrápa* of Arnórr Jarlaskáld (c. 1064).

In later sections of his work Dr Einar discusses problems about each of the Eddaic lays in detail, seeking to decide how old they are, where and by whom they were composed. On the whole, Dr Einar is more conservative than most modern scholars, tending to assign the lays to dates earlier than is now usual. The *Þrymskviða* has been said by many in recent years to belong to the twelfth century or even the thirteenth. The light vein in which Þórr and other gods are described is one reason for assigning the poem to so late a date; another reason is that no allusion to this poem is found in Snorri's *Edda*. In fact, it has even been suggested that the *Þrymskviða* is the work of Snorri himself.¹¹ But Dr Einar, partly following the researches of H. Kuhn,¹² points out that the metrical forms and the language of the *Þrymskviða* suggest that it is of considerable antiquity, perhaps belonging to the Viking Age. It is noticeable that the nearly meaningless particles *of* and *um*, replacing lost prefixes, are used in this poem more frequently than in any of the longer Eddaic lays. This, in itself, is strong evidence that the lay was composed early.

Opinion about the age of the *Rígsþula* has been no less sharply divided. As long ago as 1896, Eiríkr Magnússon wrote in this journal:¹³ "I ask, what word, passage, turn of speech or allusion to life and manners in that poem tend to make it decidedly older than the 13th century?" A. Heusler¹⁴ endorsed and developed Magnússon's arguments and, in a recent article, K. von See¹⁵ was more positive, concluding that the *Rígsþula* was composed after Snorri's time.

Dr Einar (pp. 287-8) sees the *Rígsþula* in a different light, and finds nothing in it to show that it was composed later than the tenth century. Superficially, at least, there is some evidence which might suggest that the poem was composed at a late date. It is not found in the Codex Regius of the *Edda*, but only in the Codex Wormianus of Snorri's *Edda*, dating from the mid-fourteenth century. It is evidently interpolated in this manuscript, and there is nothing to show that Snorri knew it. The lay also contains a number of loan-words, e.g. *dúkr*, *plógr*, *kartr*, besides

¹¹ See P. Hallberg, *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* LXIX (1954), 51 ff.

¹² *Das Füllwort of-um im Altnordischen* (1929), 87 ff.

¹³ *Saga-Book of the Viking Club* I (1895-7), 229.

¹⁴ *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen* CXVI (1906), 270 ff.

¹⁵ *Acta Philologica Scandinavica* XXIV (1957), 1 ff.

technical words found chiefly in the prose of the twelfth to to fourteenth century.¹⁶

The theme of the *Rígsþula* has also led critics to believe that it was composed at a late date. It tells of the origins of three classes of men, *þræll* (thrall), *karl* (freeman), *jarl* (prince). All of these descend from the god (*áss*), Rígr, who wandered over the earth to beget three sons on three different women, Edda (great-grandmother), Amma (grandmother) and Móðir (mother).

Speculation about the origins of social classes was certainly widespread in medieval Europe. Honorius Augustodunensis in the *Imago mundi* traced three classes, *liberi*, *milites* and *servi* to the three sons of Noah, Sem, Japhet and Cham.¹⁷ The *Imago*, like other works ascribed to Honorius, may have been known in medieval Iceland, but this is a very different story from that of the *Rígsþula*, which tells that the three classes descend from one divine ancestor and three earthly women. We may remember the proverb: *þrysvar hefir allt orðit forðum*, and suspect that, even in the Viking Age, men were considered to belong to one of three classes. In this case, Snorri's¹⁸ distinction of Norwegians at the time of Haraldr Hárfagri as *bændr*, *hersar*, *jarlar* may not be so wide of the mark as is commonly said.

It has been said¹⁹ that, in his description of the thralls, ugly and dark-skinned (*hgrundsvartan?*), but tilling their own fields, the poet shows that he belonged to an age when thralldom had been abandoned. But in his contrast between the ugly, dusky thrall and the beautiful blond prince, the poet seems to show that he knew an age when thralls were largely imported. The *Rígsþula* is a peculiarly "racist" poem.

The relations between the *Rígsþula* and the *Skjöldunga saga*, probably written about 1200, are of some importance, and have lately been discussed thoroughly by Bjarni Guðnason.²⁰ The genealogies of Rígr, Danr and Danpr given in these two sources differ considerably, but it seems more probable that the *Skjöldunga saga* has drawn on the *Rígsþula* than that the *Rígsþula* followed and misunderstood the *Skjöldunga saga*, as some would have it.

Who is this Rígr, said to be the father of men? The redactor of the poem said in prose that he was Heimdallr. R. Meissner,²¹

¹⁶ See Heusler, *op. cit.*, 275-6.

¹⁷ Migne, *Patrologia latina* CLXXII, 166.

¹⁸ In ch. 6 of *Haralds saga hárfagra* in the *Heimskringla*.

¹⁹ Eiríkr Magnússon, *op. cit.*, 221-2.

²⁰ *Um Skjöldungasögu* (1963).

²¹ *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* LVII (1933), 110 ff.

followed by von See,²² says, on the other hand, that he was Óðinn. It is difficult to understand why a redactor of the fourteenth century should replace the well-known Óðinn by Heimdallr, whose cult had been all but forgotten. Heimdallr may be seen as a fertility god, perhaps taking the form of a ram, as Freyr might take the form of a boar.²³

According to the only plausible interpretation of the first strophe of the *Völuspá* which has yet been offered,²⁴ men are distinguished from gods and called the greater and lesser children of Heimdallr (*meiri ok minni mögu Heimdallar*). This need not show that the *Rígsþula* is older than the *Völuspá*, but it does show that the tradition upon which it is based goes back to the tenth century.

Irish and British influences have been seen on the *Rígsþula*.²⁵ Rígr, when he comes to each house, shares the marriage bed. This custom may have been known in Germany in the Middle Ages,²⁶ but there is no evidence of it in Scandinavia. Such things are, however, recorded in Irish sources.

Most of all must hang on the origin of the name *Rígr*. In spite of other suggestions,²⁷ it seems nearly certain that it derives from the Irish *rí* (oblique *rig*) meaning "king". The poet of the *Rígsþula*, and consequently the author of the *Skjöldunga saga*, as well as Snorri, who must be following the *Skjöldunga saga*, seems to be well aware of the meaning of this name. The third son of the god, to whom he gives his own name, is Konr ungr, and thus a play is made on the word *konungr*.

It is altogether unlikely that this influence of Irish could have arisen after the tenth century. K. von See²⁸ remarks that the *Prophecies of Merlin* (and probably the *Historia Britonum* as well²⁹) were translated into Icelandic c. 1200, showing cultural relations with the Celtic world even at this late date. But there is no reason to believe that the Welshman, Geoffrey of Monmouth, writing in Latin, knew the Irish word *rí*, even if he might have called a king *brenhin* or *arghwydd*. Whether the *Rígsþula* was composed in the British Isles, or by a travelled Icelander at home, there seem to be good reasons to believe that the traditions

²² *op. cit.*, 1.

²³ Cf. R. Much in *Deutsche Islandforschung* (1930), 63 ff.

²⁴ See Sigurður Nordal, *Völuspá* (1923), 34 ff., and especially *Íslenzk menning* I (1942), 207 ff.

²⁵ See A. Olrik, *Viking Civilization* (1930), 112 ff., and especially J. Young, *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* XLIX (1933), 97 ff.

²⁶ See Much, *op. cit.*, 66.

²⁷ See Alexander Jóhannesson, *Ísländisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (1956), 701-2.

²⁸ *op. cit.*, 6-7.

²⁹ G. Turville-Petre, *Origins of Icelandic Literature* (1953), 200-2.

embodied in it date from the tenth century, and to see their influence on the *Völuspá*, composed c. A.D. 1000. Although I have approached this problem rather differently, it seems that my conclusions are not far removed from those of Dr Einar and Sigurður Nordal.

An important chapter (pp. 230-66) is devoted to the homes of various Eddaic lays. It is commonly agreed that the extant mythological lays were composed in Scandinavia, predominantly in Norway and Iceland, although some perhaps among Viking settlers in the British Isles. Disagreement is chiefly about the heroic lays, and especially those in which continental heroes are described, the so-called *Fremdstofflieder*. Are these native to Scandinavia, or were they imported from the Continent, translated or adapted?

It is widely denied that the legends narrated in such lays ever lived but in verse. Many authorities maintain that the oldest of these lays (*Hamðismál*, *Allakviða*, *Hlōðskviða*, *Völundarkviða*) are German. This has been supported by detailed analysis of word-usages, syntax and metrical forms, which are said to betray West Germanic rather than Norse features.³⁰ Dr Einar does not accept such views, and suggests that the material is too poor to allow of the conclusions (p. 241). Words and usages which are found in the *Fremdstofflieder*, but not in other Norse sources, may once have been current in Norse, and the earlier runic inscriptions give some support to this. If the lays were translated from German, the translations must have been made before c. 850, when alliterative poetry seems to have died in Germany.³¹

It is remarkable how different the Norse legends are from the German. The legend of the battle of Goths and Huns, related in the *Hlōðskviða*, is not known at all in Germany. The Gothic king Ermanaric (Jörmunrekkr) is known well enough in German as in English, but the legends about him are altogether different, and the story of Svanhildr and her brothers, in so far as it was known in Germany at all, may well derive from Norse tradition. Even the legends of Atli and the Burgundians, which must partially have originated in Germany, are told so differently by Norse poets that it is hard to believe that they were translating German records.

Supported by the researches of others, and especially of F. Askeberg,³² Dr Einar emphasizes the importance of the

³⁰ H. Kuhn has expressed such views in several brilliant papers, among which I may mention those in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* LVII (1933), 1 ff., and LXIII (1939), 178 ff.

³¹ See A. Heusler, *Deutsche Versgeschichte* I (1925), 1-2.

³² *Norden och kontinenten i gammal tid* (1944), ch. 3.

Scandinavian Baltic as a "factory" of legend and lay. Indeed, the heroic legends and lays upon which *Beowulf* is ultimately based must stem chiefly from those regions, and not from Germany. The legends of Goths and Huns and of Ermanaric might indeed have reached Scandinavia from the Black Sea area by the eastern route and not through Germany. There is no strong reason for believing that the legend of Völundr originated in Germany, and still less that the *Völundarkviða* is a German poem. The heroes travel on skis (*skríða*) like Lapps, and the redactor of the Codex Regius places the scene in Sweden. Dr Einar's suggestion (pp. 236-7) that the legend stems from the Baltic regions may not be wide of the mark. If so, the surprising similarity with the story of Daedalus (p. 419) may partly be explained; the motives could have reached Scandinavia by the eastern route.

In a short review of a long and outstanding book, I have found it impossible to do more than touch upon and discuss a few salient points. Every student of Old Icelandic literature needs this book, and we must hope that vols. II and III will be published before long, and that the whole work will be translated into English. The style of the Icelandic is beautiful, but it is not always easy for a foreigner to understand.

G. TURVILLE-PETRE

UM SKJÖLDUNGASÖGU. By BJARNI GUÐNASON. *Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóðs. Reykjavík, 1963. xx, 325 pp.*

Since Axel Olrik published most of Arngrímur Jónsson's version of *Skjöldunga saga*, together with a discussion of the text, in *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* (1894), 83-164, this lost saga has been the subject of much comment and called forth several conflicting opinions. Jakob Benediktsson edited Arngrím's works in *Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana* IX-XII and in his introduction (XII 107-17) he gives a detailed discussion of the passages which he considered that Arngrímur had derived from *Skjöldunga saga*. In addition he published an admirably lucid account of the matter of the saga in 'Icelandic Traditions of the Scyldings', *Saga-Book* XV (1957-59), 48-66. In the present book Dr Bjarni Guðnason now presents a much more extensive treatment of *Skjöldunga saga*.

He begins by attempting to reconstruct the original text of the saga by examining all the related sources and comparing those he considers most reliable, i.e. *Upphaf*, *Snorra Edda* and *Ynglinga saga*, with Arngrím's Latin recension in the passages where *Skjöldunga saga* would appear to have been his principal source.

Axel Olrik formulated the theory that there had existed two versions of *Skjöldunga saga*, an older, more elaborate text and a younger, simpler one that must have been used by Arngrímur and the author of the vellum fragment *Sögubrot af fornkonungum*. Jakob Benediktsson opposed this view and asserted that "there are no valid reasons for assuming that more than one redaction of the saga ever existed" (*Saga-Book* XV 51). It is Bjarni Guðnason's thesis that Dr Jakob's view cannot be accepted without qualification and he makes the tentative suggestion that there were, in fact, two redactions of *Skjöldunga saga* but that the younger one was the more elaborate and that *Sögubrot* testifies to the existence of this younger redaction. This suggestion rests, however, on a very weak foundation since, as Bjarni himself says, it is impossible to point to any other text derived from *Skjöldunga saga* which seems to depend on the younger recension, with the possible exception of *Upphaf*. Jakob's view that there was only one redaction would still seem to be the more acceptable.

There is another significant point on which Bjarni differs from Jakob. This is his assessment of the nature of Arngrím's Latin version. Jakob writes in *Saga-Book* XV 50, "A J did not translate the saga, he only made an abstract of it, and, as we can see from comparison with other sources, this abstract is in some places very much abridged". Bjarni discusses Arngrím's normal practice in the treatment of his sources and compares his version of *Skjöldunga saga* with that preserved in the other sources and comes to the conclusion that, apart from the omission of a few episodes and some names, he rendered his source very closely in the section extending from Óðinn to Hrólfr kraki. Bjarni's arguments are convincing although, as he himself admits, it is possible that more material found in the original saga was omitted by Arngrímur than the few fragments which comparison with other sources would seem to prove that he omitted.

Bjarni agrees with Jakob's view that *Skjöldunga saga* must have told of the Danish kings from Skjöldr, son of Óðinn, to Gorm the Old, and he makes a comparison in some detail between the Latin text and parallel texts in the more reliable of the Icelandic sources. The less reliable sources such as *Bjarkarímur* and *Sögubrot* are also discussed. These painstaking comparisons produce much interesting evidence.

Until the appearance of this book there had been general agreement among scholars that the original *Skjöldunga saga* must have been composed about 1200 or perhaps a little later. Bjarni's assessment of *Sögubrot* as a relic of a younger recension removes the necessity of assigning the saga to a date as late as this to

account for the evident influence of the *ridðarasögur* on the fragment. He wishes, therefore to date the composition to approximately 1180-1200. He points out that Gunnlaugur Leifsson probably knew *Skjöldunga saga* when he wrote his saga of Ólafr Tryggvason c. 1200 and that *Skjöldunga saga* is probably contemporary with those other Scandinavian historical works we now know by Saxo, Svend Aggesøn and Theodricus.

Bjarni agrees in essentials with Jakob's assessment of the sources of *Skjöldunga saga*. The only certain written source is a genealogy of the Skjöldungar but the author may have found miscellaneous pieces of information in odd lays and mnemonic verses. The various existing Icelandic genealogies are discussed and compared and Bjarni draws attention to the fact that the author was acquainted with some foreign historical and religious works. It is difficult to determine whether he borrowed anything from these. The main body of material for the *Skjöldunga saga*, however, must have been derived from oral sources. Bjarni demonstrates the author's treatment of this material by comparison with heroic poems and shows that he belongs to the objective rationalistic school. He sifted his material and discarded anything that was grossly improbable. It is a pity that Bjarni does not pay more attention to the Skjöldungar episodes in *Beowulf* which, although not of course a source for the saga, are interesting because the poem is much older than any of the written Scandinavian sources. No real idea of the extent of the *Beowulf* material can be gained from Bjarni's few scattered references to the poem. Some consideration of *Beowulf* could perhaps have been included in the section dealing with the transmission of the Skjöldungar tales to Iceland and more attention could have been paid to the individual names and incidents preserved in *Beowulf* in Bjarni's reconstruction of the *Skjöldunga saga*.

Bjarni gives a good description of the way in which *Skjöldunga saga* blends traditional tales, Christian sentiments and foreign and Icelandic learning. He praises the air of reality it achieves, as compared with, say, Saxo or *Hrólfs saga kraka*, and criticizes its main fault — an inconsistent texture.

His final section represents an attempt to place the saga in its context, both Icelandic and international. It was hardly necessary to include all the material that he presents here. The potted history of the twelfth-century European literary renaissance could well have been summed up in a couple of pages without weakening the demonstration of the way in which *Skjöldunga saga*, while belonging to the same literary fashion as,

for example, the works of Geoffrey of Monmouth and Saxo, was yet typically Icelandic in its adherence to objective rationalism, standing half-way between the austere history of Ari the Wise and the later *fornaldarsögur*.

Bjarni adheres to the view put forward by Einar Ól. Sveinsson in *Sagnaritun Oddaverja* (Studia Islandica I, 1937), that the saga was written in Oddi in the south of Iceland. The family of the Oddaverjar traced their ancestry back to the Skjöldungar and their genealogy may have been compiled by Sæmundr Sigfússon the Wise. Bjarni agrees that the saga was probably written by, or for, the Oddaverjar and, after a reasoned attack on the theory of the existence of three separate literary schools in Iceland, he concludes by tentatively proposing Páll Jónsson of Oddi, bishop of Skálholt from 1195 to 1211, as the author of *Skjöldunga saga*. It is not and probably never will be possible to establish the author's identity with certainty. That the saga was composed in Oddi, however, seems a reasonable assumption.

In his book Bjarni brings many established theories in question and puts forward some new ones of his own. Not all of these seem equally attractive but the book gives much food for thought and discussion. All students of Icelandic literature will be grateful to him for presenting the problems in a new light and with so many full quotations from the relevant material. The arrangement of the various chapters and disposition of materials is perhaps not entirely satisfactory, for the devotion of separate chapters to individual texts entails some repetition on the part of the author and a good deal of referring back to the quotations from Arngrímur on the part of the reader. A clearer picture, though without the wealth of detail, is gained from Jakob Benediktsson's concise account in *Bibliotheca Arnarnagana* XII 107-17. Some kind of tabular summary of the relation between the text in Arngrímur Jónsson and that of all the other sources treated by Bjarni Guðnason would have been a welcome addition to the book.

GILLIAN FELLOWS JENSEN

SAGNASKEMMTUN ÍSLENDINGA. By HERMANN PÁLSSON. *Reykjavík: Mál og Menning*, 1962. 188 pp.

Mr. Hermann Pálsson is both an Old Norse and a Celtic scholar, and one might hope that a book of his would show traces of this very attractive blend of scholarship, and throw new light from the outside on Old Icelandic literature. Unfortunately this is not his approach, and we learn little about the world outside Iceland

in this book on the important question of the origin and growth of saga literature.

His message is very simple, possibly too simple, for he argues that the development of medieval Icelandic literature is more closely connected with the traditional pastime *Sagnaskemmtun* than we have hitherto been willing to believe. By *Sagnaskemmtun* is understood the more or less formal reading aloud of sagas to an audience, and the author rightly emphasizes the well-established fact that the creation of any sort of literature depends on an audience. As evidence of the fact that this form of entertainment had an important place in the life of the people until quite recently, he cites a number of passages from later centuries, by Eggert Ólafsson and others. The quotations are excellent, but they are accompanied by the author's own glosses which are sometimes inaccurate and occasionally quite wrong. Thus, it was not because of special animosity towards the Icelanders and their innocent and time-honoured pastime, that the Danish king, Christian VI, issued two decrees with a warning against the spiritual dangers of reading sagas and the like. This was simply an expression of the somewhat narrow-minded Christianity which throughout the reign of that king was dominant in all his countries. The frustrating results of this spiritual policy in other spheres have been known for a long time, for instance, in the case of the young Danish theatre, which after a promising beginning was closed during the reign of Christian VI, so that Holberg was unable to follow up his earlier success as a playwright. The heyday of the *Sagnaskemmtun* is loosely put at c. 1250 to c. 1650, and one of the reasons why it gradually became less popular is, according to Mr Pálsson, because the antiquaries, or as he nicknames them *handritasmalar*, collected manuscripts in Iceland in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century in order to promote scholarly studies abroad. What Mr Pálsson seems to overlook are the two facts that a great many old manuscripts had already perished or been more than half destroyed when Árni Magnússon, the greatest of the collectors, rescued the remnants, and that a multitude of paper manuscripts, often more legible than the old vellums, remained in Iceland. Such younger manuscripts on paper are now found in an amazing number in *Landsbókasafn* and in several British collections.¹

The preliminary survey of the *Sagnaskemmtun* in later centuries (pp. 14-38) makes the reader doubt whether Mr Pálsson's book is meant to be a piece of scholarship, or simply a patriotic tonic.

¹ See Ole Widding, 'Árni Magnússon and his Collection. An Appreciation on the Tercentenary of his Birth', *Scandinavica* II: 2 (Nov. 1963), 93-107, especially 97 ff.

He is pulling the reader's leg, I fancy, when he offers his version of why Brynjólfur Sveinsson was not granted a privilege to run a printing press. This was due to the narrow-mindedness of the Danish government, we are told, and not apparently to the strong opposition of his colleague, Bishop Þorlákur Skúlason of Hólar, who is not mentioned by him at all in this context.

The first well documented *Sagnaskemmtun* was the one at Reykhólar in 1119.² According to Mr Pálsson the sagas used to entertain the guests on that occasion must have been written sagas. This is found easier to believe by Mr Pálsson than by other scholars because he has the benefit of his own definition of what *Sagnaskemmtun* is, i.e. a *reading* aloud of sagas in contrast to mere story-telling. The entertainment at Reykhólar is known from the *Þorgils saga ok Haflíða*, and in so far as it is advisable to believe in this source, most scholars have agreed that the sagas mentioned must have been oral tales. It is all very well to think that the phrase *setja saman sögu*, on which he pins his faith, can only mean to compose or write a saga, when the context shows in fact that the meaning can equally well be to tell a story or to spin a yarn. But why is it so important for the author to make us believe in this very early instance of written sagas of an entertaining nature? Obviously because his theory demands that not only the later popularity of such sagas, but also the very origin of the *genre* must be connected with the *Sagnaskemmtun*. To those of us who have hitherto believed the author of the *First Grammatical Treatise*, who wrote later in the twelfth century, and the evidence of the oldest manuscripts, it comes as a shock to find that the oldest written literature in the vernacular should not be legal or historical works or hagiographic and homiletic writings, so essential for a society in which Christian education and literacy on any large scale was still something pretty new, but rather works of an entertaining and far less useful nature. The two entertainers at the wedding in 1119 have thus a better chance, in Mr Pálsson's view, of being the fathers of Icelandic literature than Ari has ever had. Another rash attack on the teachings of other scholars is his suggestion (p. 63 f.) that such works as *Fóstbræðra saga*, *Bjarnar saga Hítðlakappa*, *Kormáks saga*, *Bandamanna saga*, and *Heiðarvíga saga* existed in written form already in the twelfth century.

Some of Mr Pálsson's arguments in later chapters of his book are also somewhat provocative, though often quite stimulating. His peculiar chronology makes it possible for him to explain the

² Discussed by Peter G. Foote, 'Sagnaskemmtun: Reykjahólar 1119', *Saga-Book* XIV: 3 (1955-56), 226-239, with references.

literary interest of the Norwegian court as a simple imitation of the Icelandic *Sagnaskemmtun* (p. 167)!

I have dwelt mainly on the less satisfying passages of Hermann Pálsson's book, but I must end by congratulating the author on having written a book full of enthusiasm for the old literature in an easy and unaffected style. Enthusiasm is of course as least as valuable as pedantry, but it is best if it is combined with exactness.

The book is well produced by the Hólar Press in Reykjavík. Whom we must blame for the jacket, I do not know. It bears a hideous and distorted reproduction of a detail of August Schiøtt's well-known painting of a *Sagnaskemmtun*. It is fortunate for the painter's reputation that this is nowhere acknowledged.

HANS BEKKER-NIELSEN

HEMINGS ÞÁTTR ÁSLÁKSSONAR. Edited by GILLIAN FELLOWS JENSEN. *Editiones Arnamagnæanæ, Series B, vol. 3. Copenhagen, 1960. clxxxiv, 160 pp.*

It is perhaps not surprising that we have had to wait so long for an adequate edition of *Hemings þáttur*, for none of the surviving manuscripts preserves the whole story. There are indeed two stories: one which has been entitled *Hemings þáttur* and tells the story of a contest in skills between Heming, the son of Aslak, and King Harald of Norway, and a second which, after an account of the battles of Stamford Bridge and Hastings, tells of the survival after the latter battle of Harold of England, the son of Earl Godwine. This second story has often been called *Tósta þáttur* because of the part played in it by Harold's brother Tostig who is said to have brought about the invasion of England by Harald of Norway. The only previous edition to amalgamate the two stories was that of Guðbrandur Vigfússon in the Rolls Series in 1887. Guðbrandur was, however, unfortunate in his choice of manuscripts.

No reconstruction of the original text of *Hemings þáttur* is now possible, and Mrs Fellows Jensen has therefore rightly based her text on the oldest surviving manuscripts. For the first part of the story, *Hemings þáttur* proper, these are *Hrokkhinskinna* and *Flateyjarbók*, and these two texts are printed side by side. There is considerable variation between them, but they both appear nevertheless to be derived ultimately from one written source. The second part, *Tósta þáttur*, is now only to be found in *Hauksbók* or its derivatives. In the introduction notice is given of all other surviving manuscripts, of which there are forty-one, and a pains-

taking attempt has been made to demonstrate the relationship between them.

In addition to the text of *Hemings þáttur*, Mrs Fellows Jensen provides us with a text of *Hemings rímur* by Benedikt Sigurðsson and of an eighteenth-century *Æfentýr af Heminge Áslákssyne* based upon it; the earlier medieval *Hemings rímur* is not printed, because its text is available elsewhere.¹ She further discusses Arngrímur Jónsson's Latin summary of *Hemings þáttur*, Magnús Jónsson's *Hemings rímur*, and various Norwegian and Faroese ballads on the same subject.

From the above it should be clear that we now have not only a fine edition of *Hemings þáttur* but an abundance of valuable information about it. Indeed the very abundance of this information provokes the main criticism the reviewer has to make — that the introduction is so full and yet so compressed that it is difficult to use. Mrs Fellows Jensen must herself have felt this, for she very considerably provides as an appendix a summary of her conclusions on the relationships between the various manuscripts and also an index of references to the manuscripts throughout the introduction, without which the reader would indeed be in difficulties. A further appendix gives a summary account of one extra manuscript not listed on page xvi.

The production of the volume deserves high praise, and both editor and printer are to be congratulated.

A. R. TAYLOR

THE SAGA OF GISLI. Translated by GEORGE JOHNSTON, with Notes and an Essay on the Saga of Gisli and its Icelandic Background by PETER FOOTE. *J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd, and University of Toronto Press, 1963.* xiii, 146 pp.

This translation has a special interest for members of the Viking Society, coming as it does after the publication of the two papers 'On Translation' in *Saga-Book* (1957-61), 383-402. It testifies to the wisdom of Professor Johnston's decision to follow the Icelandic as closely as he could (see p. xi), in that its closeness enables the reader to know not only what the saga says, but, within the limits of translation, how it says it. To take a very small example (from p. 22), "A gift always looks to a return" (*sér æ gjof til gjalda*) allows the reader to feel for himself the effectiveness of the expression, where the substitution of a modern English near-equivalent (e.g. "one good turn deserves another") would immediately intrude the presence of the translator. There are

¹ P. M. den Hoed, *Hemings rímur* (1928).

times when a close translation can be quaint or clumsy, as on p. 42, "Now I am going to change men in bed with you" (*Nú mun ek skipta við þik monnum í rekkjunni*), or fail to convey the idiomatic sense, as on p. 3, "Skeggi spoke to Thorbjorn of marriage ties" (where *mæla til* implies rather "sued for"), and p. 50, "You can see for yourself" (where *Máttu ok á þat lita* means rather "You may also take this into consideration"). But it is not often that the sense suffers like this from a too narrowly verbal closeness, and it is pleasing to find how much of the style of the original comes through. In the *Saga-Book* Professor Johnston had said that the patience and hard work that close translating requires are likely to generate life. Though it may be doubted that they would do this of their own accord, they have indeed generated life here, where they have been used in the service of a very real and unself-regarding enthusiasm for the work being translated.

The standard of accuracy in the translation generally is high, though there are a few careless errors, e.g. *mágr* translated as "kinsman" (p. 28). ("Thorgrim and Thorkell had prospered on their voyage as well", on p. 10, for *Hefir þeim ok gott til fjár orðit*, which at first sight seems a similar example of carelessness, may be merely unnecessary explanatory expansion.) There are also some examples of failure to bring out the full meaning, and of distortions which, however slight in themselves, may have the effect of blurring the precision of the original or destroying the nuances. For example, to translate (*hann*) *víkr súð reið sinni at hann kemsk á bak þeim Berki* "(he) takes a way that brings him up behind Bjork and the others" is to miss the explicitness of the verb *víkr* ("he wheels round as he rides so as to come up behind ."). Similarly on p. 11, Asgerd's question to Aud 'What will you do?' hardly does justice in the context to the saga's *Hvert órræði muntu taka* ("What way out will you take?"). Precision should apply also to word-order where the context demands it. On p. 40 *en þeir eru uppi á berginu Ingjaldr ok þrællinn* is translated "for Ingald and his thrall have taken their stand on the crag" But the context demands something nearer to the word-order of the Icelandic: Bórk and his men have seen the men on the crag and assumed that one of them is Gisli — "They go up after them and think that everything is going their way, but those up on the crag are Ingjald and the thrall" An example of how even a very slight lack of precision may obscure a nuance of style occurs in Thorkell's words on p. 12, "But this is worse than illness": the impersonal form of the original expression, *en sóttum verra er þó* ("But there are worse things than sickness"), is more in keeping with the somewhat cryptic attitude that

Thorkell is assuming at this point. A more important example occurs in the scene where Thorkell refuses to accept the tapestries that Véstein has brought as a joint gift to the brothers: the excuse he gives for his refusal, *eigi eru launin synni en súð*, is translated "Any return for them from me is not very likely" (p. 17). This is not what Thorkell actually says, and in making his statement more explicit the translation hides its ironic ambiguity. Like other of his remarks in this part of the saga, Thorkell's words are intended to have a meaning for those who know the true situation (i.e. Gisli and Thorgrim) which is hidden from those who do not: to the latter, Thorkell's words — "the repayment is not so clear as all that" — would suggest merely that he is refusing the tapestries because he is not sure that he can repay such a costly gift, but to Gisli they would have a more ominous ring, suggesting a very different kind of repayment.

Occasionally Professor Johnston shows a lack of trust in the reader's intelligence (which a close translator must have) by unnecessarily explanatory translation, e.g. (p. 41) "The *larger* boat, with the more men in it, goes faster" (*Rennir þat skip meira sem menninir váru fleiri í*), and the several insertions of explanatory reminders to identify persons mentioned in the narrative. But, taken all together, these lapses from his intention of following the Icelandic as closely as he could are too few to mar the general impression of a fine model of saga translation.

In his translation of the verses Professor Johnston has found a good, workable compromise between sacrificing the clarity and sacrificing the form. A reader new to saga verse should be able to follow even the most esoteric of them, with the help of the "Notes to the Verses", while at the same time he will get some idea of the form and diction of the original verse.

Peter Foote's "Notes on the Text" are admirable for the purpose. They combine scholarly information with a liveliness calculated to whet the interest of the newcomer to saga studies. His "Essay on the Saga of Gisli and its Icelandic background" prefaces its account with a useful review of the social and political background and of the literary genesis of the Sagas of Icelanders. There is a good discussion of the history of *Gísla saga*, with a most interesting and valuable contribution relating the dream verses to twelfth-century poetry. As literary criticism the Essay is disappointing, mainly because (like most modern criticism of the sagas) it is content to analyse the saga as though it were a modern novel. Mr Foote had said earlier, of the writers of the Sagas of Icelanders, that "they describe conduct in order to reveal character" (p. 105). But it would be just as true to say "they

reveal character in order to describe conduct" For what we, looking at it from a modern angle, call "characterisation" in the sagas is usually, more strictly, motivation of the action of the story, and it is from a study of personal relationships and tensions, rather than from character as such, that the narrative derives its strength. Mr Foote himself remarks on "the sustained dramatic sequence of highly charged emotional relationships between the central characters" (p. 107), and comments that "the relationships could hardly be more complex" (p. 106), yet he sees Gisli (somewhat uneasily) as "essentially a simplex character" (p. 109). So he may be in terms of "characterisation", but in terms of motive his conduct, especially in the central scenes of the saga, is anything but simple (e.g. his hiding away of the spear he takes from Véstein's body, the spear that he knows his brother Thorkell will recognise if it is used to avenge the murder). It is only by throwing away modern assumptions and getting as close as we can to what these medieval writers were trying to do that we can hope to evaluate adequately what they have done. And to do this we must pay more attention to their methods. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the central part of *Gísli saga* is the organic use of irony — both verbal irony in the speeches and dramatic irony in the action — and of pattern in the sequence of events. It is by these methods that the "highly charged emotional relationships between the central characters" is conveyed, and the close-knit quality given to this part of the saga that is lacking in the rest of the saga. It would have been interesting to have had more analysis of the saga's techniques.

I. L. GORDON

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF OLD NORSE-ICELANDIC STUDIES 1963. Edited by HANS BEKKER-NIELSEN and THORKIL DAMSGAARD OLSEN in collaboration with the ROYAL LIBRARY, COPENHAGEN. *Munksgaard, Copenhagen*, 1964. 64 pp.

It is pleasant to welcome this new bibliography covering the field of Old Norse-Icelandic studies. As the editors rightly point out, it fills a long-felt want. It has been produced with exemplary promptness, and we must hope that the editors will maintain the same speed and accuracy, so that this bibliography will not falter or fail, appearing tardily or not at all, as so many of its predecessors have done.

The bibliography sets out to be selective, not exhaustive, and this spikes the critic's guns immediately, although he may choose to quibble about the criteria employed in making the selection.

This the present reviewer does not intend to do; and should the many references to articles in the *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder* seem unnecessary to any reader, it is proper to recall that all or most of these certainly represent new and important contributions to the study of the topics in question.

The 333 entries for 1963 (original works and reviews) are arranged in one alphabetical sequence, by author, with cross-references for co-authors, editors, translators, reviews, etc. Each entry is numbered, for ease of reference, and book reviews are marked with an asterisk. There is a short alphabetical subject-index (pp. 57-63), and the bibliography is prefaced by an interesting article by Dag Strömbäck on 'The dawn of West Norse literature' (pp. 7-24). It is an admirable notion to plant such a green oasis of an introduction at the entrance to the necessarily arid and austere landscape of the bibliography itself, and it is much to be hoped that similar refreshment for the reader will be offered in future parts.

I am not entirely happy about the general arrangement, although it may have been largely determined by circumstances. It could be argued that the primary approach should be by subject and not by author, and that, therefore, a subject arrangement, with an author index, would have been better. This would probably have been easier both for the user and for the publisher. It would have cut out the need for any cross-references in the main text, and would have simplified the index. As it now stands, with the alphabetical subject index, a lot of cross-indexing is necessary. (*Hrafnkels saga* (No. 134) is indexed in four different places — under the title of the saga, under "Editions", under "Literary History", and under "Translations". Other sagas are similarly found in two or more places in the index.) It is a nuisance, too, to have book reviews put in the first place under the author of the review, so that the reader has to chase reviews of one book through the bibliography by means of cross-references, instead of having the reviews listed together in one place (Anna Birgitta Rooth's *Loki in Scandinavian mythology* has six cross-references for reviews).

Some economy could have been used in citing the titles of books reviewed, and the librarians here might be urged to leave their cataloguing principles behind. All the reader needs, surely, is for the book to be identified. He does not really need exhaustive bibliographical details, and above all he does not need an exact citation of the form of title employed in the reviewing journal, where this is patently wrong. Entries like "J.C.M. [recte J.M.C.] Kroesen" (p. 33) and "N.J. [recte N.F.] Blake" (p. 41) are unduly pedantic and out of place.

There are certain inconsistencies in headings. E. F. Halvorsen appears once thus, and twice as Eyvind Fjeld Halvorsen (Nos. 135-37). S. Gutenbrunner appears twice with the simple initial, and three times with his forename expanded to Siegfried (Nos. 124-27 and cross-reference). Other examples are T.M., and Theodore M. Anderson (Nos. 8-9), and M., and Marlene Ciklamini (Nos. 68-69). If it was felt necessary to repeat the author's name for every entry, instead of employing a dash or some other device, it might have been preferable to give the expanded names in the first entry (for information), and use the simple initials for following entries.

The periodical *Germanistik* is rather oddly indexed, having three entries under the three divisions mainly concerned with Old Norse, i.e. *Altnordische Literaturgeschichte* (No. 4), *Nordgermanische Sprachen* (No. 236), and *Nordische Altertumskunde* (No. 237), with references given only for pt. 1 of vol. 4. As this is a regular quarterly publication, some sort of general reference should have been given to it as a periodical, pointing out what the relevant sections are, instead of indexing the only part that happened to have come out when the bibliography was published. In this connection it is good to see so many bibliographies listed in the index, and it is good that the editors have tried to draw the reader's attention to bibliographies that exist in books on the subject. There are of course many secondary bibliographical sources provided by journals, in the form of selective book lists and reviews of reviews (such as are contained, for example, in *Scandinavica*), apart from the primary sources, which are listed in this bibliography (Nos. 5, 210, 278). It seems to me that it would be useful to have a bibliographical article in some future number surveying the tools provided by the various journals in the field, and also the coverage in some of the larger, specialised bibliographies, such as the *Linguistic bibliography*.

This itemised criticism should not in any way be taken as intended to be a serious reflection on the bibliography. A lot of it is, after all, a matter of opinion and my remarks are only suggestions as to how an otherwise admirable work might be still further improved. Early numbers are often experimental and it takes time to discover the best and most expedient format, although it is doubtless true that in the bibliographical field it is never possible to please everyone at the same time. Finally, I am sure that it will be the wish of all those who, like myself, have for years hoped for a reference tool such as this, that the editors will long be able to continue their work.

J. A. B. TOWNSEND

LUCAS DEBES: FÆRØERNES BESKRIVELSE. Edited by JØRGEN RISCHÉL. I Facsimileudgave. II Indledning og noter. *Munksgaard, Copenhagen, 1963.*

The individual with a general as well as a specialised interest in northern studies is being well served by the Society for the Publication of Faroese Sources and Studies. In 1950 they did us all a great service by including in their series an edition by Håkon Hamre of Thomas Tarnovius's *Færøers Beskrivelser*, written in the 1660s and now printed for the first time. We are now indebted to them for a facsimile edition of Lucas Debes, *Færoæ Et Færoa Reserata. Det er: Færøernis Oc Færøeske Indbyggeris Beskrivelse*, first published in 1673 and again in an almost identical impression in 1674. It is interesting to note that, on the initiative of Thomas Henshaw, then English envoy in Copenhagen, this was translated into English almost at once (by a Frenchman, J. Sterpin, who is praised for his accuracy), although Henshaw would have preferred a Latin version. The translation was presented to the Royal Society in 1675 and published in London in 1676. It was, of course, Debes's own predominant concern with the natural history of the islands that aroused Henshaw's interest. The facsimile reprint is accompanied by a valuable introduction by Jørgen Rischel. He gives an account of the author's life¹ and has chapters on Debes as a natural historian and on the circumstances of the work's composition; in this last he offers some new material on Debes's sources and makes a convincing suggestion as to how we are to interpret the relationship between the work of Debes and the work of Tarnovius. The main part of the introduction, however, is a consideration of the contents of the book under separate headings — the author's treatment of the description and geography of the islands and of the history, way of life, culture and language of the inhabitants, to mention some of the chief topics. Since information on related subjects is often scattered in Debes's volume, this unified consideration of them makes the introduction a very useful key to the book as a whole. The value of Mr Rischel's contribution is further enhanced by a large body of notes to the text and by indexes which include a list of the Faroese words cited, in some form or other, by Debes.

PETER FOOTE

¹ On p. 13 Mr Rischel says that Jón Halldórsson describes the relations between Debes and the commandant in the Faroes, Claus Becher, but in fact Jón Halldórsson's very brief account in his *Hirðstjóraannáll* concerns Debes and the royal bailiff, Heidemann.

ARNE MAGNUSSON. DEN STORE HÅNDSKRIFTSAMLER. I 300-året for hans fødsel udsendt af HANS BEKKER-NIELSEN og OLE WIDDING. *København: G. E. C. Gads Forlag*, 1963. 69 pp. and 24 pls.

This small book is elegantly written and elegantly produced. It gives a brief, clear outline of Árni Magnússon's career, making special use of the biography written in Danish by Jón Ólafsson from Grunnavík, preserved in autograph in AM 1027 4to. The authors stress the importance of the formative influence on Árni of his early contact with scholarly method and the world of international learning through his work for Thomas Bartholin; and they insist, very delicately, on the credit due to the Danish scholars and patrons who recognised Árni's qualities and made his advancement possible. We get a good impression of how much Árni felt at home in the urbane and learned society of his academic friends in Copenhagen.

PETER FOOTE

MARGRÉTAR SAGA
AND ITS HISTORY IN ICELAND

By JÓN STEFFENSEN

THE life of St Margaret of Antioch was one of the many saints' lives that came to Iceland with the new Christian faith. According to Unger, it may have been translated from its original Latin as early as in the twelfth century.¹ Translations of such saints' lives exist in manuscripts written in Iceland before the Reformation (before 1550), some in many copies, some in few or only in one. The variation in number is not surprising, of course, for not every saint was as popular as the next or it may be mere accident which has decided which manuscripts have been preserved and which destroyed. It is worthy of note, however, that we also have many copies of the *Margrétar saga* that were written after the Reformation — and in this respect it is unique among the lives of saintly virgins. It was because of this that I began to look closer at this life of St Margaret, which at a casual reading would not seem to have any advantage over other saints' lives in Icelandic, either in its matter or in the quality of the translation, sufficient to justify its abiding popularity among the ordinary folk of Iceland long after they had ceased to invoke the saints of the church in the old way.

According to 'The Lives of the Saints in Old Norse Prose: a Handlist',² texts of lives of virgin saints are represented thus: the life of the Blessed Virgin in 19 manuscripts, of St Margaret in 15, of St Agnes in 7; lives of seven other saints are extant in fewer than 7 copies.

¹ C. R. Unger, *Heilagra manna sögur* (1877), I 1.

² By Ole Widding, Hans Bekker-Nielsen and L. K. Shook, in *Mediaeval Studies* XXV (1963), 294-337. Cf. *Katalog over den Arnamagnæanske Håndskriftsamling* I-II (1889-94); *Katalog over de oldnorsk-islandske Håndskrifter i det store kongelige Bibliotek* (1900).

Practically all these manuscript copies are assigned to the Catholic period, from the thirteenth to the middle of the sixteenth century. To give some idea of how widespread the cult of various virgin saints was in Iceland in the middle ages I give the number of church-dedications in which they figure, according to the list made by Guðbrandur Jónsson: 200 churches were dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, 11 to St Catherine, 7 to St Mary Magdalene, 6 to St Cecilia, 3 to St Margaret, 3 to St Agatha; four other virgin saints figure in the dedications of not more than one or two churches apiece.³ Both the number of manuscripts and the number of dedications fully agree with what one would expect — that in Iceland, as elsewhere, the Blessed Virgin came first in men's devotions; but there is otherwise no close connection to be traced between the number of copies of sagas and the number of church dedications. The comparatively large number of copies of the life of St Margaret is evidently not due to the fact that there were many churches dedicated to her, and that the texts belonged to such churches.

According to the catalogue, the Landsbókasafn Íslands possesses 25 manuscript copies of the *Margrétar saga*, but no copy of a life of any other saintly virgin.⁴ (The catalogue in fact enumerates 27 copies but, as far as I can see, no. 1599 has no text of the saga in it, and no. 8425 is a typescript copy, made in 1930, of manuscript AM 431 12mo.) The oldest of these 25 texts is reckoned to be from 1660-80, while the youngest was made about 1895. It may also be added that shortly after 1900 *Sagan af Margréti píslarvotti* was printed in Reykjavík — as far as I know the only life of a saintly virgin ever to be printed in Iceland. The edition was carelessly made; it is not said which manuscript is followed, or when it was

³ Guðbrandur Jónsson, *Dómkirkjan á Hólum í Hjaltadal* (Safn til sögu Íslands V 6, 1919-29), 56-8.

⁴ Páll Eggert Ólason, *Skrá yfir handritasöfn Landsbókasafnsins I-III* (1918-37); *Handritasafn Landsbókasafns. I. aukabíndi* (1947).

published or who the publisher was; there is merely the text and the statement that it was printed in the Gutenberg printing-works. The year of issue is put at c. 1906 in the *Catalogue of the Icelandic Collection bequeathed by Willard Fiske* (1914). It is not easy to conceive what the occasion for the printing of this text may have been or what purpose it was meant to serve. It is hardly credible that it was intended to be a source either of entertainment or of edification for Icelanders at the beginning of the twentieth century. It should be noticed that the text is not a reprint of that given by Unger in his edition in *Heilagra manna sögur* (1877).

But we must now look more closely at the *Margrétar saga* and compare it with other lives of virgin saints in Unger's collection, to see whether this gives us some clue to explain the large number of copies of the saga. As mentioned earlier, the *Margrétar saga* does not appear superior to the other sagas, either in language or in treatment. The matter indeed is more or less the same in them all. St Margaret preserves her virginity throughout her life and at last suffers a martyr's death for her faith. Before she died she called on God and said:

"Hear my prayer. I pray that the sins of the man who reads the story of my passion may be washed away; and whoever brings means of illumination to my church, may his sins be washed away at that time . . ."

And later:

"Again I ask you, Lord, the man who writes the story of my passion or buys that book, fill him with your holy spirit. And in that house where that book is to be found, let there be no child born dead or lame. Forgive the sins of that man, Lord, who has my book in his keeping, if he asks you for mercy."

Afterwards a dove comes from the sky with the sign of the Cross, and a voice is heard which says, among other things,

"And if a sinful man comes to the place where your sacred relics are preserved, with repentance for his sins and with humility, then his sins will be forgiven him; and there the devil will not

be found where the story of your passion is, but rather love and peace will be there.”⁵

In the Reykjavík print of the *Margrétar saga* the corresponding passage reads thus:

“Hear my prayer, omnipotent God. I pray you in the name of your dear son, Jesus Christ, hear the prayers of those who read my passion or hear it read and help them. I pray you, Lord almighty, that he who writes it or buys it may be partaker of your eternal grace, oh, let your blessings go with it into every home — this I beg you, heavenly Father, that the foul spirit may never enter in there or grow strong within that house where the story of my passion is found, and if that man asks you for mercy who has my passion in his keeping, hear his prayer, let him benefit from your blessed Son.”⁶

It is clear enough that in this latter version the Catholic elements have been dispensed with as thoroughly as possible, presumably to make it more acceptable for Lutheran readers. But both versions hold out the same promise of physical and spiritual benefit to the person who reads, writes or buys the text, and of safekeeping from evil spirits for the home in which the text is kept. Here there is a special sanctity in the text itself, the book on its own, and this is not found in connection with any other lives of virgin saints — it may be noted, moreover, that a book and quill-pen are emblems of St Margaret. There can

⁵ Unger, *Heilagra manna sögur* (1877), I 480¹³⁻¹⁶, 21²⁵, 30-33: Heyrdu bæn mína. Þess bið ek, at þvaiz syndir þess manz, er les þisarsögu mína; ok hverr sem einn, sa er lýsi færir til kirkju minnar, þvaiz af syndir þess a þeiri tíð . . . Enn bið ek, drottinn, sa er ritar þisarsögu mína eða kaupir þa bok, fylldu þa af helgum anda. Ok i því húi, er bok su er inni, verði þar eigi fædt dautt barn ne lama. Fyrirgef þu þeim manni syndir, drottinn, er bok mína hefir at vardveita, ef hann biðr þik líknar . . . Ok ef syndugr maðr kemr til þess stadar, sem þinn heilagr domr er vardveitt, með íðran synda ok lítillæti, þa munu honum fyrirgefaz syndir; ok þar mun eigi fiandi inni vera, sem þisarsaga þín er, helldr mun þar vera ast ok fridr. (The text is normalised in the use of æ and ö.)

⁶ *op. cit.* 6-7: Heyr bæn mína, allsvaldandi Guð. Ég bið þig í nafni þíns elskulega sonar Jesu Krists, bænheyr og hjálpa þeim, sem lesa þisarsögu mína eða heyra hana lesna. Ég bið þig drottinn minn almáttugur, að sá er hana skrifar eða kaupir megi verða þinnar eilífu náðar aðnjótandi, ó, láttu blessun fylgja henni inn á hvert heimili, þess bið ég þig himneski faðir, að aldrei megi hinn óhreini andi þar inn komast eða í því húsi magnast, þar sem mín þisarsaga er inni, og ef sá maður biður þig líknar, er mína þisarsögu varðveitir, þa bænheyrðu hann, láttu hann njóta þíns blessaða sonar.

be little doubt but that this power believed to be inherent in the book that contained the life of St Margaret was the reason why it was copied as often as it was in Iceland, but it is not equally obvious what especial virtue people attributed to it. Was it looked on as some kind of panacea, or was it intended to serve against some specific ailment? Since the *Margrétar saga* is as common as it is, one would expect it to be mentioned somewhere in other Icelandic sources, rich as these are in stories of superstition and the like. But strange as it may seem, there is almost complete silence about the *Margrétar saga* in printed sources, and I am not familiar with any oral information about it. The saga seems to have lived on from one generation to the next among the ordinary folk of Iceland with almost no comment. Only in one source have I come across a mention of the use of the *Margrétar saga*. This is in the so-called *Hugrás*, or *In versutias serpentis recti et tortuosi*. Það er: Lítil hugrás yfir svik og vélræði djöfulsins, sem stundum gengur réttur stundum hlykkjóttur að spilla mannkynsins sáluhjálþ. Saman skrifað anno 1627 af Guðmundi Einarssyni. The author, Guðmundur Einarsson, was rural dean of Snæfellsnessýsla and he wrote his *Hugrás* against the *Fjandafæla* and spells of Jón Guðmundsson lærði (1574-1658), who, according to Guðmundur, was at that time teaching witchcraft to the people on Snæfellsnes. In his counterblast the Rev. Guðmundur says that he is basing his work on two copies of the black magic book of Jón lærði. This particular book by Jón has not been preserved but it is possible to get some idea of its contents from the references to it by the Rev. Guðmundur. There is a section which he calls "Blood-staunching book", and another is named "Delivery book", and about the latter he says this:

"... the delivery book with all its figures, rules, medicines and *excipitur*, especially to bind this to the thigh of a woman in childbirth: Anna perperit Mariam, Maria Christum, Elizabeth Johannem, Cilicium, Remigium, Eorum dat salutarior et redemptio, quando parias filium tuum hæc fæmina, and read

afterwards Margrétar saga in nomine Patris, Filii et spiritus sancti."⁷

Here the power of delivering a child from its mother is attributed to the *Margrétar saga*, and the same property is indicated by the fact that in AM 431 12mo the *Margrétar saga* is followed by "lausn yfir jóðsjúkri konu" (deliverance for a woman in childbirth), sections of which are almost word for word the same as those which are to be tied to the thigh of the woman in accordance with the instructions quoted by Guðmundur Einarsson. And after the text of the saga in AM 433 c 12mo there apparently come the same formula and prayers for deliverance as in AM 431 12mo.⁸ In the oldest manuscripts of the *Margrétar saga* there is also the promise that in the house where the story is kept no child will be born dead or lame.

It is clear from the above that the *Margrétar saga* was considered to possess the power to preserve mother and child in difficult deliveries. I do not know of this faith in the actual text of St Margaret's life among other people than the Icelanders, but St Margaret herself is one of the fourteen auxiliary saints, and her intercession is particularly invoked in childbirth.⁹ Von Hovorka and Kronfeld say that in Oberland it was believed to be helpful to put consecrated objects under the pillow of a woman in childbirth and to invoke St Margaret,¹⁰ and they also make mention of a deliverance-belt of St Margaret. It was a piece of cloth or ribbon which was tied around the woman's loins in the name of the Holy Trinity, after which the woman was made to push and to invoke the

⁷ Ólafur Davíðsson, *Galdur og galdramál á Íslandi* (1940-43), 128-9: . . . lausnarbókina með sínum öllum stöfum, reglum, inntökum og excipitur. einkum að binda þetta við lærid á jóðsjúkri kvinnu: Anna perperit . . . spiritus sancti.

⁸ Kr. Kálund, *Alfræði íslenskt* III (1917-18), 89, 90; Hans Bekker-Nielsen, 'En god bøn', *Opuscula* II 1 (Bibliotheca Arnarnagagnæana XXV 1, 1961), 52-8 (on AM 431 12mo and 433 c 12mo).

⁹ See e.g. M. Buchberger, *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*³ VII (1962), 19; *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens* V (1932-33), 1634-5; A. Franz, *Die kirchlichen Benediktionen im Mittelalter* (1909), II 193-4.

¹⁰ O. von Hovorka and A. Kronfeld, *Vergleichende Volksmedizin* (1908-9), II 566.

saintly virgin.¹¹ But no mention is made of the book containing her passion and in general it was the Blessed Virgin whose help was sought for women in childbirth, in Scandinavia as elsewhere.¹² It would seem that faith in the power of the actual text of the life of St Margret in connection with childbirth was something peculiar to Iceland, originating in the days of Catholicism but surviving long after the Reformation. I can at any rate see no other explanation of the multitude of copies of her saga from post-Reformation times. If the saga was in fact believed to have special powers in helping women in childbirth, it may seem strange that no mention is made of *dauði barn né lama* in the Reykjavík printing of the saga. I can offer no explanation for this. Any attempt to do so would of course require a preliminary examination of all the manuscripts of the saga to see how they may differ in this detail, and it would be desirable to consider the Latin texts as well. I have not had an opportunity to make such an investigation, but I have gleaned from the manuscript catalogues what information they offer about the other contents of manuscripts containing the *Margrétar saga*. Among the pre-Reformation manuscripts three are larger collections in which the *Margrétar saga* appears with many other saints' lives. In one of these the *Margrétar saga* is followed by prayers. Seven other old manuscripts are fragments which tell us nothing of what other works may have appeared with the saga, but five others seem to have contained only the *Margrétar saga*; in three of them it is followed by prayers and in the other two by the formulae for deliverance spoken of above. The larger collections of saints' lives were probably intended for the edification of the pious and they may well have been the property of religious houses or churches, but the manuscripts that contain only the saga reveal the

¹¹ *ibid.* II 615.

¹² Cf. E. Gotfredsen, 'Barsel', *Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for nordisk Middelalder* I (1956); V. Møller Christensen, *Middelalderens Lægekunst i Danmark* (1944); I. Reichborn-Kjennerud, *Vår gamle Trolldomsmedisin* II (1933).

existence of some special predilection for St Margaret. And I would guess that the prayers following the *Margrétar saga* were in every case prayers for safe delivery in childbirth.

More than half of the post-Reformation manuscripts of the *Margrétar saga* contain other matter of a kind that makes it likely that they were intended for reading for entertainment. The catalogues enumerate items such as sagas, saga fragments, *ævintýri*, biographies, poems, *rímur* and hymns. The title given to the *Margrétar saga* in these collections sometimes appears as “Æfintýr af þeirri heilögu mey Margrétu”, “Lífsaga sællrar Margrétar meyar”, or “Ein historia um Fru Margrétu”. One such collection (JS 43 4to) has as its whole title: “Ein Agiæt Nitsöm fróðleg Lysteleg SkemmteRijk og Artug Book Innehaldande . . . Æfesaugur . . . Samanntekenn af Virðuglegum höfðings manne Magnúse Ioonssyne ad Wigur”. But in many manuscripts the *Margrétar saga* is accompanied by other matter which is variously described in the catalogues as miscellanea, miscellaneous collections, dreams, dream interpretations, magic, and it is not always possible to tell precisely what sort of material is covered by such items. Natural history and medical lore are found in two of the manuscripts containing the saga, and Lbs 405 8vo, written about 1850, includes “Sagann af mey Margrietu” and “Lausn H(eilagrar) Meyar Maríu”. Such manuscripts seem on the whole to have been intended to serve didactic and practical purposes, but it cannot be seen from the catalogues that any of them contain matter designed to help women in childbirth. This requires further investigation in the manuscripts themselves. An examination of the copies of the *Margrétar saga* in the Landsbókasafn Íslands leads to the conclusion that they differ from the pre-Reformation copies in that they are found neither with other saints’ lives nor with formulae designed to help women in childbirth. It seems rather as if in Lutheran times the

saga is given a place with material that is quite unconnected with it and, as far as can be seen, quite arbitrarily selected. The idea comes to mind that attention is being drawn away from the saga, that it is being hidden, and this would accord with the absence of reference to the saga in the sources. There can be little doubt but that the reason for this is that the use of the saga in childbirth was counted wizardry, as appears from Guðmundur Einarsson's remarks in *Hugrás* and as is also suggested by the curious distribution in time of the manuscripts of the saga.

The witch-hunting age in Iceland lasted 166 years, from 1554 until 1719. Of the 40 manuscripts of the saga enumerated in the catalogues only two were written in that period. They are the manuscript belonging to Magnús Jónsson of Vigur, mentioned above, and AM 667 4to VII, both from the seventeenth century. Otherwise no post-Reformation manuscript is older than about 1750, while there are 24 extant copies written between then and 1895; the remaining 14 are pre-Reformation copies. It is clear that during the witch-hunting age the copying of *Margrétar saga* more or less stopped, but it began again when the echoes of the last witch-trial had died away. Faith in the efficacy of the *Margrétar saga* in childbirth obviously lived through the witch-burnings, and indeed it had little in the way of serious competition when it came to practical aid for women in childbirth in those days. This is best seen from the *Handbók presta* of 1826, which follows *Danmarks og Norges Kirke-Ritual* of 1685, which also applied in Iceland, in the following passage concerning midwives:

"Each priest in his parish should instruct them how they should behave towards the mother and unborn child. 1. So that they know how properly to comfort pregnant women who are on the point of giving birth and prompt them to be thankful to God inasmuch as they have been blessed with the fruit of life . . ." "But should it come to the point where they appear to be in mortal peril," they are to be urged to "commend

themselves to God, with others who bear His cross. But little should be said of this unless mortal danger is evident." "For mother and child you are to use only prayer and permissible, natural and Christian measures, but not any that are impious, superstitious or forbidden, but make it public if anyone uses such."¹³

The *Margrétar saga* was doubtless counted among the superstitious and forbidden measures, but ignorant ordinary folk were hardly to be blamed if they turned to the saga in the hope of help for a wife in peril of death on her childbed when all prayers and natural measures had failed, and all that was left for her otherwise was to "commend herself to God, with others who bear His cross".

¹³ *Handbók presta* (1826), 296-301.

THE OLD SWEDISH *TROHETSVISAN* AND
CHAUCER'S *LAK OF STEDFASTNESSE* — A STUDY
IN A MEDIÆVAL GENRE*

By J. E. CROSS

(Presidential address, 19 March, 1965)

IT is a virtue in a literary historian to be curious about sources and influences, but one which needs firm control. When we read a new work reminiscences sometimes nag us and they are noted, but an experienced mediævalist always remains conscious of the mediæval attitude — the respect for authority, the plagiarism, the common basic pattern of learning and, in certain areas of literature, the fear of being nonconformist or heretical. In these conditions an indistinct echo need not point to a source. At times even a web of parallels is not enough to prove distinctive connection between one work and another. I suppose that we have all found to our cost in time spent that wider reading has denied our bright original hopes and has shown that distinctive connection is often difficult to maintain, or that seemingly unique statements are commonplace.

This, in my view, is the case both for Chaucer's *Lak of Stedfastnesse*¹ and the Old Swedish *Trohetsvisan*² (The Song of Fidelity), despite attempts in the past either to prove immediate influence from specific writers or works

* A number of friends have been kind enough to answer questions and give advice and help from their specialist knowledge in the various literatures to which a study in genre inevitably leads. I am greatly indebted to Michael Barnes, Peter Foote, Geoffrey Mellor, Lars-Arne Norborg, John Scattergood, Jim Tester and Arne Zettersten.

The paper was read to the Society on March 19th 1965 and I leave the marks of oral delivery in the text.

¹ Quotations are from the edited text of G. B. Pace, 'Chaucer's *Lak of Stedfastnesse*', (*Virginia*) *Studies in Bibliography* IV (1951-52), 119-120, as printed in Appendix B to this paper.

² Quoted in translation from the text printed in *Svenska medeltids dikter och rim*, utg. af G. E. Klemming (1881-82), 393-97. The full text and translation are given in Appendix A.

in the case of Chaucer's poem, or to ascribe precise reference to some statements of both the poems.

They are not very similar on first reading. Their poetic form is quite different. *Trohetsvisan* is composed of a series of two-part stanzas rhyming AAB, CCB,³ and similar two-part verses elsewhere in Old Swedish, in Latin, and in a distant example from fourteenth-century Flanders suggest that the form derived from the ubiquitous Latin sequence in its later development where the second half offers an antiphonal echo to the first half.⁴ Chaucer's poem, of course, is written as a ballade, a form which undoubtedly came to him on a secular and vernacular route. This form, we remember, was highly-contrived. At its most rigid it had three stanzas and an envoi, each verse ended with a refrain and its rhyme-scheme was complicated. Only one set of rhyme-sounds was used for the entire poem so that any line rhymes not only with certain other lines in its own stanza but with the corresponding lines in other stanzas. Unlike some of Chaucer's other ballades⁵ the *Lak of Stedfastnesse* agrees with the ideal form as it was developed in the *puy*s of thirteenth-century France and as it is widely illustrated within the works of fourteenth-century French writers such as Deschamps, Machaut and Graunson.⁶ This information is recalled to emphasise that Chaucer knew the conventions of the ballade since this may have a bearing on our understanding of the poem's content. In *The Complaint*

³ See Appendix A for an example verse.

⁴ Karl-Ivar Hildeman, *Medeltid på vers* (1958), 62-64.

⁵ *Gentillesse, To Rosemounde*, the dubious *Against Women Unconstant*, and the ballade in *The Legend of Good Women*, Prologue (F 249-269, G 203-223), have no envoi. The dubious *A Balade of Complaint* lacks an envoi and a common rhyme-scheme for all verses. The envoi to *The Complaint of Chaucer to his Purse* has a different rhyme-scheme from the other three verses. *Fortune* (*Balades de Visage sanz Peinture*) and the so-named *The Complaint of Venus* are composed as three separate three-verse ballades each with a common rhyme-scheme for the verses, but there is one envoi in a distinct rhyme-scheme for the whole poems. See H. L. Cohen, *The Ballade* (1915), *passim* on the development of the ballade, and 233-252 on Chaucer.

⁶ See generally Miss Cohen's chapter II, 'The Ballade in France', and turn the pages of e.g. *Œuvres complètes de Eustace Deschamps*, ed. le Marquis de Queux de Saint-Hilaire (S.A.T.F., 1878-93).

of *Venus* Chaucer bemoaned his difficulty in imitating Graunson because of the scarcity of rhyme in English.⁷ Would he have submitted himself to the same discipline of rhyme if *Lak of Stedfastnesse* were intended as an open statement to his king? Chaucer's comment in *Venus* may well have been made within the mediæval modesty convention⁸ however and I leave further speculation aside for the present.

There are further differences between *Trohetsvisan* and Chaucer's poem. In the presentation of content the brief personifications of abstract ideas in Chaucer become simply-extended allegorical pictures in some of the verses of *Trohetsvisan*. And where Chaucer speaks of many virtues and vices the Swedish poem confines itself mainly to a discussion of the overthrow of Fidelity by its opposing vices.

Yet there is similarity of content and the same general attitude and purpose which makes a mediævalist suspect that the poems may be of the same genre and compels general reading in other similar poems before conclusions are drawn about either as individual pieces.

The impetus for this comparative study however came for me from an illuminating scholarly paper on *Trohetsvisan* by Karl-Ivar Hildeman in his book, *Medeltid på vers* (1958),⁹ and I draw largely on this essay for comment on the Swedish poem.

It is scarcely an inspiring poem but it has received notice mainly because it appears in the same manuscript (B 42 of the Royal Library Stockholm) as *Frihetsvisan* (The Song of Freedom), a poem with clear historical reference

⁷ And eke to me it ys a gret penaunce,
Syth rym in Englyssh hath such skarsete,
To folowe word by word the curiosite
Of Graunson, flour of hem that make in Fraunce (ll. 79-82).

⁸ See E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (trans. W. R. Trask, 1953), Excursus II, 407-13, 'Devotional Formula and Humility', on the 'modesty' of mediæval writers; and note that Chaucer produced common rhyme-schemes for the separate verses of all of the ballades certainly attributed to him.

⁹ 'Trohetsvisan och dess genre', Hildeman, *op. cit.*, 116-152.

and quotable lines for historical text-books, and because both poems are attributed in the manuscript to the same author, Bishop Thomas of Strängnäs who died in 1443,¹⁰ "Hec Thomas pie memorie, quondam episcopus strenge-nensis" runs the ascription at the end of *Frihetsvisan*¹¹ and similarly for *Trohetsvisan*.¹² Historians were happy to accept these attributions and in 1955 they appeared to be confirmed when Lars Sjödin indicated¹³ that the scribe of B 42 was a certain Birger Hammar, dean of Strängnäs, a canon of the cathedral during Bishop Thomas's episcopacy and, indeed, one of the executors of the bishop's will. Clearly Birger should have known whether Bishop Thomas wrote the poems or not and even those who naturally suspect anonymous scribal attributions now allowed the poems to the bishop. Gottfrid Carlsson,¹⁴ the Lund historian, and other historians before him were surely influenced by this common authorship and the nature of *Frihetsvisan* when they saw precise historical reference in *Trohetsvisan*. They knew the political environment in which Bishop Thomas moved. It was a turbulent period in Swedish history, the time of the rise and fall of Engelbrekt, who first led the "free" miners of Bergslagen in revolt against the absentee king of all Scandinavia, Erik of Pomerania. They demanded, as it says in a contemporary letter,¹⁵ "to have one king in Sweden and to drive out the King of Denmark from the three kingdoms", and, either naïvely or with a cynical eye to propaganda, "they . . . wish Sweden to return to her state under King Eric (their idealised patron saint) . . . in his time no customs duties or taxes existed . . . they will therefore have back the same rights as in former days".

¹⁰ See *Ny Illustrerad Svensk Litteraturhistoria*, ed. E. N. Tigerstedt (1955), I 269, for a brief biography of Thomas Simonsson.

¹¹ As printed in E. Noreen, *Fornsvensk Läsobok* (ed. S. Benson, 1957), 133.

¹² Klemming, *op. cit.*, 397: "Hec Thomas Episcopus Strenge-nensis."

¹³ Hildeman, *op. cit.*, 120.

¹⁴ G. Carlsson, *Biskop Tomas av Strängnäs* (1955), 24, cited by Hildeman, *op. cit.*, 120.

¹⁵ See Ingvar Andersson, *A history of Sweden* (trans. Carolyn Hannay, 1956), 78-89 on Engelbrekt's bid for power and 79 for the letter.

But Engelbrekt never really gained the position for which he and his followers had hoped. He had strong enemies and in 1436 the Council chose as their man the marshall Karl Knutsson. Although Engelbrekt shared the leadership of the army with Karl at this time he was soon murdered by the nobleman Magnus Bengtsson and the people were forgotten. Karl Knutsson gained supremacy and even executed Engelbrekt's right-hand man, Erik Puke. We do not know where Bishop Thomas stood at every change of alliance but he was in the centre of these temporal events. Earlier he had been Erik of Pomerania's candidate for the vacant archbishopric of Uppsala¹⁶ and during the year of the revolt (1434) he was urged by Engelbrekt to undertake the naval defence of Sweden together with the lords of Uppland against Erik's counter-attack.¹⁷ Such a man as he could easily have been the author of *Frihetsvisan* which refers to the main figures and events of this period. If he also wrote *Trohetsvisan*, as all the evidence suggested, would there not also be precise reference in that poem? Gottfrid Carlsson, and other historians before him, looked and found, latching on to a phrase in verse 10 of the poem:

It happened last year,
Fidelity committed a murder,
then she escaped.

This, he surmised, was a reference to Engelbrekt's murder by Magnus Bengtsson on a small island in Lake Hjälmaren;¹⁸ and the older historian Hans Hildebrand¹⁹ thought that there was a hint about the place of murder in verse 3:

Fidelity went to the shore
and put out from the land;
it is very difficult
to get to her help at such a hard time;
she sank to the bottom.

¹⁶ *Ny Illustrerad Svensk Litteraturhistoria*, I 269.

¹⁷ Andersson, *op. cit.*, 81.

¹⁸ Carlsson, *op. cit.*, 24 ff., cited by Hildeman, *op. cit.*, 125.

¹⁹ Hildeman, *op. cit.*, 126.

There is, perhaps, little need to comment on such opinion when a reader of the whole poem sees that Fidelity was also hidden in a rock, locked within a thick wall, sent to a foreign country and even creeps into hiding and gets as foul as steaming dung.²⁰ All of these, of course, must be metaphorical pictures to express the rejection of Fidelity and it is unreasonable to ascribe precise reference to one statement and not to the others. There have been other candidates for the murder,²¹ and this too emphasises the imprecision of the poetic comments.

But lest literary historians feel superior we may recall that similar comments have been made on Chaucer's *Lak of Stedfastnesse*. A. W. Pollard took the line "Pite exiled no man is merciable" to refer to the Merciless Parliament of 1388, and G. H. Cowling thought it was a reference to Richard's banishment of Mowbray.²²

We return however to *Trohetsvisan* and Hildeman's argument that the Swedish poem may not have been written by Bishop Thomas. In writing his book of 1958²³ he had checked Sjödin's remarks on the scribal hand of B 42 and as a result of comparison of this hand with that of a book in Strängnäs Diocesan Library which in places was written by Birger Hammar, he suggested that the two manuscripts were written by different men. This now would mean that the attribution of *Frihetsvisan* and *Trohetsvisan* to Bishop Thomas rests on an anonymous manuscript tradition of some thirty years²⁴ after the bishop's death. As Hildeman says,²⁵ the manuscript

²⁰ Hildeman, *loc. cit.*, points out that this verse should be taken with the preceding one where Fidelity "has set sail on the wild sea", a phrase which does not suggest an association with Lake Hjälmaren.

²¹ Erik Puke and Archbishop Olof have also been named. See Hildeman, *op. cit.*, 124-25.

²² As noted by H. Braddy, 'The Date of Chaucer's *Lak of Stedfastnesse*', *JEGP* XXXVI (1937), 488 note 23. There appears to be some inconsistency between Braddy's correct comment on "conventional personifications" to oppose Pollard and Cowling and his reliance on indistinct echoes of various poems of Deschamps to prove his main thesis that Chaucer was influenced by the French poet.

²³ Hildeman, *op. cit.*, 121.

²⁴ MS. B 42 Royal Library Stockholm is dated to the 1470s; Hildeman, *op. cit.*, 121, 122.

²⁵ *ibid.*, 122.

tradition may be correct since it was certainly written in the Strängnäs cathedral chapter, but he would prefer some confirmation. A little is found for *Frihetsvisan* in a proclamation by the Council, including Thomas Simonson, where there is parallel wording to the poem,²⁶ but nothing for *Trohetsvisan*. Indeed, as I think, the provenance of the manuscript may throw doubt on the attribution, since it may indicate partisan activity for Strängnäs in the person of one of its bishops. Seemingly one more mediæval poem becomes anonymous.

Hildeman had rightly founded his argument on opposition to the traditional opinion of the historians but his positive literary contribution was to identify *Trohetsvisan* with other poems in other languages and so to indicate its genre. If you have glanced at the list of abbreviations on the cyclostyle²⁷ for Chaucer's poem you will have anticipated many of the following comments, but before Hildeman's remarks there had been no discussion of the Swedish poem on these lines. He stated, as we now expect, that the poem "represents a mediæval kind of poetry, or at least a pattern of motifs with stereotyped expression and consistent characteristics — with many variations and of great extent. It is a generalising poetry of lamentation which, above all, is concerned with the same personified moral concepts; virtues such as Justice, Truth, Wisdom, Fidelity or their opposites, e.g. Falsity, Avarice, Injustice, Envy. The theme varies insignificantly, outbursts over the wretchedness of the time, lamentation over the perpetual inferiority of the Good, resignation or indignation before the triumphal march of Evil through the world."²⁸

The moralising *planctus* or 'complaint' is found in many European languages so it is probable that its origin is Latin or that its spread is explicable by Latin versions.

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ Now Appendix B.

²⁸ Hildeman, *op. cit.*, 128.

The genre, however, is not, strictly speaking, liturgical or ecclesiastical in the limited sense of these terms despite the religious undertones and moral didacticism, but rather it should be associated with the so-named Goliardic poetry which was written by educated men, some of them anonymous 'clerici vagantes' but some named authors such as Philippe de Grève, chancellor of Paris University who died in 1236.²⁹

Some titles and some representative verses will give an impression of the genre. Titles include: The Evils of the Times, On Injustice, The Conflict of Justice and Grace, Complaint on the Vileness of the Times, On Faith and Truth, On the Exile of Truth.³⁰ Verses include 'Fas et Nefas ambulat' in the loose but rhythmical translation of Miss Waddell:³¹

Right and Wrong they go about
Cheek by jowl together.
Lavishness can't keep in step,
Avarice his brother.
Virtue even in the most
Unusual moderation,
Seeking for the middle course,
Vice on either side it, must
Look about her with the most
Cautious contemplation.

and 'Ecce torpet probitas'³² in a closer prose translation:

²⁹ On Philippe see F. J. Raby, *A History of Secular Latin Poetry in the Middle Ages* (1957), II 227-235.

³⁰ *De Malitia Temporum, De Iniustitia, Conflictus Iustitiae et Misericordiae*, in *Analecta Hymnica*, ed. G. M. Dreves, etc. (1886—), XLVI 361, 367, 377; *Planctus de temporum nequitia*, *ibid.*, XLV 73 (Anhang); *De Fide et Veritate, De Veritate exsule*, *ibid.*, XXI 124, 125.

³¹ Helen Waddell, *Medieval Latin Lyrics* (1948), 189. The text, 188, reads:

Fas et Nefas ambulat
pene passu pari;
prodigus non redimit
vitium avari;
virtus temperantia
quadam singulari
debet medium
ad utrumque vitium
caute contemplari.

³² Quoted by Hildeman, *op. cit.*, 129, but the translation is that of a slightly variant text in *Carmina Burana*, herausgegeben von A. Hilka and O. Schumann (1930), I i 3: (see foot of following page).

1. See Uprightness is sluggish,
Worth is buried,
Now liberality becomes niggardly,
Parsimony is lavish.
Falsehood speaks the truth,
Truth lies.
2. Avarice reigns,
The avaricious rule also;
Everyone struggles with worried mind
to become rich, since the height
of glory is to be proud in wealth.

3. All people hurt the law; the lawless proceed to lawless deeds.

and a poem from the twelfth century³³ which has the same subject as *Trohetsvisan* and which illustrates the rhetorical play on words found, at times, in such verses:

Once the fact of faith, now its semblance is honoured,
Once faith alone, now fraud also is deceived.
And guile is repelled with a trick of guile,
Guile is in guile and guile is exalted.

Exactly this kind of poetry appeared in Latin within the *Piæ Cantiones*, a Scandinavian collection printed in 1582 but composed of poems written earlier, as the title indicates: 'Ecclesiastical and scholastic songs of ancient bishops used everywhere in the illustrious kingdom of Sweden'.³⁴ The sources of some of these songs can be traced outside Sweden, often to Bohemia, and we recall the importance of Prague University to Swedish culture before the Reformation. Again a few verses are

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Ecce torpet probitas,
virtus sepelitur;
fit iam parca largitas,
parcitas largitur,
verum dicit falsitas,
veritas mentitur. | 2. Regnat avaritia,
regnant et avari;
mente quivis anxia
nititur ditari,
cum sit summa gloria
censu gloriari. |
| 3. Omnes iura ledunt
et ad res illicitas
licite recedunt. | |

³³ Quoted by Hildeman, *op. cit.*, 131, from *Analecta Hymnica*, XXI 124:
Olim res fidei, nunc umbra colitur,
Olim sola fides, nunc et fraus fallitur,
Et doli machina dolus repellitur,
In dolo dolus est et dolus tollitur.

³⁴ Quoted by Hildeman, *op. cit.*, 142, "cantiones ecclesiasticæ et scholasticæ veterum episcoporum, in Inclÿto Regno Sueciæ passim usurpatæ".

translated, the first from a poem 'On the Iniquity of the Times':³⁵

1. True love has breathed its last,
Peace on earth has been exiled,
Children rule their father,
Guile has attacked Law,
All the world has changed itself,
A new law prevails.
2. Fraud imprisons Faith,
Tongue tears Fame to pieces,
King overpowers King,
People pour blame on people,
Novelty, Vanity, Iniquity, War and
Hostility have seized all the ways
of the world.

and a few lines from 'On the Evils of the World':³⁶

1. Now Lying flourishes,
Fellowship of depravity,
They who speak falsely
are valued in the world.
2. Fraud is crowned with gifts,
Worth is trampled under foot,
Piety and Felicity
are as though brutishness.

Such poems as these are clear illustration of Dr Hildeman's general remarks about the genre, but the allegorical pictures of *Trohetsvisan* have not yet been paralleled. To explain this feature however Dr Hildeman has, I think, created excessive difficulties for himself. The noun plus verb personifications of the Latin lists are rhetorical and controlled and probably scholarly, but it takes little initiative to extend such limited personifica-

³⁵ *Analecta Hymnica*, XLVb 162:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Verus amor expiravit,
Pax in terris exsulavit,
Patri proles imperat,
Legem dolus impugnavit,
Totus mundus se mutavit,
Nova lex exsuperat. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Fidem fraus incarcerat,
Famam lingua lacerat,
Regem rex exsuperat,
Plebem plebs vituperat.
Omnes mundi semitas
Occupavit novitas,
Vanitas, iniquitas,
Guerra vel hostilitas. |
|--|---|

³⁶ *ibid.*, 160:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nunc floret mendacium,
Pravtatis consortium.
In mundo diliguntur,
Qui falsa obloquuntur, | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Fraus donis coronatur,
Virtus suppeditatur,
Pietas et felicitas
Est tamquam bestialitas. |
|---|---|

tions to whole verse pictures with realistic detail, possibly for a more popular audience. Such a line as the macaronic "Verecundia was drownytt at þe laste fluyde"³⁷ would need little elaboration. Indeed we have such an extension in the English poem 'Truth is Unpopular':³⁸

In ladyis chaumberys comit he not,
Der dar trewþe settyn non fot;
Þow he wolde he may not
comyn among þe heye mene.

Dr Hildeman argues³⁹ closely from the parallel cases of later Swedish poems such as the seventeenth-century *Konstens och Dygdens förakt* (Contempt of Order and Virtue) which has the same extended pictures. This poem has a variant in sixteenth-century Danish and appears to have contact, perhaps at a number of removes, with a German poem known to be written by the German mastersinger Hans Rosenplüt who lived about 1450.⁴⁰ From this derivation and evidence of relationships for other Swedish poems Hildeman deduces that *Trohetsvisan* was also influenced by the German *Spruch* poetry which was composed in the poetic guilds. The detail in argument here and the knowledge of cultural contact between the Continent (Germany especially) and Sweden makes this a very likely line of descent, although the English example suggests that it is not a necessary one. As we recall, the vernacular and Latin lyric flourished side by side at this period⁴¹ and it is difficult to distinguish the direction of influences. It does seem however that the allegorical pictures of *Trohetsvisan* are a vernacular feature. If it was derived from German *Spruch* poetry this merely means that *Trohetsvisan* is a modified form of

³⁷ *Religious Lyrics of the XVth Century*, ed. Carleton Brown (1939), 269, no. 176 l. 10.

³⁸ *Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries*, ed. R. H. Robbins (1959), 146, no. 59 ll. 5-8.

³⁹ 133-141. Other poems discussed are the macaronic verses of *Sanningen, Falskheden, Troonn*, found in sixteenth-century manuscripts, but also in German, and *Sanningen och Lögnen*.

⁴⁰ For the date see J. G. Robertson, *A History of German Literature* (3rd ed. revised by E. Purdie, W. I. Lucas and M. O'C. Walshe, 1959), 134.

⁴¹ See F. J. Raby, *op. cit.*, II 322 ff.

the Latin *planctus*, since the German poetry has clear affinities with the Latin.⁴²

This feature of *Trohetsvisan* is, of course, not apparent in Chaucer's poem, and we may take our lead from Hildeman's remarks about the Latin poems in considering the genre of *Lak of Stedfastnesse*. I have thought it clearer to produce a text with illustrations, now printed in Appendix B, but I will select and elaborate on some recurring features which identify the genre of the poem.

The general attitude is emphasised in the description of a world "rotten to the core", as Hildeman said of other poems,⁴³ and this is presented partly in the brief personifications of abstractions. The short statements of lines 15-17:

Trouthe is putte down resoun is holden fable
Vertu hath now no dominacioun
Pite exiled no man is mercriable

are clearly echoes of the Latin noun plus verb statements in the Continental poems, which are also found in other Middle English verses. The stylistic feature may derive ultimately from Scriptural passages spoken by other prophets of woe such as Isaiah 59, 14: "And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter", probably reinforced⁴⁴ by the Latin satirists such as Juvenal: "Probitas laudatur et alget" (I, 74). It is, of course, difficult to trace a direct line of descent for any isolated phrase unless there is other evidence of the poet's immediate reading. Such phrases as these are found in quantity in the *de contemptu mundi* literature, as for example in the poem attributed to Bernard of Morlaix: "Peace weeps, love groans, wrath stands and roars, right

⁴² Hildeman, *op. cit.*, 135 on *Sanningen, Falskheden, Troonn*.

⁴³ The Swedish idiom is a little different: "intill roten ruttna", Hildeman, *op. cit.*, 131.

⁴⁴ The notes in Hilka and Schumann, *op. cit.*, amply illustrate the echoes of Latin satirists in *Carmina Burana*. See also Raby, *op. cit.*, II 325: "The poets of the Arundel and Benediktbeuern collections, as well as Walter of Châtillon, knew the classical poets thoroughly . . ."

is exiled", "Fraud stands, love lies low, order weeps".⁴⁵ We can say only that such statements are a feature of the genre.

The line "Thorugh couetyse is blent discrecioun" has a similar idea expressed in the same image as Deuteronomy 16, 19: "gifts blind the eyes of the wise",⁴⁶ but we cannot say certainly that Chaucer recalled his Vulgate at this point. For the hint may well have come through such a phrase as this in *Carmina Burana* no. 11, "Nummus destroys the hearts of the wise, blinds their eyes"⁴⁷ where the bribery implied in the Scriptural text has been adapted to the general *nummus*, in classical Latin 'a coin',⁴⁸ but a word which has come to stand for all the evils of money.

The contrast of the good past and evil present which F. N. Robinson,⁴⁹ (and, more recently, J. Norton-Smith⁵⁰) found only in Boethius is a commonplace, not only in this genre in Latin, French, English and Swedish as the illustrations to lines 1-3 show,⁵¹ but in numerous earlier writings on the last age of the world as well. The "good old days" could be the first age of the world as in Chaucer's *The Former Age*, in Boethius, Ovid, Hesiod, Augustine and so on, as Professors Lovejoy and Boas have so prolifically exemplified.⁵² But they could be any time in the past.

⁴⁵ Translated from *Bernardi Morlanensis De Contemptu Mundi* in *The Anglo-Latin Satirical Poets and Epigrammatists of the Twelfth Century*, ed. T. Wright (Rolls Series, 1872), II 47: "pax flet, amor gemit, ira stat et fremit, exule recto", and 40: "fraus stat, amor jacet, ordo flet . . ."

⁴⁶ "munera excacant oculos sapientum (et mutant verba justorum)."

⁴⁷ "Nummus corda neceat sapientum, lumina cecat", Hilka and Schumann, *op. cit.*, 16 (No. 11 l. 26). See their notes to this line (p. 19 in the last section) for other similar statements.

⁴⁸ *A Latin Dictionary*, ed. C. T. Lewis and C. Short, s.v. *nummus*.

⁴⁹ *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. F. N. Robinson (1957), 862; see Appendix B.

⁵⁰ 'Chaucer's *Etas Prima*', *Medium Ævum* XXXII (1963), 123. "This balade (*Lak of Stedfastnesse*) derives its major source material from Boethius's *De Consolatione* II metre 8 . . . In terms of sources it shows not a little similarity to 'The Former Age'. The balade, moreover, opens with a contrast between former times and the present . . ." The statements above are somewhat vague and, I take it, are derived from those of Robinson, but the assumption to be made appears to be that the antithesis is Boethian.

⁵¹ See Appendix B.

⁵² A. O. Lovejoy and G. Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity* (1935), and G. Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in the Middle Ages* (1948).

Gregory the Great, for example, when exhorting his congregation to recall the saints Nereus and Achilles, reputedly martyred under Trajan in the first century A.D., regarded their lifetime as the ideal period and contrasted it with his present time.⁵³ The Gregorian passage, which was used by Ælfric in his *Passio S. Mauricii*, was adapted in *Blickling Homily No. X*⁵⁴ to provide a contrast between the first and last ages of the world. Against such a background who can say that this simple contrast between past and present in *Lak of Stedfastnesse* is specifically Boethian?

The "up-down" antithesis in Chaucer's phrase: "turned vp so doun is all this world", lines 5-6, is relevantly illustrated by F. N. Robinson in his reference to *Boece*:⁵⁵

the condicion of thynges turned up-so-doun, that a man,
that is a devyne beest be meryte of his resoun, thynketh that
hymself nys neyther fair ne noble but it be thurw possessioun
of ostelementz that ne han no soules.

But Boethius is not the only one to present the idea. As E. R. Curtius has pointed out,⁵⁶ this is the "basic formal principle" of *Carmina Burana* No. 6 where the idea is emphasised in ludicrous examples of men and animals doing things contrary to nature and commonsense, exactly as in our modern phrase to express disbelief: "pigs might fly". Another mediæval example is seen among the poems attributed to Lydgate by Halliwell:⁵⁷

A leche to thryve where none is sore ne sike,
An instrument of musyk withouten a sown,
A scorpion to be both mylde and meke,
A cloyster man ever rennyng in the towne.

⁵³ *Homilia XXVIII in Evangelia* § 3, P. L. 76, cols. 1212-13.

⁵⁴ Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*, ed. W. W. Skeat (E.E.T.S., O.S., 76, 82, 94, 114, 1881-1900), II 166-8; *The Blickling Homilies* ed. R. Morris (E.E.T.S., O.S. 58, 63, 73, 1874-80), 115. On the adaptation see J. E. Cross, 'Gregory, *Blickling Homily X* and Ælfric's *Passio S. Mauricii* on the world's youth and age', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* LXVI (1965), 327-30.

⁵⁵ There is a printer's error in Robinson's edition, *op. cit.*, 862 col. 2. The reference should be to *Boece*, ii pr. 5, 127-8.

⁵⁶ Curtius, *op. cit.*, 95 for the statement.

⁵⁷ *A selection from the minor poems of Dan John Lydgate*, ed. J. O. Halliwell (1840), II 57.

The device is found in classical antiquity, known in Carolingian poetry⁵⁸; illustrated in fourteenth-century French poetry, exemplified elsewhere in Middle English; and Chaucer's phrase recurs in poems printed by R. H. Robbins and in a late Latin poem within the genre: 'Totus mundus est subversus'.⁵⁹ "Vpsedowne — subversus" says the *Promptorium Parvulorum*,⁶⁰ the English-Latin word-list of about 1440.

The phrase in line 19, "The worlde hath made a permutacioun", has its equivalent in the Scandinavian Latin collection *Piæ Cantiones*, "Totus mundus se mutavit", and is immediately identified by Chaucer in the contraries: "Fro right to wrong fro trowth to fikelnesse". Such contraries are found elsewhere within the genre, for example, in a thirteenth-century Latin poem which translates:⁶¹ "Judgement is for sale; Justice is neglected; Vices usurp power to themselves; Virtue and Vice are seen to be a pair from the deeds of all because they are contrary."

There is further identification with the literary type in the use of stock verbs or verbal phrases to create the personifications. The most notable example is the verb 'to exile' (line 19) which appears to have been very popular. Its popularity obviously opposes the remarks of Pollard and Cowling on precise reference in the phrase to political event.⁶² The illustrations to lines 15-16 offer a number of verbal phrases which Chaucer might have chosen.

Perhaps however enough has been said to indicate that *Lak of Stedfastnesse* exhibits the marks of its genre. There is nothing internal which suggests that Chaucer need have

⁵⁸ Curtius, *op. cit.*, 95-96.

⁵⁹ See Appendix B, note to l. 5.

⁶⁰ *Promptorium Parvulorum . . . auctore Fratre Galfrido Grammatico dicto . . . A.D. circa MCCCCXL*, ed. A. Way (1843-1845), III 512 col. 2.

⁶¹ See Appendix B, note to l. 20 for the Latin.

⁶² See above note 22.

been *directly* influenced by Boethius,⁶³ and, apart from the inconclusive evidence of the ballade-form which Chaucer certainly saw in more than one French writer, there is nothing distinctive to suggest a debt to Deschamps.⁶⁴ It would, of course, be another matter, if there were some external evidence, if the poem were entitled: 'On Looking into Boethius's Consolation' or 'On reading the slim volume lately sent to me by Eustace Deschamps'. But in the absence of this, we may leave the last word on this point to an earlier reader of this poem, the sixteenth-century George Bannatyne (or his exemplar) who added a spurious verse to Chaucer's poem which, as Skeat said, "is very poor stuff" but is pure genre material:⁶⁵

Falsheid, that sowld bene abhominable,
Now is regeing, but reformatioun,
Quha now gifis lergly ar maist dissavable,
For vycis ar the grund of sustentacioun;
All wit is turnit to cavillatioun
Lawtie expellit, and all gentilnes,
That all is loist for laik of steidfastnes.

I have not attempted to illustrate the last verse, the *envoi*, since there are no parallels to this feature within the genre except in poems written in the ballade form and this might incline us to consider French influence for the content. The content of the *envoi* needs consideration, however, in relation to the etiquette of ballade writing. A number of scholars have regarded it as a personal and direct statement, some reading it as open Chaucerian "admonition"⁶⁶ to King Richard II, one seeing it as

⁶³ In the note to line 16 no. 4 (Appendix B) the Boethian image of "virtue trodden under foot" appears to be the source of the phrase in Deschamps and *Pia Cantiones* no. 193, but there is not such a distinctive collocation in Chaucer's poem, and in even considering this 'source' one should be aware of the metaphorical use of *conculco*, *calco* in the Vulgate.

⁶⁴ The notes in Appendix B illustrate how Deschamps also was writing within the genre on many occasions.

⁶⁵ Chaucer, *The Minor Poems*, ed. W. W. Skeat (1888), 387. The stanza is quoted there.

⁶⁶ e.g. F. N. Robinson, *op. cit.*, 862, and M. Schlauch, 'Chaucer's Doctrine of Kings and Tyrants', *Speculum XX* (1945), 137, who both use this word. Haldeen Braddy, *op. cit.*, 488 is obviously of the same opinion when he speaks of Chaucer's "advising Richard to cease doing 'his neighbour wrong or oppression' and to give up 'covetyse'".

more subtle revelation.⁶⁷ The first, to my mind, is unlikely, since the recipient perhaps should have been more specifically distinguished,⁶⁸ and because strong feelings are not freely expressed in a rigid verse-form. The second, however, is a possibility since, as Hildeman says of the genre, "it is possible that such cases (of unlawful action) were the 'sparks' that caused the poems to be written", yet, he continues, "this should not be taken for granted and certainly cannot be proved."⁶⁹ The last phrase should be modified for there are occasions when hints are given in the poems which may date or place them. R. H. Robbins has produced some fascinating results along these lines for Middle English verses in his *Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries*⁷⁰ and F. J. Raby records⁷¹ the exciting case of a Latin poem (in the Arundel collection) attacking a bishop whose name was the enigmatic 'Obliviosus'.⁷² Bernhard Bischoff however pointed out that the word was the 'interpretation' of the name Manasses in Jerome's *Liber de nominibus Hebraicis* and such was the name of a notorious Bishop of Orleans (1146-1185).

Some alertness and care is needed. But, to my mind, there is no conclusive evidence within the poem of the identity of the recipient. The word "Prince" appears promising but may well be conventional. Miss Cohen,

⁶⁷ A. Brusendorff, *The Chaucer Tradition* (1925), 274: "it was probably intended as a Machiavellian compliment to Richard on his bold bid for supremacy rather than as a somewhat commonplace reflection on his failure to do justice, a reflection which Chaucer would hardly have dared to address to the king."

⁶⁸ See below for the comment on the term 'Prince' and note that Chaucer drops the conventional mode of address when he wants money from Henry IV in *The Complaint of Chaucer to his Purse*.

⁶⁹ Hildeman, *op. cit.*, 152.

⁷⁰ Robbins, *op. cit.*, xxiv-xxvi. The most interesting case is for no. 49, p. xxiv.

⁷¹ Raby, *op. cit.*, II 253.

⁷²

a me si requiritur
quis est, qui sic dicitur
mendax et mendosus:
oblitus sum nominis,
quia nomen hominis
est 'Obliviosus'.

who has written the most detailed study of the ballade form, reminds us that the patron of the *puy* was conventionally addressed as "Prince" and ⁷³ "that after the opening of the fourteenth century a *ballade*, whether composed in a *puy* or not, almost inevitably⁷⁴ contained a conventional address to the 'Prince' in the first line of the envoy". If the term refers to a patron there is no indication in the *envoi* that the addressee, who admittedly has authority, need be a king or indeed of royal blood.⁷⁵

There is information within the manuscript traditions but this should not be lightly accepted.⁷⁶ Four manuscripts in all state that the recipient was the king, one that it was written in Chaucer's last years. The Shirley autograph, Trinity College Cambridge MS. R. 3. 20, states that the poem is a "Balade Royal made by oure laureal poete of Albyon in hees laste yeeres" and the last verse is here entitled 'Lenvoye to Kyng Richard'.⁷⁷ Manuscript Harley 7333 informs us that Chaucer sent this ballade to King Richard at Windsor.⁷⁸ Two other manuscripts, the

⁷³ Cohen, *op. cit.*, 38.

⁷⁴ This phrase is, of course, an exaggeration, but "very commonly" would fit the situation.

⁷⁵ Cf. Cohen, *op. cit.*, 235 on the term 'Princes' used in *Lenvoye de Fortune* in *Balades de Visage sanz Peinture*: "the royalty addressed is probably literary, not literal".

⁷⁶ As does J. Norton-Smith, *op. cit.*, 123. It was unfortunate, I think, that he marred his generally illuminating analysis of *The Former Age*, which was clearly based on alert reading, by demanding some support from *Lak of Stedfastnesse* for a similar attitude in the poet. The comments made on *Lak of Stedfastnesse* rely on a different standard of evidence, e.g. 123: "This ballade derives its major source material from Boethius's *De Consolatione* II metre 8", whereas even Skeat who, I suppose, offered information as basis for this statement says only: "The general idea is taken from Boethius book ii metre 8" (*op. cit.*, 386). And on the same page: "The refrain is imitated from Deschamps' 234th ballade: 'Tout se destruit et par default de garde' " is an idea from Brusendorff (p. 487) or Braddy (p. 484) since Robinson (p. 862) is doubtful.

This kind of statement about *Lak of Stedfastnesse* is quite different from e.g. the comments (p. 121) on the point of Chaucer's choosing Jupiter and Nimrod in the last verse of *The Former Age*, statements which are founded on careful reading of the poem and relevant knowledge of mediæval thought. In my view such comments can stand without other support.

⁷⁷ Robinson, *op. cit.*, 862 col. 1. There is a printer's error in Robinson's second edition (p. 919) where it says that R³ (Trin. Coll. Camb. MS. R. 14.51) reads 'Lenvoye to Kyng Richard'. This, of course, should read R¹ (Trin. Coll. Camb. MS. R. 3. 20).

⁷⁸ *ibid.* 862 col. 1. The poem is called 'l'envoy to Kyng Richard' according to Brusendorff, *op. cit.*, 230.

Bodleian Hatton 73 and its descendant⁷⁹ Lambeth Palace Library MS. no. 344 state simply that "these baladdis were send to the kyng",⁸⁰ but there are indications that Hatton 73 originally read "Geffrey Chauncier [*sic*] sende these Balades to Kyng Richard".⁸¹ All this looks tempting. But we recall that, according to Brusendorff,⁸² all these manuscripts belong to or have close affinity with the Shirley group, which suggests that the statement originates with Shirley, or that, according to Pace's close analysis of the manuscripts,⁸³ they all derive from a lost manuscript which is three removes from Chaucer's poem. In the second case we are dealing with an anonymous scribal tradition which is opposed by two groups of manuscripts only one remove from the original whose title for the poem is simply 'Balade'. In the first case we need to consider the value of the Shirley descriptions and headings and, as is known, they have been variously accepted and rejected by Chaucerian commentators as and when desired. The accuracy of Shirley's statements is, indeed, difficult to assess. His statement about *Fortune* is, at best, loose;⁸⁴ the comment on *Truth* cannot be checked;⁸⁵ parts of the description of *The Complaint of Venus* are demonstrably inaccurate;⁸⁶ and the description of *Chaucer's wordes unto Adam* could have been surmised from the poem's content. It is therefore possible that

⁷⁹ H. N. MacCracken, *MLN* XXIII (1908), 213 says: "the (Lambeth Palace) MS. is . . . a careless copy of Hatton 73".

⁸⁰ Brusendorff, *op. cit.*, 228 for Hatton 73; MacCracken, *op. cit.*, 214 for Lambeth Palace Library MS. no. 344 (with variant spellings).

⁸¹ So MacCracken, *op. cit.*, 214, "original titles revealed under acid". G. B. Pace, *Speculum* XXVI (1951), 315 note 27 read "Chaucier send" under ultra violet.

⁸² p. 228 for Hatton 73, p. 229 for Trin. R. 3. 20, p. 230 for Harley 7333.

⁸³ (*Virginia*) *Studies in Bibliography* IV (1951-52), 105-122, and the genealogical table on 107. Pace's table is the basis for the following statement.

⁸⁴ As Brusendorff notes, *op. cit.*, 242, when defending the description: "translated oute of ffrenshe in to Englysshe by pat famous Rethorissyen Geffrey Chaucier".

⁸⁵ Given in Brusendorff, *op. cit.*, 250: "Balade pat Chaucier made on his deeth bedde".

⁸⁶ See Shirley's description in Brusendorff, *op. cit.*, 263, and Brusendorff's discussion, 264; but note Robinson's comments, *op. cit.*, 862 col. 2, and Cohen's summary (pp. 237-38) of Piaget's opposition to Shirley's remarks.

John Shirley who was not only a (careless)⁸⁷ scribe but a flourishing commercial publisher⁸⁸ had his eye to his customers when writing some of these gossiping headings, since he ran a kind of circulating library for a set of noble clients on strictly business lines. Of course he may have had special information since he was connected with court and literary circles⁸⁹ but there is no certainty about this.

The evidence available at present must force us to leave *Lak of Stedfastnesse* undated and unaddressed as a poem written within a popular genre in the ballade form; and this conclusion returns us to Hildeman's opening remarks on *Trohetsvisan* — that a study of mediæval literature should go hand in hand with a study of genres.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Brusendorff, *op. cit.*, 233: "What generally took place when Shirley was copying Chaucer's poems, which he evidently knew well, appears to have been that he relied too much on his frequently failing memory, and that, when refreshing it by a much needed look in the written original, he did so in a rather too rapid and perfunctory way."

⁸⁸ Brusendorff, *op. cit.*, 216-17.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, 453-471, an appendix on 'Lydgate and Shirley' where Brusendorff indicates their close relationship. A. I. Doyle, 'More Light on John Shirley', *Medium Ævum* XXX (1961), 93 ff. suggests that Shirley was attached to the retinue of Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick (in 1401), but, as Doyle notes p. 93, Shirley was nearly fifty before there is certain knowledge about his career. This brings us to a date nearly twenty years after Chaucer's death.

⁹⁰ Hildeman, *op. cit.*, 116.

APPENDIX A

Troheten

(text from G. E. Klemming, *Svenska medeltids dikter och rim* (1881), II 393-7).

Thet märke mz sik
swa fatigh som riik
 ä hwo som wil
han sigle oc roo
han findir ey tro
 j wärldinne til

Som mik är sagdt
tro hauer vtlagdt
 j thz willena haff
ther bleste swa fast
mz owerkast
 hon sank j qwaff

Thro gik sik til strand
oc skött fra land
 j swa harde stund
thz är stoor waande
henne komma til hande
 hon sank the j grund

Thro hauer sik holt
oc inne dolt
 j swa hardhan steen
thz är stort meen
tro är nw seen
 at finna j geen

Thro hauer sik fäst
oc inneläst
 j swa tiokkan mwr
thz är stoor skam
hon tör ey fram
 bland herrar oc frwr

Ware thro thöm käär
hon booddhe them näär
 hon halz¹ for spott
man borde ey swiika
fatigh eller riika
 thöm man sigher gott

Thro är bort wend
oc fierran sänd
 j fremedhe land
Thw riidh oc sök
mz hund oc hök
 badhe skogh oc strand

Thu sök mz makt
oc alle tinne akt
 ä hwar tw far
hon findz thy wär
ey fierre ey när
 tw wardher thess war

Thro är nw minna
mz frur oc quinna
 swa tykker mik än
thro är forwnnen
fals är vprwnnen
 bland quinnor oc män

Thz skedde j fiord
tro giorde eth mord
 hon rymde swa bort
hon siter oc grater
hon komber seen ater
 thz hauer jak sport

¹ Corrected from *halzt*.

Fals oc swik
the finnas for tik
i hwarie wraa
the finnas först
ther makten är störst
hwo som meer forma

Thro krypir j skiwl
oc warder swa fwl
som rykande träk
ootro gaar in
mz zabelskin
oc peninga säk

Them faller fast
sees j hwart kast
sink quarter ther nest
een tröya forgaas
oc dws oc aas
them kaster hon mäst

O fals tw snödha
tw gör them mödha
tik thiena mäst
thro gör them ära
som henne haffua kära
hon löner them bäst²

Hwar fals kombir widher
hon bryter thernidher
sannind oc tro
är hon a tingom
hon spar jngom
ey oxa eller ko

Driiff falshet bort
som tik hauer giort
swa stoor orätt
tak gudh til hielp
oc nidher stielp
then fula wätt

Gaar fals til retta
oc böriar träta
mz hweem thz är
henne kan engen winna
ey man eller quinna
här eller thär

Falskhet³ sik öffuar
hon stiel hon röffuar
badhe stund oc riidh
A tro tw sköna
lat tw nw röna
thz är wel tiidh

Fals swik oc flerd
the drogho sin swerd
oc gingo j striid
sannind oc tro
the magha ey boo
j wärldinna wiidh

Han är jw säll
som fals ey qwäll
ewinneligh
hallir tw tro
thu faar wist roo
j hymmerik Amen

Hec Thomas Episcopus Strengenensis

² Corrected from *bästz*.

³ Corrected from *falsheet*.

The Song of Fidelity

Whoever so wishes may observe this — poor as well as rich; a man may sail and row, he will not find Fidelity in the world.

Fidelity, I have been told, has set sail on the wild sea; it blew so hard with swamping waves that she sank to the bottom.

Fidelity went to the shore and put out from the land; it is very difficult to get to her help at such a hard time; she sank to the bottom.

Fidelity has hidden herself away in such a hard rock; this is most harmful; it will now take a long time to find Fidelity again.

Fidelity has locked herself away inside such a thick wall; it is a great disgrace; she dare not come out among lords and ladies.

If Fidelity were dear to them she would live near them; she is looked on with scorn; we ought not to deceive men, either poor or rich, to whom we speak well.

Fidelity has been turned away and sent far off into a foreign land; you may ride and seek her with dog and hawk through wood and strand.

You may seek with all your might and diligence wherever you go; alas! she will not be found either far or near, you will see.

Fidelity is now weaker among ladies and women; it seems so to me still; Fidelity is defeated, Falsity has arisen among men and women.

It happened last year, Fidelity committed a murder, then she escaped; she sits weeping, and will be slow in returning I have heard.

Falsity and Treachery await you at every turn; they are found foremost where power is greatest — among the mighty.

For them a six falls regularly at every throw; five, four, then three are passed by; the two and the one she (Fidelity) throws regularly.

Where Falsity gets an opportunity she breaks Truth and Fidelity to pieces; when at gatherings, she spares nothing, neither ox nor cow.

If Falsity goes to court and begins to wrangle, nobody, whoever it may be, can overcome her, neither man nor woman, anywhere.

Falsity, Treachery and Deceit drew their swords and went into battle; Truth and Fidelity cannot live in the whole wide world.

Fidelity creeps into hiding and gets as foul as steaming dung; Infidelity walks in with sable skin and money bag.

O vile Falsity! you make trouble for those who serve you best; Fidelity brings honour to those who love her; she rewards them best.

Drive Falsity away who has done you so much injustice; seek the help of God and cast down the foul creature.

Falsity exerts herself, she steals and robs, again and again; O fair Fidelity, show us your strength! the time has surely come.

Happy is the man whom Falsity does not torment eternally; if you keep faith you will surely find peace in the Kingdom of Heaven.

APPENDIX B

Lak of Stedfastnesse

(text from G. B. Pace, 'Chaucer's Lak of Stedfastnesse', *Studies in Bibliography* IV (1951-52), 119-20).

- | | | |
|-----|----|---|
| I | 1 | Sumtyme the worlde was so stedfast and stable |
| | 2 | That mannes worde was obligacioun |
| | 3 | And nowe it is so false and disceyuable |
| | 4 | That worde and dede as in conclusioun |
| | 5 | Is no thing lyke for turned vp so doun |
| | 6 | Is all this worlde for mede and wilfulnesse |
| | 7 | That al is lost for lak of stedfastnesse |
| II | 8 | What maketh this worlde to be so variable |
| | 9 | But lust that folke haue in discencioun |
| | 10 | For amonge vs now a man is holde vnable |
| | 11 | But yf he can by som collusioun |
| | 12 | Do his neyghbour wrong or oppressioun |
| | 13 | What causeth this but wilful wrechednesse |
| | 14 | That al is lost for lake of stedfastnesse |
| III | 15 | Trouthe is putte doun resoun is holden fable |
| | 16 | Vertu hath now no dominacioun |
| | 17 | Pite exiled no man is merciable |
| | 18 | Thorugh couetyse is blent discrecioun |
| | 19 | The worlde hath made a permutacioun |
| | 20 | Fro right to wrong fro trouthe to fikelnesse |
| | 21 | That al is lost for lak of stedfastnesse |
| IV | 22 | O prince desyre to be honourable |
| | 23 | Cherisshe þi folke and hate extorcioun |
| | 24 | Suffre no thing that may be reprobable |
| | 25 | To thine estate don in þi regioun |
| | 26 | Shewe forth thy swerde of castigacioun |
| | 27 | Drede god do law loue trouthe and worthynesse |
| | 28 | And wed thi folk ayen to stedfastnesse |

Abbreviations

Latin texts

- AH *Analecta Hymnica*, ed. G. M. Dreves etc. (1886), cited by volume number, number of poem and/or page, and date of earliest MS. e.g. AH 21/no. 92/13thC.
- Carm. Bur. *Carmina Burana*, herausgegeben von A. Hilka und O. Schumann, Band II, (1930). MS. early 13thC.
- PC *Piæ Cantiones* (printed in AH 45 — the collection dated 1582).
- Cons. Phil. *Anicii Manlii Boethii Philosophiæ Consolatio*, ed. L. Bieler, (C.C.S.L. XCIV, 1957).

Swedish texts

- T *Trohetsvisan* in *Svenska medeltids dikter och rim*, utg. af G. E. Klemming (1881-82), 393-97.
- S and L *Sanningen och Lögnen* (Bröms Gyllenmärs Visbok) in *1500- och 1600-talens visböcker*, utg. af A. Noreen och H. Schuck (1884), I 269-70.

English texts

- CB/13 *English Lyrics of the Thirteenth Century*, ed. Carleton Brown (1932).
- CB/14 *Religious Lyrics of the Fourteenth Century*, ed. Carleton Brown (2nd ed., 1952).
- CB/15 *Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Carleton Brown (1952 reprint).
- R. Sec. *Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Centuries*, ed. R. H. Robbins (1952).
- R. Hist. *Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries*, ed. R. H. Robbins (1959). This series cited by number of poem or page with line, e.g. R. Hist. no. 53 ll. 1-2.
- K *Twenty-Six Political and Other Poems*, ed. J. Kail (E.E.T.S., O.S. 124, 1904).
- CL *Cambridge Middle English Lyrics*, ed. H. A. Person (1953).
- PRL *Political, Religious and Love Poems*, ed. F. J. Furnivall (E.E.T.S., O.S. 15, 1866).
- WL *The extant poetical works of William Lauder*, ed. Hall and Furnivall (E.E.T.S., O.S. 3 and 41, 1870).
- I. *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate*, Pt. II, ed. H. M. MacCracken (E.E.T.S., O.S. 192, 1934).
- FNR *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. F. N. Robinson (2nd ed. 1957).

French texts

- Des. *Euvres complètes de Eustace Deschamps*, ed. le Marquis de Queux de Saint-Hilaire (S.A.T.F., 1878-93), cited by volume, page, number of poem and line.

I

11. 1-3 On the antithesis of past and present FNR p. 862 says: 'the contrasted picture of the *Former Age* (Boethius, ii, m. 5) seems . . . to have been in his mind', but note the commonplace as in:
- 1 Olim res fidei, nunc umbra colitur
Olim sola fides, nunc et fraus fallitur. (AH 21/no. 179, p. 124/12thC.).
 - 2 Florebat olim studium
nunc vertitur in tedium. (Carm. Bur., no. 6 ll. 1-2).
 - 3 quod prior etas respuit
iam nunc latius claruit. (Carm. Bur., no. 6 ll. 37-38).
 - 4 Stronge, trewe and corteis kepte þe land
Bot now feynte, false, folis, it han vndir hand.
(PRL p. 264).
 - 5 Manhood in þys reame hath regnyd lange
But now perfayleth ordynaunce. (CL p. 36).
 - 6 Troupe was sumtyme here a lord. (CB/14 no. 108 l. 49).
 - 7 "I fordom tidh war sanningen mächtig och bääll . . .
men nu är lögnen vorden henne wred." (S and L ll. 1 and 5).
 - 8 Les temps passé fut vertu et haultesse
Mais au jour d'ui ne voy regner que vice. (Des. V p. 142 no. 933, end of verse 2 plus refrain).
 - 9 See also Des. V p. 147 no. 936 ll. 1-2,
V p. 249 no. 997,
V p. 246 no. 995,
VII p. 93 no. 1331 (in Latin).
1. 2 On the idea cf.
- 1 Hypocrisis, fraus pullulat
et menda falsitatis
que titulum detitulat
vere simplicitatis. (Carm. Bur. no. 4 verse 3 ll. 1-4).
 - 2 ffor frend is fo, þe lond is loueles. (R. Hist. no. 54 l. 44).

- 3 It gos ful wrong, ho-so it wust
a frend, ho may ken fro his foo?
to hom I may trewely trost
In fayth, I fynde but fewe of þo! (R. Hist. no. 60
ll. 5-8).
- 4 falsed for sleyth now is taken (R. Hist. no. 58 l. 2).
11. 3-4 On the difference between word and deed FNR
p. 862 says: 'cf. perhaps Boethius Bo. III pr. 12
'205-208' (the wordis moot be cosynes to the thinges
of whiche thei speken' < Plato, *Timaeus* 29B, FNR
p. 805, used also in *Gen. Prol.* I 741-42 and *Manc. T*
IX 207-10) but cf. also
- 1 Matt. XXIII 3, Jesus on the Pharisees: dicunt enim,
et non faciunt.
- 2 Des. III p. 270 no. 455 l. 10: *Faulx Semblant* qui ne
fait que mentir.
- 3 Thou3 a man holynes preche,
He shetep no3t, but bent his bowe
But he lyue as he teche
He nys not trusty for to trowe (K p. 16 ll. 57-60).
- 4 þat false arn and fayre cun speke (R. Hist. no. 60
l. 27).
- 5 Herte and mouþ loke þei ben tweyne (CB/14 no. 103
l. 9).
- 6 Ainsi dit on, mais on ne le fait mie (Des. II p. 62
no. 233 refrain).
1. 5 FNR p. 862 'Cf. Boethius, Bo. ii pr. 5, 27-28'; this
should read 127-28.

On the idea of 'the world upside down':

See E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (1953), 94-98. He demonstrates that the 'basic formal principle' of Carm. Bur. no. 6, 'stringing together impossibilities', derives from classical antiquity and is found in Carolingian poetry. Examples in this Latin poem refer to nature, to the names of Fathers and Scriptural figures, and to classical times. This principle is basis for Des. II p. 31 no. 209 'Je voy a tout changer condicion', where verse 2 illustrates impossibilities from nature (cf. Des. III p. 194 no. 404: 'leur propre nature deffont', refrain) e.g. 'the tender wolf, the fighting chicken' cf. 'implumes aves volitant' (Carm. Bur. no. 6). This poem of Deschamps has been cited by H. Braddy, *JEGP* XXXVI (1937), 483 as a source for Chaucer's

poem! Echoes in ME. lit. of Latin 'impossibilities' include: 'whane brome wyll appolles bere' (R. Hist. no. 61) cf. Virgil *Ecl.* (cited Curtius p. 95): 'the oak bear golden apples', and 'ffor now þe bysom ledys þe blynde' (R. Hist. no. 49), cf. Carm. Bur. no. 6 'ceci cecos precipitant' (cf. Matt. XV, 14; Luke VI, 39). On R. Hist. no. 49 see R. H. Robbins, *Anglia* LXXII, 385-89 esp. 388 for other ME. 'impossibilities' from nature. Add also Lydgate's poem: 'Ryme without Accord' (L. p. 792).

On the Chaucerian phrase cf.

- 1 þer world is turnyd up so doun among (R. Hist. no. 49 l. 45).
- 2 All these lightli shold tornyn vp so dovne (R. Hist. no. 63 l. 43).
- 3 Totus mundus est subversus (AH 46/no. 318 p. 361/15thC.).
For similar images cf.
 - 1 The worlde hath made a permutacioun (L. of S. l. 19).
 - 2 Totus mundus se mutavit (PC no. 197, AH 45).
 - 3 A lord how gos þis word (= world) abowte (R. Hist. no. 60 refrain).
 - 4 Mundus eclipsim patitur
Decoris et honoris (AH 21/no. 189 p. 131/15thC.).
1. 6 On 'mede' cf.
 - 1 'Penny' poems (R. Sec. nos. 57 and 58).
 - 2 'The power of the purse' (R. Sec. no. 59 esp. l. 25 seq.).
 - 3 'Money, Money' (R. Hist. no. 51).
 - 4 Compare 1-3 with 'Nummus' poems (Carm. Bur. nos. 1 and 11) and with 'Simon' poem (Carm. Bur. no. 10).
 - 5 NB that R. Hist. no. 55 l. 17 including 'Demon regnat, simonia dominatur' is a variant of Carm. Bur. no. 5 l. 3.
 - 6 Deschamps 'Arithmetic' poems (Des. V no. 937 p. 148 and Des. V no. 938 p. 150).
 - 7 Des. III p. 22 no. 325, descriptive title: 'Everything is obtained with money'.
 - 8 Tout se fait par force d'argent (Des. VIII p. 75 no. 1422 refrain).
1. 6 On 'wilfulness' (asserting one's own will against 'law', or, governed by will without regard to reason) cf. generally *Wyt and Wylle* (K pp. 22-24) and

especially verse 4 on the kingdom:

pat leueþ wit, and worcheþ by wille,

and verse 5 on the people:

that leueþ troupe and falshed vse

And lyue not after goddis sawe,

..

þe swerd of vengeaunce on hem is drawe

pat leueþ wit, and worcheþ by wille.

1. 7 FNR p. 862: "al is lost; the words recur (with variations) in *Tr(oilus)* iii 1266, 1764, passages which go back, like this ballade, to Boethius ii m. 8. This is a more probable source than the refrain of Deschamps's ballade, 234 ("Tout se destruit et par default de garde") suggested by Brusendorff "The Chaucerian Tradition 1925), p. 487" But the words 'were al lost; lost were al' (*Tr.* iii 1266, 1764 resp.) found in passages which do have contact with Boethius's ideas that Love unites all, are slight indication that L. of S. need have been influenced by the Boethian verses in view of the identification with the genre elsewhere. Deschamps's refrain: 'All is destroyed and for lack of *care*' in a poem on carelessness is even further removed from the Chaucerian idea.

II

1. 8 On the 'variable' world:
 - 1 Thys warlde ys varyabyll
No-thing þer in ys stable (R. Hist. no. 61 ll. 13-14).
 - 2 þis worlde is ful of stabulnesse
þer is þer inne no varyaunce (L p. 465, with 'destroying' refrain).
 - 3 'Fortune' poems (Carm. Bur. nos. 14, 15, 16, 17).
 - 4 NB the idea in this Chaucerian stanza is the exact opposite of Cons. Phil. ii m. 8:
Quod mundus stabili fide
concordes variat vices
quod pugnancia semina
foedus perpetuum tenent (ll. 1-4)
where 'love rules all'.
1. 9 On 'discencioun':
'Ho(u) scholde eny frendshupe ben i founde?
Good feip is flemed out of þis londe
þer is more treupe in an hounde

þen in sum man, I vnderstonde' (CB/14 no. 104 ll. 49-52).

11. 10-12 On the present antagonism of man to man:
 1 ffor frend is fo, þe lond is loueles (R. Hist. no. 54 l. 44 'The Sayings of the Four Philosophers').
 2 Nullus amicus amat; Triew frende can noman fynde (Variant of R. Hist. no. 55 noted p. 327).
 3 Fidem fraus incarcerat
 Famem lingua lacerat
 Regem rex exsuperat
 Plebem plebs vituperat (PC no. 197).
 4 Sinistrae manui titentur dextera
 Nec carent fraudibus fraterna latera (AH 21/no. 179 p. 124, ll. 3-4/12thC.).
 5 Sclandre from his tunge hathe plucked owte þe thorn
 Detraccioun his langage dothe repress (L p. 463 ll. 30-31, with 'destroying' refrain.).

III

1. 15 On the fall etc. of 'Trouthe' (loyalty, fidelity or truth):
 1 Veritas supprimitur
 distrahitur et venditur (AH 21/p. 126 no. 182 verse 1, ascribed to Philippe de Grève (12thC.), trans. H. Waddell, *Mediæval Latin Lyrics* (1948 ed.), 192 from Carm. Bur. version.).
 2 Trewþe is put in low degre (R. Hist. no. 59 l. 4).
 3 Riȝtful dom is ouercast
 And trouþe is fer agon
 Sopnesse is ileyd adoun,
 And riȝt nis þer non (R. Hist. no. 55 notes p. 327).
 4 Truthe ys turnyd to trechery.
 Truthe is set at lytel prys.
 ffor trouth ys sonkyn vndur þe grounde. (R. Hist. no. 49 ll. 7, 17, 34).
 5 Veritas is demytt to hange one the ruyde
 Verecundia was drownytt at þe last fluyde (CB/15 no. 176 ll. 9-10),
 and Lex ys leyð adowne (CB/15 no. 176 variant in notes p. 347).
 cf. 6 Lawe hathe diffied Guerdoun and Mede
 And sette vp Trowthe as a goddess. (L p. 461 ll. 3-4 — with 'destroying' refrain.).

1. 15 On 'holden fable':
ffides is fybled and goys in torynde clothys (CB/15 no. 176 l. 4).
1. 16 On the 'overthrow' etc. of 'vertu':
1 Sibi dominium
Usurpant vitia (AH 21/p. 130 no. 185 verse 3/13th C.).
2 Virtus cessat, ecclesia calcatur (R. Hist. no. 55 l. 17 = Carm. Bur. no. 5 l. 3).
3 Virtus sepelitur (Carm. Bur. no. 3),
cf. Misericordia sepelitur (Nigel Wireker as in notes to Carm. Bur. no. 3).
4 Virtus suppeditatur (PC no. 193),
cf. virtus sceleratorum
pedibus subiecta calcatur (Cons. Phil. iv pr. 1),
vertu . . is cast undir and fortroden undir
the feet of felonous folk (Boece in FNR p. 358 col. 2),
cf. Tel art fait les vertus gesir
Soubz sez piez, par sa voie inique (Des. VI p. 20 no. 1111 ll. 17-18).
5 Prude enuye and lecherie
Couetise and trecherie
Habbeþ þis lond one here baillye (PRL p. 258).
6 cf. Toutes vertus au jour d'ui se declinent (Des. V p. 219 no. 978 refrain), cf. Des. V p. 275 no. 1011 ll. 41-42; Des. VI p. 1 no. 1101 refrain.
7 How Vertu is of Vices lady and maistresse (L p. 463 l. 50, with 'destroying' refrain.).
1. 17 On the 'exile' image:
1 Jus, ratio, discretio
Concordiae communio
Miseriae protectio
proscribitur exilio (AH 21/p. 127 verse 2 section 1/13thC.).
2 Fides a cunctis exulat (Carm. Bur. no. 4).
3 Falsnes, I vnderstande
haues dreuen trwvte of lande (CB/14 no. 39 ll. 9-10).
4 Laus exulat pudoris (AH 21/p. 131 no. 189 l. 4/15th C.).
5 Iusticia is exylde owt of owre bowkys (CB/15 no. 176 l. 2).
6 Pax in terris exulavit (PC no. 197).
7 Enuy exilid is fro gentylnesse.
Amongge the comyns pride is now exilid. (R. Hist. no. 63 ll. 3, 8 — with 'destroying' refrain).

- 8 'God be with trewþe qwer he be
I wolde he were in þis cuntre' (R. Hist. no. 59 as
caption).
- 9 Lawtie and luife ar in exile (WL).
- 10 Lawtie expellit and all gentilnes (Bannatyne MS.,
spurious Chaucerian verse).
- 11 Thrö är bort wend
oc fierran sänd
j fremedhe land (T ll. 37-39).
- 12 Owtlawed ben Feyninge and Falsenesse, (L p. 463
l. 42, with 'destroying' refrain).
- 13 Feythe hape exyled doublesesse, (L p. 466 l. 11,
with 'destroying' refrain).
- l. 18 On the idea and the image:
1 munera excaecant oculos sapientium (Deut. XVI, 19).
2 Nummus corda necat sapientium, lumina cecat
(Carm. Bur. no. 11).
On the image:
Under dercnesse, darket lit of stedefastnesse
(PRL p. 264).
- l. 19 See notes to l. 5.
- l. 20 On 'contraries'
In Carm. Bur. no. 6 'contraries' are linked with
'impossibilities' and with the 'past-present' anti-
thesis. One of the features of the genre is reference
to the present rise of vices and fall of their opposing
virtues. Note the *categoric statements* in:
1 AH 21/p. 130 no. 185 verse 3/13th C.
Prostat iudicium
Alget iusticia
Sibi dominium
Usurpant vitia
Videntur omnium
Ex factis paria
Virtus et vitium
Cum sint contraria.
- 2 caption of Des. V p. 167 no. 949:
'comment verité, charité et loyauté, foy et creance
font au jour d'uy le contraire de leurs noms',
and e.g. ll. 1-2 'Se verité veult estre menteresse
Et loyauté veult estre desloial,'
and *examples* under illustrations to lines above, plus:
Moult sont les loys et les drois bestornés
Les gens aussi et leurs condicions
Et les bons temps et usages mués
Entre mauvais, entre les nacions (Des. V p. 261
no. 1005 ll. 1-4).

THE TREATMENT OF POETIC SOURCES BY THE COMPILER OF *VQLSUNGA SAGA*¹

By R. G. FINCH

I

AN examination of the compiler's treatment of his poetic sources is best begun with a comparison of several paraphrases of complete stanzas with the original verse. This will reveal tendencies on the compiler's part which are more or less typical of his work as a whole.²

A

(*HH* 30) *En þeim siálfom | Sigrún ofan, | fólkdigrf, um
barg | ok fari þeira: | snøriz ramliga | Rán ór hendi |
giálfrdýr konungs | at Gnípalundi.* (*VS* 16/1-3) *Þá kom
þar Sigrún, dóttir Høgna konungs, af landi ofan með miklu
liði, ok snýr þeim í góða høfn er heitir at Gnípalundi.*

The following points may be noted: (1) *fólkdigrf*, an heroic poetic epithet, and appositional, is avoided and for it is substituted a conventional prose attribute, *með miklu liði*; the addition of *dóttir Høgna konungs* after the proper name effects the complete identification of Sigrún. (2) The kenning *giálfrdýr* for 'ship' is omitted without substitution. (3) *af landi* is inserted before *ofan*, and thus the supernatural implication of this latter, i.e. that Sigrún, the warrior maiden, descends 'from (the clouds) above' is nullified. (4) The reference to the goddess Rán is cut out.

¹ My thanks are due to Mrs Ursula Dronke for a number of most helpful suggestions.

² References are to G. Neckel's second edition (1927) of the *Edda* and to my edition, *The Saga of the Volsungs* (1965). The first arabic number in references to poems is that of the stanza, in references to the *Saga* that of the page; the number after the oblique stroke refers to the line of stanza or page. The numbering of examples in section I is continuous. As in the editions of the poetry and prose just mentioned, the following abbreviations are used: *Akv.* *Atlakviða*, *Am.* *Atlamál*, *Br.* *Brot*, *CR* *Codex Regius* of the Poetic Edda, *Fm.* *Fáfnismál*, *Ghv.* *Guðrúnarhvot*, *Gör.* *II* *Guðrúnarkviða II*, *Grp.* *Gripisspá*, *HH* *Helgakviða I*, *Hm.* *Hamðismál*, *PE* *Poetic Edda*, *Rm.* *Reginismál*, *Sd.* *Sigrdrífumál*, *Sg.* *Sigurðarkviða* in skamma, *VS* *Volsunga saga*.

- (5) Instead of merely substituting a more prosaic phrase for *Rán ór hendi*, the compiler formally identifies the ship's escape from the waves with Sigrún's saving help (*um barg*) which is now expressed in specific, concrete terms: 'Sigrún . . . directed them to a good harbour . . .', where 'them' does duty for both men and ship, and *í góða hǫfn* is an explanatory addition. An historic present, *snýr*, has been substituted for the past tense of the original verb.
- (6) The emphatic *siálfom* is considered unnecessary, as is *ramliga*, in the new version, and both are passed over.
- (7) The addition of the introductory *Þá kom þar* provides a transition, suitable to prose narrative, between two situations, and the new *er heitir* after *hǫfn* is also appropriate to prose style.

B

(Fm. 36) '*Erat svá horskr | hildimeidr, | sem ek hers iaðar | hyggia myndak, | ef hann bróður lætr | á brott komaz | en hann gðrom hefr | aldrs of syniat.*' (VS 34/12-14) *Þá mælti in fimmta*, '*Eigi er hann svá horskr sem ek ætla ef hann vægir honum, en drepit áðr bróður hans.*' (8) Again kennings are avoided: *hildimeidr* becomes simply *hann*, and *hers iaðar* is omitted altogether — for prose style it is at any rate an unnecessary repetition. (9a) The change from *aldrs of syniat* to the plain *drepit* is a typical instance of the substitution of a bald prose word or phrase for markedly poetic diction. (9b) Again, *honum* — *bróður hans* for *bróður* — *gðrom* gives a more natural prose style. (10a) An unnecessary change from the point of view of prose diction is that from *lætr á brott komaz* to *vægir*; admittedly, the latter is the most succinct way possible of putting it. The change is hardly due to a desire to avoid alliteration with *bróður* since in the remodelled sentence *brott* could be kept without leaving an impression of metre. It is also an instance of the contrary procedure to that exemplified in (5) where a general action was described in specific terms: here, the specific, comparatively

vivid picture of 'letting him get away' is turned into the plain 'spare him'. (10b) *Hyggia myndak* might have been considered too deliberative a phrase, 'I should think' becoming simply 'I think', but there was no real need to substitute *ætla* for *hyggia*, a good prose word. The compiler may have felt that an alliteration between *horskr* and *hygg* would be undesirable. (11a) (*mynda*-)k. It is worth noting that the compiler regularly avoids the suffixed *ek*. (11b) (*er*)at. The archaic and poetic verbal negative suffix *-a*, *-at* is regularly discarded in favour of *eigi* or a changed construction. (12) The use of *horskr* by the compiler is one of the comparatively rare instances of his retaining a word that hardly ever occurs in prose. The same word appears e.g. *Fm.* 35/1 where the compiler substitutes *vit* (*VS* 34/10). (13) The addition of *Þá mælti in fimmta* at the beginning of the passage forms an appropriate transition between two otherwise formally undifferentiated speakers (cf.(7) above).

C

(*Br.* 18-19) '*Þá reyndi þat, | er riðit hafði, | móðigr, á vit | mín at biðia, | hvé herglötuðr | hafði fyrri | eiðom haldit | við inn unga gram: || Benvond of lét, | brugðinn gulli, | margdýrr konungr, | á meðal okkar: | eldi vóro eggjar | útan gorvar, | en eitrdropom | innan fádár . . .*' (*VS* 59/33-35) '*ok þá reyndi þat, er hann kom til vár, hvé hann helt sína eiða, at hann lagði okkar í milli it snarþeggjaða sverð þat er eitri var hert.*'

The treatment of these stanzas shows tendencies similar to those already observed. (14a) *Herglötuðr*, 'destroyer of hosts', i.e. warrior, is rendered with *hann*. (14b) *Benvond*, 'wound-wand', appears as *sverð*. (14c) *móðigr* and *margdýrr konungr* are too high-flown for the compiler's taste and both are reduced to *hann*. (15) *lagði* is substituted for the more poetic *of lét*. (16) *brugðinn gulli* is passed over as an unnecessary descriptive detail. (17a) The change from *riðit hafði*

(*á vit*) to *kom* (*tíl vár*) is not essential for prose style and may be due to a desire to avoid alliteration. The change from a pluperfect to a preterite, *helt* for *hafði haldit*, is probably a slight syntactic improvement. (17b) The substitution of *milli* for *meðal* is quite unnecessary (*i meðal* occurs in *VS* 50/2). (18) The initial *ok* links together the paraphrase of two separate stanzas, thus making for a less abrupt style. (19a) The omission of *mín at biðia* and *við inn unga gram* reveals a general tendency akin to (6) above, viz. to omit details superfluous in the context. The reason for Sigurd's visit to Brynhild is sufficiently obvious to need no special mention, and to whom but Gunnar (*inn ungi gramr*) should Sigurd have kept his oaths? (19b) *fyrri* seems to imply a contrast between Sigurd who 'on the first relevant occasion' kept his oath, and Gunnar who afterwards broke his. But Brynhild has already included Gunnar in the term *eiðrofa* (*VS* 59/30) and referred to him as having betrayed Sigurd (*VS* 59/32); moreover, the compiler, now basing his narrative on *Sg.*, has in the next sentence *snemma réðu þér tíl saka við hann*. In this context *fyrri* may well be considered superfluous and the compiler passed it over. (20) The prose version of *Br.* 19/5-8 shows more clearly characteristics touched on in (5). At times, the compiler's paraphrase amounts to an explanation or clarification of his poetic source. The treatment of the sword's edges with fire means that they were made sharp — and the compiler says so, referring to *it snarpeggjaða sverð*. At least one of the reasons for the use of venom in the making of a sword was to strengthen or harden the metal — and this, too, is clearly brought out in the paraphrase, *þat er eitri var hert*.

D

(*Gðr.* II 2-3) *Svá var Sigurðr | of sonom Giúka, | sem væri
grænn laukr | ór grasi vaxinn, | eða hiqrtr hábeinn | um
hvössom dýrom, | eða gull glóðrautt | af grá silfri. || Unz*

mér fyrmundu | mínir bræðr, | at ek ætta ver | öllum fremra; | sofa þeir ne máttot, | né of sakar dæma, | áðr þeir Sigurð | svelta léto. (VS 61/23-26) '*Betra var þá vart líf er ek átta Sigurð. Svá bar hann af öllum mönnum sem gull af járnri eða laukr af öðrum grósum eða hjörtr af öðrum dýrum, unz bræðr mínir fyrirmundu mér slíks manns er öllum var fremri. Eigi máttu þeir sofa áðr þeir drápu hann.* (21) *Betra var þá vart líf er ek átta Sigurð.* Formally parallel to *Gðr. II* 1, the thought expressed is new, and these words are best seen as an addition, one by no means essential yet appropriate to the circumstances. It is this consideration that brings Gudrún to lament Sigurd's loss and the manner of it. Such appropriate additions are not infrequent. (22) the *Sigurðr* of *Gðr. II* 2/1 is changed to *hann* since the prose text has already mentioned the name. (23) Poetic attributes are avoided, and the compiler omits *glóðrautt* (of gold), *hvoðssom* (of animals), and also (the perhaps not especially poetic) *hábeinn* (of the stag). (24) He deems it unnecessary to specify the greenness of the *laukr*. (25) The change of *sonom Giúka* to *öllum mönnum* and of *grá silfri* to *járnri* makes a considerable difference of degree still greater. As far as prose style is concerned, *grá silfri* (something of a technical term) could have been retained, but the compiler may have wished to avoid alliteration with *gull*. (26) *Drepa* again replaces a more poetic phrase viz. *láta svelta*, and the rather elevated language of the clause dependent on *fyrmundu* is turned into prose style by means of a change in construction and vocabulary. (27) The varied prepositions expressing superiority (i.e. *of*, *um*, *af*) are levelled out in favour of a single one, probably making for a better prose style. Unfortunately, the poetic image expressing the superiority of the *laukr* is also made to conform to the new pattern and the image is destroyed. Further, the compiler's sequence of compared objects differs from the original. This is possibly due to a different order of lines in the text he had, or else he may have considered the final comparison

of gold with metal the least effective, putting it at the beginning in order to work up to a climax. (28) *Né of sakar dæma* is omitted in the prose. If the compiler unnecessarily destroyed the effective image of the *laukr*, it is at least arguable that here the Saga makes some improvement on its source. The retention in prose of an equivalent to 'nor speak law' (implying that they could not keep their mind on their usual business during the day) after 'they could not sleep' (until they had killed him) could have detracted from the urgency of the thought expressed. (29) The negative *-t* of *máttot* becomes the normal prose *eigi*.

E

(*Am.* 53-54) *Morgin mest vógo, | unz miðian dag líddi | ótto alla | ok þndurðan dag; | fyrr var fullveggit, | flóði völlr blóði; | átián, áðr fello, | øfri þeir urðo, | Bero tveir sveinar | ok bróðir hennar. || Røskr tók at ræða, | þótt hann reiðr væri: | 'Illt er um litaz: | yðr er þat kenna! | vórom þrír tigur, | þegnar vígligr: | eptir lifom ellifo; | ór er þar brunnit!'* (VS 69/22-29) *Orrostan stendr nú lengi fram, allt um miðjan dag. Gunnarr ok Høgni gengu i gegnum fylkingar Atla konungs, ok svá er sagt at allr völlr flaut i blóði. Synir Høgna ganga nu hart fram. Atli konungr mælti, 'Vér høfðum* lið mikit ok fritt, ok stóra kappu, en nú eru margir af oss fallnir, ok eigum vér yðr illt at launa — drepit nitján kappu mína, en ellifu* einir eru eptir.'* *Ok verðr hvíld á bardaganum.* (The MS readings of the two words emended in the prose text — they are here asterisked — are due rather to faulty scribal transmission than to changes by the compiler.) (30) A reluctance to use poetic or elevated diction continues to be evident (and *Am.* is a particularly florid poem which must at times have made it difficult for the compiler to unravel the sense). The opening lines of each stanza are turned into ordinary prose. The somewhat sentimental idea of the original, thirty valiant warriors reduced to

eleven, becomes the harsher and clearer statement that nineteen champions were slain, leaving eleven. *Ór er þar brunnit* becomes the ungarnished *nú eru margir af oss fallnir*. The compiler also takes exception to *yðr er þat kenna*, not that it leaves an especially poetic impression — possibly he thought of it as smacking of legal technicality and so best avoided; his equivalent is rather longer and less pithy. The compiler also prefers *flaut í blóði* to the original *flóði blóði*, the latter being, perhaps, a slightly less prosaic turn of phrase and rather obviously rhyming. (31) *Am.* 53/3-4 are a repetition of the details of the battle's duration in the preceding lines, and they are omitted as superfluous. *fyrr var fullvegit* may also be thought of as expressing little more than the following *flóði völlr blóði*, and the compiler omits them. The *fyrr*, implying that there was much slaughter before the end of the battle, is at any rate superfluous. *Þótt hann reiðr væri* is so obvious a state of mind in the circumstances as to need no mention. The compiler also omits *dórr fello* (which must surely apply to the Gjúkungs, not the Huns), probably because he considered it an unnecessary, commonplace remark, though in fact it is rather more than that since the stress laid on their outliving the enemy they vanquish amounts to a statement of their valour. (32) The compiler substitutes for *Bero tveir sveinar, synir Högna*, possibly a more appropriate reference to their parenthood since they are on the field of battle, and since *VS* (unlike the *PE* source, see below) has just spoken of Högni's prowess. The number of warriors who fell before their onslaught is omitted, and the attack is recorded in the historic present. (33) An interesting example of a clarification or explanation of the source is shown in the compiler's treatment of *Illt er um litaz*. Abandoning the original thought, he states the reasons that gave rise to it, here by substituting the words *Vér höfðum lið mikit ok frítt ok stóra kaþþa*, linked to his prose rendering of *Ór er þar brunnit* (see above), thereby incidentally changing the order of the

clauses. (34) The insertion of *svá er sagt at* ('statement of common rumour') is an addition appropriate to prose style. The statement of the number slain by Högni's sons is turned into a description of Gunnar's and Högni's valour which is given a loose causal link with *flóði völlr blóði*. In the general context of *Am.* this is a most happy innovation since the feats of the two main heroes during the battle receive no mention whatsoever. In the specific context of *VS* it is especially appropriate since a neat parallel is thereby drawn with their prowess in the second half of the battle (absent in *Am.* and based on *Akv.*). (35) *ok verðr hvíld á bardaganum* is not in the source. This insertion by the compiler seems, if not absolutely essential, at least logically desirable. A speech the length of Atli's (comprising *Am.* 54-56) along with Högni's retort could hardly be made in the heat of battle. Some sort of breathing space is necessary, and the compiler provides it.

The omission by the compiler of *bróðir hennar* is also a matter of logic, or rather of consistency. Having cut out the reference to Bera (see above) he obviously cannot refer to her brother, nor does he do so.

II

A consideration of the following words and passages will show that the tendencies noted above are on the whole general, and will also bring out a number of related trends.

The compiler's attitude towards poetic vocabulary and diction, towards unnecessary and superfluous detail and towards repetition is abundantly clear. Kennings are rejected whenever they occur (cf. (2), (8), (14) above): (*HH* 7/6) *vígþrimo* : *orrostu* (*VS* 14/13); (*HH* 17/7) *baugbrota* : *þér* (*VS* 15/10); (*Fm.* 32/6) *spillir bauga* : *hann* (*VS* 34/2); (*Am.* 66/1) *ilkvistom* : *tánum* (*VS* 71/29).³

Two of the above examples (*baugbrota* and *spillir bauga*) are kennings for 'prince', and it may be specially noted

³ For reasons of space a few examples must suffice to illustrate a general tendency, here as in most other cases.

that no poetic or semi-poetic expression for 'prince' or 'warrior' is ever retained (such expressions are particularly numerous in *HH*): (*HH* 2/3) *þðlingi* : *honum* (*VS* 14/12); (*HH* 2/5) *fylki* : *hann* (*VS* 14/12); (*HH* 2/7) *budlunga* : *konunga* (*VS* 14/12).

There follow a few of the compiler's equivalents for more general words which he apparently thought too poetic: (*HH* 21/1) *áro* : *menn* (*VS* 15/20); (*Fm.* 8/3) *fedrmunom* : *frændum* (*VS* 31/22); (*Sg.* 15/6) *fiqrvi* : *líf* (*VS* 57/18); (*Gðr. II* 38/7) *hiqr* : *sverði* (*VS* 64/20); (*Akv.* 12/6) *erfivqrðr* : *sonr* (*VS* 67/33).

It is, moreover, not merely a question of the substitution of a prose equivalent for a word that has a wholly or largely poetic flavour. The poetic language of the Eddaic poems evinces a widespread use of adjectives, of descriptive expressions of all kinds, for the sole purpose of embellishment. It is here that the pattern of the compiler's ruthlessness in the matter of poetic diction clearly emerges (cf. (16) and (23) above). Certainly, there are examples of the retention of attributive adjectives, or more often of their replacement by others, which are purely decorative in character: (*Fm.* 28/3) *hvassa hiqr* : *snarþa sverð* (*VS* 33/11-12); (*Gðr. II* 36/2) *hárar borgar* : *hári holl* (*VS* 64/13); (*Ghv.* 7/5) *siðar brynior* : *stórar brynjur ok góðar* (*VS* 76/26); (*Ghv.* 13/6) *hávar báror* : *stórar bárun* (*VS* 74/24) — but they are far from numerous. Of course, equivalents of 'large', 'great', 'much', 'many', 'most', 'such' occur on nearly every page of the saga, and as might be expected in a saga, the first, or even a subsequent mention of a prince or warrior often includes a description, more or less stereotyped, of his qualities, and this even though there may be no equivalent in the source. An example is the description of Hunding (*VS* 14/22 f., indicated in the source, *HH* 10) and with it might be compared those of Helgi (*VS* 17/27, not in the source, the conclusion of *HH*), Atli (*VS* 65/6, not in the source, *Am.* 2), and Jónakr (*VS* 74/25, indicated in the

source, *Ghv.* 14). Sometimes a fairly elaborate description of their arms and accoutrements is given, see e.g. the description of Sinfjötli, *VS* 16/6 f. (a marked elaboration of what is said in *HH* 33), or that of the party that goes to visit Gudrún in Denmark, *VS* 62/15 f. (again an elaboration of indications in *Gðr.* II 19). Banquets, if not more amply described, are usually 'sumptuous', e.g. *VS* 47/35 (source lost), *VS* 64/14 (not in source, *Gðr.* II 36); a victory, when mentioned, is generally 'magnificent', e.g. *VS* 15/3 (not in source *HH* 13), *VS* 30/6 (source lost), and battles are very often 'fierce', e.g. *VS* 17/18 (indicated in source, *HH* 53), *VS* 69/11 (indicated in source, *Am.* 44 f.), *VS* 70/7 (source unknown).

But in most cases attributive adjectives are retained (or replaced) only if they are essential and their omission would destroy the sense of what is being said. Occasionally the compiler uses an attributive adjective to render the sense of a longer phrase which he wishes in essence to keep, or else, rather rarely, the compiler retained an adjective he considered to be especially appropriate in the context. There follow a few examples of these latter categories which, as indicated, are by no means large:

(*HH* 46/5-8) *Þeir hafa markat | á Móinsheimom | at hug hafa | higróm at bregða : en þó eru þeir harðir menn* (*VS* 17/5); (*Sg.* 26/1-2) *Á ek til ungan erfynytia : en þess til ungan son á ek* (*VS* 58/36) : here, it is the youth of the boy that explains why he cannot protect himself, a statement that immediately follows.

(*Am.* 26/1, 3-4) *Á hugða ek inn renna . . . | þyti of þjósti, | þeystiz of bekki : þat dreymdí mik at mér þótti hér falla inn á harðla ströng ok bryti upp stokka í höllinni* (*VS* 66/23-4). Here, the torrent's fury is expressed in the adjective (*harðla*) *ströng*. An indication of its fury is appropriate in view of its results. (*Am.* 24/1) *Blóðgan mæki : blóðugt sverð* (*VS* 67/17). Here, the sentence has been remodelled, but the adjective 'bloody' is no less effective, it might even be thought a more effective symbol: the dream sword

is brought blood-stained into the hall before the blow is struck.

But the contrary trend is the more apparent and many attributive adjectives felt by the compiler to be unnecessary are simply cut out altogether (cf. (23) above), e.g. (HH 24/5) *langhǫfðoð* (*skip*) : (VS 15/25) ; (HH 25/1) *tryggra* (*manna*) : (VS 17/11) ; (Fm. 32/8) *fránan* (of the dragon's heart) : (VS 34/1).

It would not be unfair to say that the compiler is more of a pragmatist than a poet. Epithets, any descriptive phrases or words of an appositional nature, fare no better than purely decorative attributive adjectives. There is an example of substitution in (1) above and in VS 65/37, 66/1 there are two appositions that do not exist in the source (cf. *Am.* 9/3 and 6/1); cf. also *manna kúrteisastr*, VS 41/29, although here the source is not extant. But the principle the compiler essentially follows is shown in (16) above — excision: (HH 34/7) *gunnar giarnir* : (VS 16/10); (*Gðr.* II 19/6) *iðfrom líkir* : (VS 62/20); (*Am.* 30/13) *blíðr var þórr skialdar* : (VS 68/3). Vocatives may be included in this category, e.g. (HH 38/7) *svévis kona* : (VS 16/21); (*Akv.* 30/1) *Atli* : (VS 71/24); (*Am.* 85/1) *Gudrún* : (VS 73/1). An instance (poetic) of the retention of a vocative is found in VS 31/18, cf. *Fm.* 5/4, and of its insertion in VS 60/31, cf. *Sg.* 65/1 (though this may have been transferred from the beginning of Gudrún's speech, *Sg.* 53/1). Occasionally an unqualified proper name in the vocative, formally omitted, is replaced by a construction showing that the person concerned is being addressed. One instance of this may be seen in VS 57/9, *ok enn kom Gunnarr til hennar. Þá mælti Brynhildr . . .* cf. *Sg.* 10/3, where Brynhild addresses Gunnar by name. This is, of course, a very proper procedure in prose style.

III

From the various considerations above it becomes clear that the compiler finds very many epithetical words and

phrases completely unnecessary — but he does not stop short at epithets, and in a number of instances he excises general statements and details which he seems to find equally unnecessary (a hint of this was seen in (6) above). For instance, he omits the detail that the sons of Hunding demand recompense from Helgi for the slaying of their father and with it the detail that a proportion of that recompense was due to *fiárnám mikit* on Helgi's part (VS 14/26, cf. HH 11/1-4, 7). Having shown the brother of King Hoddbrodd to ask *hverr stýrði inu mikla liði* he omits the following *ok hann feiknalið | færir at landi* of the original (VS 16/5 : HH 32/3-6) — it is hardly more than a repetition of the first question (for further examples of the avoidance of such repetition see below). Brynhild's gifts (other than gold) to her women attendants are not mentioned (VS 60/16, cf. Sg. 49/5-8). The details in Brynhild's prophecy of Atli's murder are omitted (VS 60/26, cf. Sg. 60). The statement that Grímhild flung aside her embroidery on hearing what had become of Guðrún is omitted — and a most effective image destroyed (VS 62/10, cf. Gðr. II 17/5). Guðrún's reply to Atli's question as to who dealt him the fatal wound omits in the Saga her own references to the fact that the wound was serious and fatal (VS 73/20, cf. Am. 91/4, 6).

Phrases and sentences that are superfluous in their context form a special category, and these, too, tend to be omitted (cf. (19a) above), e.g. *Fara hildingar | hiðr stefno til* (HH 13/1-2): to mention that Helgi's forces proceed to the place of battle is unnecessary since the Saga tells of the preparations taken by the sons of Hunding and follows this with the statement *þeir eiga harða orrostu* (VS 14/27) and a description of the battle.

mun mins féar | manngi nióta (Rm. 5/7-8): this has no direct equivalent in the Saga. To stress the fact that no one will benefit from Regin's treasure is superfluous since the regrettable consequences of being in possession of it are already sufficiently emphasized in the Saga by the

change of *bræðrom tveim* (at *bana verða*) to *hverjum* (at *bana verða*), (VS 26/7).

i vatni (*þú drukknar*) (Fm. 11/4): where else but in water would a man drown? This is quite superfluous and does not appear in the Saga (VS 31/33).

Brynhild's reasons for wanting Sigurd's young son dead are sufficiently obvious to make a direct statement of them superfluous, and they are not to be found in the Saga (Sg. 12/5-8, cf. VS 57/12-13). A number of other passages could be viewed in a similar light.

The avoidance of repetitive phrases has already been noted (cf. (31) above and also p. 326), but words that are superfluous because they repeat or echo the idea expressed in a preceding or following phrase or an earlier passage in the narrative may be considered to form a sub-category of their own. A few examples: *HH* 2/7-8 repeat the idea expressed in the preceding lines, viz. the norns' statement of Helgi's future distinction. The Saga omits them (VS 14/13). *Fm.* 29/6 is a poetic variation of the word 'sword' (*sverz*) in *Fm.* 29/4, and it is discarded by the compiler (cf. VS 33/16). *Sg.* 17/7-8 are little more than a repetition of the immediately preceding *svarna eiða* and they do not appear in the Saga (cf. VS 57/23). The whole of *Sg.* 37 which tells of Brynhild's deliberations as to whether she should agree to Atli's demand that she should marry, along with those parts of *Sg.* 36 and 38 which mention the pressure that Atli brought to bear on her and her final acquiescence, are entirely omitted (VS 60/1-3). The lines in question can be thought of as superfluous in that a very similar passage occurs in VS 53/9-13 (the source is lost). *Am.* 32/2 mentions that Glaumvör is Gunnar's wife. This is omitted (VS 68/5) since this fact has already been stated (VS 65/37 : *Am.* 6/6).

Superfluous from the point of view of saga style are personal reflections on the part of the author and these the compiler also excises, e.g. (*Am.* 30/8) *hugat var því illa* :

(VS 68/2); (*Am.* 38/2) *lok mun ek þess segja* : (VS 68/18); (*Am.* 39/2) *þats án væri* : (VS 68/21).

There can be no doubt that the compiler is transforming, and with surprising thoroughness, his poetic sources into a plain prose narrative. Poetic diction and elevated style yield very largely to the matter-of-fact (cf. (9), (15), (26), and (30) above), as the following comparisons conclusively demonstrate; these few examples are entirely typical and could be multiplied : (*HH* 10/1-2) *skamt lét vísi | vígs at biða : hann rézk í hernað* (VS 14/18); (*HH* 21) *sendi áro | allvaldr þaðan | of lopt ok um lög, | leiðar at biðia, | iðgnógan | ógnar lióma / brognom bióða | ok burom þeira : Eptir þetta sendir Helgi menn með fégjǫfum at stefna at sér mǫnnum* (VS 15/20). (*HH* 41/7-10) *Þá er bræðrom þínom | brióst raufaðir; | gerðir þik frægian | af firinverkom : þú drápt bræðr þína ok gerðir þik at illu kunnan* (VS 16/26); (*Fm.* 1/2-3) *hveriom ertu sveini um borinn? | hverra ertu manna mǫgr? : hverr er þinn faðir, eða hverr er ætt þín* (VS 31/8); (*Akv.* 24/1-4) *Hló þá Hogni, | er til hiarta skáro | kvikvan kumblasmið | klökkva hann sízt hugði! : . . . ok skáru ór honum hjartat. Ok svá var mikill þróttr hans at hann hló meðan hann beið þessa kvǫl* (VS 71/10-12).

On the other hand it must be admitted that he does at times let a word or phrase of a poetic or elevated nature slip through his net (cf. (12) above), though very infrequently, e.g. *fráneygi* (VS 31/18 : *Fm.* 5/4); *er blanda hjörlegi Surtr ok Æsir saman* (VS 32/6-7 : *Fm.* 14/5-6); *minu afli atta ek við orms megin* (VS 33/12 : *Fm.* 28/4-5).

At other times the compiler makes changes in vocabulary that are not perhaps strictly necessary from the point of view of prose style (cf. (10), (17) and (25) above), e.g. (*HH* 36/7-8) (*bræðr þínom*) *at bana orðit : drepit (bræðr þína)* (VS 16/15); (*HH* 36/9) *sár (sogit) : hræ* (VS 16/17) (the two changes may be due to a desire to avoid alliteration); (*HH* 41/5) *ógogn : óhopp* (VS 16/26); (*Fm.* 30/1) *hugr : gott hjarta* (VS 33/18-19); (*Am.* 6/6) (*Glaumvǫr*), *er Gunnarr átti : kona Gunnars* (VS 66/1).

IV

It has already been remarked that some changes may have been made to avoid alliteration. But this consideration was not always decisive. Nothing, of course, could be done about the alliteration of names with each other, if they were to be kept, but, as P. Wieselgren has pointed out,⁴ the compiler has retained more than a few alliterating pairs which are not pairs of names, e.g. *seg svá - svínum* (VS 16/9 : HH 34/1-2); *fell - fótahlutr* (VS 58/30-31 : Sg. 23/5-6); *ek gef þér gull* (VS 63/21 : Gðr. II 25/1-2); *illúðgar - á ek* (VS 66/25 : Am. 13/1-2); *minstu - mæltum* (VS 77/7-8 : Ghv. 19/1-2).

Even more significant is the fact that on some few occasions the compiler substitutes a word of his own for a word that bears the alliteration — without destroying the alliteration, e.g. *ægishjálms - öllu fólki : ægishiálm - alda* (VS 32/11 : Fm. 16/1-2); *en hverr frækn maðr vill fé ráða : fé ráða skal fyrða hverr* (VS 32/28-29 : Fm. 10/1); *höggvi þá hofuð af honum : höfði skemra hára* (VS 34/5 : Fm. 34/1-2); *harðast (Högn) hjarta : hvassastr - hiarta* (VS 77/5 : Ghv. 17/9), and here the compiler has included a third alliterating noun, the proper name Högni, which is not in the source. Indeed, there are instances of alliteration seemingly retained when in fact the words in question simply do not figure in the source, e.g. *bylgjur gnuðu á borðunum* (VS 15/30) is not in the source (HH 28); *þetta it snarpa sverð* (VS 31/20) corresponds to *minn inn hvassa higr* (Fm. 28/3); *þeir vildu velja systur sínni góðar gjafir* corresponds to *Hverr vildi mér hnossir velja* (Gðr. II 20/1-2).

Alliteration need not in itself convey an especially poetic effect and the desire to avoid it was not always uppermost in the compiler's mind.

⁴ In his 'Quellenstudien zur Völsungasaga', *Acta et Commentationes Universitatis Tartuensis* 34-8 (1935-6), I 149 f.

V

Before leaving the discussion of what the compiler discarded of his source material, it is as well to consider how the mythological and supernatural, the sentimental and the gruesome or cruel elements in that material fared. P. Wieselgren reached certain conclusions concerning the compiler's attitude towards them, more especially towards the last three, and we may test his results.

Firstly, the mythological and supernatural in the paraphrase of *HH* (cf. (3) and (4) above).

The compiler retains the appearance of the norns at Helgi's birth (*VS* 14/11 : *HH* 2/2). He retains, with a change in vocabulary, a reference to 'daughters of the giant' (*VS* 16/24 : *HH* 40/7), and to *Göllnir* (adding in explanation *jötuns*, *VS* 16/30). In *VS* 16/20 he refers to Asgard which is not in the source (*HH* 38/4), though this does not introduce an additional mythological element: it replaces *Alföður* in the original (*HH* 38/4) — perhaps to avoid possibly blasphemous overtones.

Yet the compiler cuts out far more than he retains. His excision of the supernatural is particularly clear in his treatment of Sigrún and her warrior maidens.⁵ In the Saga they first appear *VS* 15/4 . . . *konur margar ok virðuligar sýnum, ok bar þó ein af ǫllum. Þær riðu með ágætligum búningi*, a marked contrast to the original (*HH* 15) : *Þá brá lióma | af Logafiðlomm, | en af þeim liómom | leiptrir kvómo: | þá var und hiálmom | á Himinvanga . . . | Brynior vóro þeira | blóði stokknar, | en af geirom | geislar stóðo*. For thunder and lightning we have commonplace attributes, and there is no reference to 'Himinvanga' which in the context must surely mean the sky, though in *HH* 8/6 the word seems to be an ordinary place-name (not included in the paraphrase : *VS* 14/14). We saw above in I A, that a similar reference to the warrior maidens' airy provenance was avoided, and the compiler also omits

⁵ Cf. Wieselgren, *op. cit.*, I 25, who however does not give a full discussion.

from his paraphrase *HH* 54/1-2 *kómo þar ór himni | hialmvitr ofan*, (nor does he specifically mention that they helped Helgi — his alone was the victory). In *HH* 21/3 it seems clear from the phrase *of lopt* that Helgi's messenger must be one of the supernatural warrior-maidens, but the compiler, consistent in his approach, omits the *of lopt* and speaks of *menn* who do his bidding (*VS* 15/20). He also omits *disir suðrænar* of *HH* 16/4, where *disir* could only have the supernatural connotation. Shield-maidens they may be, but valkyries — no!

The norns, as we have seen, were mentioned, but with what brevity! Two lines of prose (*VS* 14/11f.) do duty for three whole stanzas of the original (*HH* 2-4).

The ravens and their prophecy in *HH* 5-6 are likewise passed over by the compiler (*VS* 14/13) as is the whole of st. 12 (*VS* 14/26) which contains a reference to Óðin, nor does he include the *Vidris* grey of *HH* 13/7 (*VS* 14/26), the *einherjar* of *HH* 38/5 (*VS* 16/20), the *Fenris* element of the *Fenrisúlfa* of *HH* 40/2 (*VS* 16/21), *Kólgo systir* of *HH* 28/3, *Ægis dóttir* of *HH* 29/6, *Rán* of *HH* 30/6 (*VS* 15/30 — 16/3, see also (5) above), *Mistar marr* (whatever its precise significance) of *HH* 47/7 (*VS* 17/7), and as we saw when considering the compiler's excision of unnecessary detail, he omits one of the insults exchanged before the battle, and this, too, contains a reference to *Imðar dóttir* (*HH* 43/6 : *VS* 16/29).

The supernatural and mythological references of this source dwindled away until comparatively few remained. And yet — none of these omissions in any way materially affected the main outlines of the narrative. Here, the mythological and supernatural elements were on the whole expendable. One of the few that the compiler did take over was a concomitant circumstance of Helgi's birth which he wished to mention, all the others without exception belong to the exchange of insults before the battle, and these he could hardly have discarded if he wished to keep that scene at all.

Elsewhere in the Saga, the supernatural, the magical (they occur chiefly in the sections without an extant source) play a different rôle. They are generally more or less organic elements, not merely ornamental flourishes. The magic potions, the shape-changing (with the possible exception of the whole were-wolf episode) are essential to the action, unless the story be radically altered. The appearance of Óðin at crucial moments, his gift of the sword and his supervision of the disposal of Sinfjötli's body (was not Sinfjötli the purest in blood of all Óðin's Völsung heroes?) are all part and parcel of the basic narrative material.

It might be argued that the mention of *kynfylgja* (VS 5/27) is unnecessary, but it does provide an explanation for Signý's evil premonitions. Again, the *spáðísir* of VS 20/12 explain how Sigmund remained unscathed. Certainly the reference to the fact that the wolf who devoured Sigmund's brothers was king Siggeir's mother, a shape-changer, is by no means essential, though it is a conventional and soothing explanation. But Brynhild's fire surely is essential; some such barrier is indispensable. The story of Fáfnir's becoming a dragon was probably too famous to be omitted, and being retained, mythological references could not but make their appearance, and the same applies to the conversation between Fáfnir and Sigurd. Again, Sigurd's understanding of the conversation between the birds in *Fm.* could not be omitted since Sigurd learns thereby of Regin's proposed treachery, and of Brynhild. But Högni's gratuitous reference to the possibility of Brynhild's reincarnation is cut out (Sg. 45/5-6 : VS 60/11 — was this too unchristian?), so is the description of Sigurd as *Freys vinr* in Sg. 24/7 (VS 58/32 — admittedly as a kenning it would have at any rate been changed, mythological or not, see above), and even in *Fm.* the reference to *norna dóm* (*Fm.* 11/1-2 : VS 31/33), *Bilrøst* (*Fm.* 15/4 : VS 32/8), and *Hugin* (*Fm.* 35/6 : VS 34/11) are omitted, as are incidental references to norms in

Gðr. II 38/1-4 (*VS* 64/20) and *Ghv.* 13/2 (*VS* 77/1). Not, of course, that the concept of fate is in itself weakened, and thus dreams and prophecies must play their part.

It seems difficult to sustain an impression, created perhaps by his treatment of *HH*, that the compiler is essentially anti-mythological and anti-supernatural. The compiler clearly considered mythological and supernatural elements that were not strictly germane as irrelevant, and in accordance with the principle amply demonstrated above, he simply removed them.

The compiler's attitude towards sentimentality (cf. (30) above) is referred to by Wieselgren as one of hatred,⁶ though no specific references are made. There are certainly instances of the compiler's avoidance of sentimental elements. Gunnar's feelings at the thought of Sigurd's death (*Sg.* 13/11-14) are passed over and a reference to the oaths he and Sigurd had sworn substituted (*VS* 57/15); Brynhild's reflections on the love that might have been between her and Gunnar in *Sg.* 58/8-10 are omitted (*VS* 60/24); *Am.* 66/4-6 tell how Gunnar's skill with the harp in the snake pit made the onlookers weep: this becomes a statement that Gunnar played well (*VS* 71/29); Guðrún's reminiscences in *Am.* 72/1-6 are omitted (*VS* 72/12) as are her remarks (*Am.* 98) on the Gjúkungs' early exploits with Sigurd, though the related remarks in the following stanza are largely retained (*VS* 73/29-31); *Ghv.* 9/1-2 describes Guðrún as weeping, and this, too, is omitted (*VS* 76/30). There are also instances of the omission of whole stanzas which may be said to contain an element of sentimentality, e.g. *Sg.* 40-41 (*VS* 60/4), *Sg.* 57 (*VS* 60/22), *Ghv.* 20-21 (*VS* 77/8).

'Hatred', however, is too strong and Wieselgren himself later remarks⁷ that a mixture of styles would not have improved the saga. This surely is the point. The

⁶ *op. cit.*, I 14 (he uses the word 'Ingrimm').

⁷ *op. cit.*, I 70: '... durch Stilmischung wäre seiner Arbeit nicht gedient gewesen'.

compiler takes pains to cut out what seems to him unnecessary detail in telling a straightforward narrative. Sentimental passages might not have been to his taste — they were certainly not germane to his purpose.

Finally the compiler's attitude towards the gruesome or cruel. Again, Wieselgren considers that the compiler dislikes the gruesome and cruel as such⁸ and that he tends to avoid them. In the course of his work, Wieselgren notes a few instances: *Am.* 41/3-4 give details of Vingi's death that are not in the Saga⁹ (*VS* 68/28); *Am.* 78-79 tell how Gudrún murdered her sons (*VS* 72/24-27) and Wieselgren points out that the compiler omits *Am.* 78/3-4¹⁰ and 79/1-2,¹¹ and similarly *Am.* 83/8 where Gudrún reminds Atli how she told him that the hearts he had eaten came from calves¹² and *Am.* 83/6-8, omitted by the compiler, dwell further on Atli's eating of his sons' hearts (*VS* 72/33), though here Wieselgren, mentioning these lines together with *Am.* 84, also omitted, refers to Gudrún's boastfulness.¹³ A further instance that Wieselgren might have cited is the compiler's treatment of Gudrún's prowess when she helps her brothers against Atli and hacks off his brother's foot (*Am.* 50-51) — here, too, the details are omitted from the Saga (*VS* 69/19-21).

But it is difficult to uphold Wieselgren's contention in this matter. Is the compiler really against the gruesome and cruel as such, or is it again a question of cutting out unnecessary detail? Vingi had already been slain (*Am.* 41/1-2), and to mention his death-rattle might seem superfluous. The lines omitted in the description of Gudrún's murder of her sons can hardly be termed horrific or particularly expressive of cruelty, while the gory *skar hon á háls báða* (*Am.* 79/4) is retained (*VS* 72/27)

⁸ *op. cit.*, I 14, 120.

⁹ *op. cit.*, I 120.

¹⁰ *op. cit.*, I 122: 'Ein weiteres Beispiel dafür, dass der Sagaverfasser sich nicht mehr als notwendig beim Grausamen aufhält.'

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ *ibid.*

when a *drap þá* would have done equally well. The omission of the reference to calves can scarcely be said to reveal the compiler's dislike of the horrific, though admittedly the omission of just how Atli ate his sons' hearts does make the passage rather less gruesome — whether this was the compiler's purpose in making the omission is more doubtful. The compiler's avoidance of the details of Guðrún's prowess in battle, whatever his real reason, can hardly be due to squeamishness in the description of battle scenes. See e.g. *VS* 29/24 ff. where skulls are cleft and arms bloody to the shoulders! There are clearly a few instances where the compiler could have modified gory or similar elements, and did not do so, e.g. how the two halves of Guttorm's corpse fell one in, one outside Sigurd's bedchamber (*VS* 58/31); how Guðrún awoke, bathed in Sigurd's blood (*VS* 58/33), and the vivid description of Brynhild's self-inflicted wound (*VS* 61/10) is not really an essential element, while her command regarding the funeral pyre: *Lát þar tjalda yfir af rauðu mannaþlóði* (*VS* 61/2) is not as such in the source, *Sg.* 66/1-4 (for other such interpretative renderings see below). Moreover, the inclusion by the compiler of the two different accounts of the Hjalli episode (*Am.* 61-64 and *Akv.* 22-25 respectively, see *VS* 70/25 - 71/10) does nothing to lessen the cruelty inherent in the situation.

In view of these considerations it seems difficult to maintain that the compiler made a special point of eliminating the gruesome or cruel elements in his sources.

VI

The compiler, however, does not adopt a purely negative attitude towards his source material; he does not merely prune it of elements unsuited to his purpose. There are not a few instances of additions made by him which, if not essential, are by no means inappropriate or unreasonable in their context (cf. (21) and (35) above), e.g. *þann gullhring ok svá allt (gullit)* (*VS* 26/8 : *Rm.* 5) — the

compiler specifically includes the ring in Andvari's curse; *en annat mun ek gera* (VS 32/22 : Fm. 21/1-2) — in rejection of Fáfnir's counsel; *ok vissir þú eigi hvárt er var himinn eða jörð* (VS 33/13 : Fm. 28-29) — in the context of Regin's cowardice; *eða mun hér kominn Sigurðr Sigmundarson er hefir hjálm Fáfnis ok hans bana í hendi?* (VS 35/11-12 : Sd. 1) — an appropriate addition in the context of Brynhild's knowledge and wisdom; *undir skemmuveg sinn* (VS 57/7 : Sg. 6/1-2) — the place where Brynhild sat is clearly indicated. A number of other instances could be cited.

Some additions and changes seem to aim at providing what the compiler thought necessary circumstantial detail when a new character is introduced, e.g. *ok bar þó ein af öllum . . . Helgi spyrr þá at nafni er fyrir þeim var. En hon nefndisk Sigrún (ok kvezk vera dóttir Høgna konungs)* (VS 15/5-7 : HH 16-17) — in HH, Helgi addresses not Sigrún, but the group of warrior maidens as a whole. He is answered by 'Høgna dóttir' whose name is not mentioned until 30/2. The compiler lets Helgi address Sigrún, not the whole group, and makes this seem natural by giving her special prominence in advance. He then very properly introduces her name to complete the exposition. *Helgi konungr kallar til sín skipstjórnarmann sinn er Leifr hét* (VS 15/23-24 : HH 23/5-6). — In HH (Hjör)Leif's presence is assumed, and he is suddenly addressed by Helgi, whereas in VS he is formally brought into the scene. *Brynhildr* (VS 34/9 : Fm. 43/2) — The compiler's opinion as to the valkyrie's identity is made clear when she is first mentioned. *Høgni átti son eptir er Niflungr hét* (VS 73/10 : Am. 88/5) — (H)Niflung makes an abrupt appearance in PE and is not revealed as Høgni's son until Am. 89/7. The compiler gives the reason for Niflung's animosity towards Atli by mentioning his relationship to Høgni at the outset.

Additions such as these help to ensure a steady narrative flow, and there are, in fact, a large number which aim

specifically at the creation of a natural prose style (cf. (7), (13), (18) and (34) above).

There are many instances of additional 'he said', 'she said' phrases and similar expressions inserted in the dialogue, e.g. *Sigurðr mælti* (VS 32/2 : Fm. 11-12), *Þá mælti hon* (VS 59/28 : cf. Br. 15-16).

The compiler also adds a few 'statements of common rumour' (see (34) above), e.g. *Nú er þat sagt einhverja nótt at* (VS 64/18 : Gðr. II 36-37), *ok þat segðu allir á einn veg at* (VS 69/21 : Am. 48-49).

Occasionally *eða* is inserted by the compiler to introduce a direct question, e.g. VS 17/10 : HH 48/9-10; VS 35/11 : Sd. 1 — here the whole sentence is new (see above p. 336).

Some of the compiler's additions so far cited might also seem to help avoid abrupt transitions (see just above on VS 15/23-24, VS 73/10, and possibly the 'statements of common rumour'). Further examples of such additions are: *Nú gerði at þeim storm mikinn ok svá stóran sjó* (VS 15/29-30 : HH 26-28) — in HH there is no such introductory statement before the description of the storm's rage. *ok enn kom Gunnarr til hennar. Þá mælti Brynhildr* (VS 57/9 : Sg. 10) — in Sg. Brynhild suddenly addresses Gunnar whose presence has not previously been mentioned. '*Vel verði þér, dóttir*' (VS 63/21 : Gðr. II 24-25) — Grímhild's greeting, absent in Gðr. II, makes her offer to Guðrún rather less abrupt.

The compiler's desire to avoid abrupt transitions and to attempt a smooth style is often shown in the way he rounds off his prose paraphrases of the lays, or links them up, one with another or with an original prose passage, e.g. the addition at the end of the paraphrase of HH (VS 17/26-28) brings the chapter to a close in a proper saga manner, especially characteristic in the circumstances being: *ok er hann hér ekki síðan við þessa sögu*. The beginning of chapter 32 (VS 57/7) which begins the paraphrase of Sg. is made to follow on naturally from the preceding chapter by the addition of *Eptir þetta gekk Brynhildr út ok . . .*

The transition to *Gðr. II* is made with the addition of *þat er sagt einnhvern dag* (VS 61/21); the end of *Gðr. II* is rounded off with *nú liðr þetta, ok er þeira samvista fáligr* (VS 65/3), and the paraphrase of *Am.* which follows has introductory material which gives Atli's reason, absent in the lay, for issuing the invitation to the Gjúkungs, and also a stereotyped description of Atli himself, which is again peculiar to the Saga (VS 65/4-6).

The compiler's paraphrase of *Ghv.*, ending at st. 19, is rounded off with *ok lýkr þar hennar harmtölum* (VS 77/10), and he bridges the gap between her lament and the Hamdir material with *þat er nú at segja frá sonum Guðrúnar at . . .* (VS 77/11).

On two occasions the compiler used simultaneously two different lays, each of which gives a variant account of the same material. The lays concerned are *Br.* and *Sg.*, and *Akv.* and *Am.* respectively, corresponding to VS 57/7-61/10 and VS 65/6-74/16. The measure of the compiler's ability in narrative construction can be gauged from the skill with which in each instance he combines both the lays into a rounded organic whole, and this is especially true of his treatment of *Akv.* and *Am.* The narrative flow is steady and unbroken, the seams invisible. The compiler has left here no more traces of his combinatory activities than he did in his fusion of the lost lays of *CR*, about the number of which there has been no little dispute.

Typical of saga style is the sudden transition from indirect to direct speech and in VS there are a number of instances of this, introduced by the compiler, e.g. VS 17/10 (*HH* 48/9-10), VS 35/11 (*Fm.* 1/1-3), VS 57/16 (*Am.* 16), VS 64/22 (*Gðr. II* 39).

Also typical of saga style is the use of the historic present, and in a number of instances the compiler has used a present tense where his source has a past tense (cf. (5) above), e.g. (*HH* 8/1) *gaf : gefr* (VS 14/14); (*Am.* 21/1) *vpknoðo : vakna* (VS 67/14); (*Am.* 36/4) *skilðoz : skiljask* (VS 68/13); (*Am.* 46/2) *heyrdi : heyrir* (VS 69/12).

In his attempt at a natural prose style the compiler makes use of the suffixed article, rarely found in poetry, e.g. (*Fm.* 25/3) *á grasi : á grasinu* (*VS* 33/9); (*Sg.* 23/3) *hendr ok haufuð : hofuðit ok hendrnar* (*VS* 58/31); (*Am.* 11/5) *rúnar : rúnarnar* (*VS* 66/19).

In fact, he avoids throughout all grammatical elements that seem to have any sort of poetic or archaic flavour.

He avoids the auxiliary verb *kná*, e.g. (*Fm.* 34/5) *kná : má* (*VS* 34/5); (*Am.* 56/4) *knáka : ekki má ek* (*VS* 69/33).

This last example also illustrates the compiler's avoidance of the verbal negative suffix (cf. (11) and (29) above) and of the suffixed *ek*. Further combined examples are: (*Fm.* 2/4) *ek ákka : ok á ek engan* (*VS* 31/11); (*Fm.* 16/6) *fannka (ek) : aldri fann ek* (*VS* 32/13); and of the simple negative: (*Sg.* 25/5) *grátaðu : grát eigi* (*VS* 58/35); (*Sg.* 26/3) *kannat : kann eigi* (*VS* 58/36). The compiler also avoids the poetic use of the nominal negative suffix, e.g. (*Am.* 78/6) *manngi : engi* (*VS* 72/26). He also avoids the form *hirðaðu*, e.g. (*Gðr.* II 28/1) *Hirðaðu hplðum | heiptir gjalda : Eigi skaltu nú á heiptir hyggja* (*VS* 63/28), and the construction of *lata* with the past participle, e.g. (*HH* 10/5-6) *ok hann lét . . . Hunding veginn : en Hundingr konungr fellr* (*VS* 14/24).

VII

In view of the compiler's clear intention to write a straightforward prose narrative, it is only natural that his rendering of his poetic source should sometimes be of a clarifying, explanatory or interpretative character (cf. (20) and (33) above), as Wieselgren points out from time to time,¹⁴ e.g. *ok hér skal líft á leggja* (*VS* 15/19, i.e. Helgi will stake his life to prevent Hunding marrying Sigrún) explains *nema ek dauðr síak* (*HH* 20/4). The words '*Heim munda ek riða, þótt ek missta þessa ins mikla fjár, ef ek víska at ek skylda aldri deyja*' (*VS* 32/27-28) explains what

¹⁴ E.g. *op. cit.*, I 43, 81.

Sigurd implies by saying that every valiant man desires to have wealth until 'the one day'. One possible addition of an interpretative nature is the first reference to Brynhild's betrothal to Sigurd, VS 40/22-23. It might perhaps be an attempt to explain (probably wrongly) the *ástráð* of VS 39/22 (*st.* 21 = *Sd.* 21/4).¹⁵

The reason for Gunnar's confused emotions after Brynhild had demanded Sigurd's death is made clearer by a mention of the shame he would feel if his wife left him, a detail absent in the source Sg. 13-14 (VS 57/14-16). Högni's somewhat oblique statement that Brynhild is behind Gunnar's plan to slay Sigurd in Sg. 19 is rendered in the directest of terms: *ok sé ek hversu þetta stenzk af. Þat hefir Brynhildr vakit* (VS 57/26-27) — and this is followed by a further addition, reasonable in the circumstances, to the effect that her advice will be ruinous.

Here may also be noted the compiler's *Lát þar tjalda yfir af rauðu mannablóði* (VS 61/2), a vivid interpretation, albeit erroneous, of *valarípt vel fád* of the source, Sg. 66/1-4. When Grímhild asks her sons to compensate Guðrún, she does so *þrágiarnliga* in the source (*Gðr.* II 17/17). The compiler substitutes for this idea of defiant determination a phrase which seems to explain the reasons behind it, viz. *kvað þeim þat skylt* (VS 62/12). The words *því at vera má at sjá sé vár in síðarsta veizla* (VS 67/28-29) give a reason for Gunnar's demanding 'great goblets of good wine to drink' (*Akv.* 10). The words *ok á ek ekki skap til þess at fara illu í mót við menn, nema þat sé makligt* (VS 66/25-26) give a reasonable interpretation of the rather opaque *vilka ek þess leita, | nema launa eigim* (*Am.* 13/3-4). *Þér brugðuð fyrri friði* (VS 70/1) is an explanation of *gørðir svá fyrri* (*Am.* 57/2).

¹⁵ Although completing ch. 22, probably a later interpolation, the passage in question need not itself be the work of an interpolator (see Wieselgren, *op. cit.*, III 249, n. 4). There is certainly no such reference in *Sd.* (admittedly the passage may have been lost, cf. A. Heusler in *Germanistische Abhandlungen Hermann Paul . . . dargebracht* (1902), 4).

VIII

A number of changes and additions introduced by the compiler affect to some extent his portrayal of several of the main characters.

There can be no doubt that in the *Saga Fáfnir's* terror-inspiring qualities are emphasized more than in the lay.¹⁶ *Fáfnir* implies that exceptional courage is needed to attack him: *æða hver er ætt þín, er þú vart svá djarfr at þú þorir at bera vápni á mik?* (*VS* 31/8-9), whereas the equivalent passage in *Fm.* reads *hverra ertu manna mögr | er þú á Fáfnir rautt | þinn inn frána mæki* (*Fm.* 1/1-3). Compare also Regin's statement in *Fm.*, *manna þeira, | er mold troða, | þik kveð ek óblauðastan alinn* (*Fm.* 23/4-6), with the much more pointed *er engi var fyrr svá djarfr at á hans götu þorði sitja* (*VS* 33/3), a further reference to the courage needed to approach *Fáfnir*. *Fáfnir* himself stresses the dread he inspires: *Hafðir þú eigi frétt þat, hversu allt fólk er hrætt við mik ok við minn ægishjálmi?* (*VS* 31/17-18), of which there is no trace in the source (*Fm.* 5). Again, *Fáfnir's* description of his own redoubtability in *VS* 32/11-15 could hardly be an unstrengthened paraphrase of the source, *Fm.* 16, 18, even if the latter is defective. He goes as far as to stress how dangerous he is, though dying, citing the old adage, not in the source (*Fm.* 20), that a mortally wounded man avenges himself (*VS* 32/20).

In this general context the compiler's omission of *Fáfnir's* admittance of *Sigurd's* superiority is also relevant (*Fm.* 22/6, cf. *VS* 32/10).

Only on one occasion does *Fáfnir* appear in a slightly milder light in the *Saga*: his words to *Sigurd* in *Fm.* 11, which can hardly be other than a threat are (inappropriately) turned into a piece of seemingly well-meant advice (*VS* 31/33-34): *Fátt vill þú at mínum dæmum gera, en drukna muntu ef þú ferr um sjá óvarliga, ok bið heldr á landi unz loqn er.*

¹⁶ Cf. Wieselgren, *op. cit.*, I 36 f.

Regin in the Saga seems slightly less of a boor¹⁷; the vocative *Sigurðr* of *Fm.* 23/1 becomes *herra minn* in the Saga (*VS* 33/2), and he is much politer when asking Sigurd to roast the dragon's heart: *veit mér eina bæn er þér er lítt fyrir* (*VS* 33/24) which is absent in the source (*Fm.* 27).

Concerning Brynhild, two points could be made. Firstly, the compiler's treatment of *Sg.* 6-9 is such that many details are lost (*VS* 57/7-10). This has the effect of lessening the stress laid in the source on Brynhild's jealousy. Not that the compiler entirely avoids this motif (see e.g. *VS* 51/27-28), but on the whole he is far more concerned with Brynhild's desire for vengeance. This could also be considered in keeping with his attempt to make the narrative as consistent as he can (see below).

Secondly, again probably owing to the excision of what the compiler deemed unnecessary detail, Brynhild's wish to give away her gold when she stabs herself seems in the Saga more a final act of benevolence than an invitation to suicide (*VS* 60/13-18 : *Sg.* 49-52).

Gunnar appears on one occasion in the Saga a little more civilized than in the source. His greed for Sigurd's wealth, so forcibly expressed in *Sg.* 16/1-2, is less emphasized in the Saga, and his desire for the death of Sigurd is instead ascribed to Sigurd's supposed breach of good faith (*VS* 57/21 perhaps influenced by *Br.* 2). Here again it may be a question of consistency in the narrative: the compiler has played down Brynhild's jealousy and now introduces an element of the vengeance theme.

Certain changes in the Saga have also slightly affected the character of Gudrún. Wieselgren¹⁸ mentions the compiler's omission to utilize *Sg.* 61 in which Brynhild reproaches Gudrún for not joining Sigurd in death, and states that the compiler is concerned to show Gudrún in the best possible light. Yet there seems to be but little evidence to support his contention, to which he does not

¹⁷ Cf. Wieselgren, *op. cit.*, I 43.

¹⁸ *op. cit.*, I 65.

again specifically refer. There are, however, perhaps three further points that speak in its favour, though not without possibility of contradiction.

Firstly, Atli in the Saga admits that Guðrún had at least some cause for contriving his death, there being no such reference in the source (see *VS* 73/21-22 and *Am.* 92), so her guilt might seem to be less. On the other hand, this is in a sense counterbalanced by the Atli of the Saga's statement that Guðrún herself was responsible for the downfall of her brothers (*VS* 72/3-4), whereas in the source he tells her that she is only partly responsible (*Am.* 68/7-8).

Secondly, Guðrún in the Saga tells how she slew her sons *í harmi* (*VS* 77/1), thus making her action more spontaneous than premeditated. There is no hint of this in the source (see *Ghv.* 12). There is another specific reference by Guðrún to the fate of her sons in *Gðr. II* 34/7-8 which is turned into a more general statement (*VS* 64/9-10). But the first of these instances may perhaps be thought of as a not unnatural addition in the context of Guðrún's general lament, the second as a cutting down of detail unnecessary in the context.

Thirdly, one of the reproaches levelled against Guðrún by Atli in *Am.* (96/5-6) is omitted (*VS* 73/23), but the precise sense of the reproach seems obscure and the compiler may therefore have chosen to disregard it — or he may simply have considered that the two reproaches he took over from the source were enough.

It is not impossible to argue the opposite case, viz. that the compiler slightly blackens her character. Guðrún (*Gðr. II* 39/3-4) seems to tell Atli openly of her anger against him. The omission of this reference in *VS* (64/21-22) could be said to show a tendency on the compiler's part to increase Guðrún's cunning and deceit, a tendency further revealed in Guðrún's declared willingness to be reconciled to Atli after the death of her brothers (*VS* 72/14-15), which is not as such in the source (cf. *Am.* 73).

Yet the reason for the compiler's deletion of *Gðr. II* 39/3-4 may once again be due to his concern for consistency — why, after all, should Gudrún flare out against Atli before he treacherously attacks her brothers, even if she had married him reluctantly? The compiler might well have thought this entirely out of place. The precise significance of the line seems at any rate a little doubtful, and this may also have influenced the compiler to disregard it. Gudrún's avowal of her readiness to become reconciled to Atli is really no more than her personal statement of the way she is actually shown to act in *Am.*, and *Am.* lays at least as much stress on her duplicity as *VS* does.

It is rather doubtful whether the changes introduced by the compiler which affect in some way the original conception of the characters were expressly made with this end in view. Admittedly, Fáfnir is a shade fiercer, and Regin a shade politer, but changes noted in the other characters may have been due to quite other considerations.

IX

Of course, many small changes introduced by the compiler seem to be quite gratuitous and the reasons for his making them, if reasons there were, must remain obscure, e.g. (*HH* 35/7) *á kvernom : við eld* (*VS* 16/12); (*Sg.* 34/8) (*á fleti*) *bróður : (heima með) fǫður mínum* (*VS* 59/36); (*Akv.* 12/1) *um fioll : um hrið* (*VS* 68/17); and other instances could be cited.

X

Sometimes the compiler's changes might seem to improve on his source in one way or another (cf. (28) and (32) above).

In *PE*, Gudrún is described as asleep in bed at Sigurd's side (*Sg.* 24/2-4) at the time of his murder, whereas in *VS* she is asleep in his arms (*i faðmi*, *VS* 58/32). The scene is the more effective for the change.

The rather improbable threats uttered by Guðrún's children when they learn of their mother's murderous intentions (*Am.* 78/7-8) are changed into a slightly more credible expression of the shamefulness of her action (*VS* 72/26) — probably because the *skómm* of the source was misunderstood by the compiler.

When Atli asks Guðrún what has become of his sons, she tells him in *PE* that her answer will cause him no pleasure (*Am.* 80/5). In *VS* the negative is omitted from Guðrún's answer, and this gives it a more sarcastic and pithier twist (*VS* 72/29).

When Guðrún, after stabbing Atli, speaks to him of earlier days, she mentions Sigurd's death and her grief at being widowed, adding that it was a greater grief to have to marry Atli (*Am.* 100). In the same scene in *VS* she tells Atli that to bear the name of widow was nothing—her greatest grief was her marriage to him (*VS* 73/32). But Atli (and the reader) know full well how Guðrún sorrowed over Sigurd, and thus her denial of this in the context gives her remark to Atli a keener cutting edge.¹⁹

XI

Such possible instances of improvement are rare. Unfortunately, the compiler is more likely to destroy, often unnecessarily from the point of view of prose diction, a particularly striking effect or scene (cf. (27) above and the comment on *Gðr. II* 17/5 : *VS* 62/10, p. 326 above).

The compiler omits *nótt varð í bæ* (*HH* 2/1 : *VS* 14/11), presumably as an unnecessary detail, and the hint of mystery conveyed by the words is lost.

The vivid picture of Sinfjötli's hoisting his red shield on the mast as a sign of hostile intent (*HH* 33/2-4) is turned into a stereotyped description of his accoutrements (see above p. 324) and thereby destroyed (*VS* 16/6).

¹⁹ Wieselgren, *op. cit.*, I 118 considers the change discussed here as an unfortunate one ('wenig glücklich') because it does not accord with her known feelings. He seems to have missed the point.

In *PE*, Sigrún's delicate, or at least indirect, declaration of love for Helgi is made after his victory (*HH* 56/4). The compiler transfers it to their first meeting where it is made with more directness (*VS* 15/16). Sigrún is thus given a somewhat inappropriate forwardness quite absent from the source.

The striking description of Guðrún's grief on seeing Sigurd die, and her scream which penetrates to Brynhild's bedchamber, is reduced to a wretched *En Guðrún blæs mæðiliga ǫndunni. Þat heyrir Brynhildr . . .* (*VS* 59/9-10), this, no doubt, in the interests of excising unnecessary detail. Brynhild's anguish over her deception, and her incitement to murder (*Sg.* 6-12) lose all their force in the *Saga* (*VS* 57/7-13).

Brynhild's lovely description of the daughter to be born to Guðrún (*Sg.* 55) is turned into the stereotyped . . . *Svanhildr, er vænst mun fædd allra kvenna* (*VS* 60/22).

When Brynhild has concluded her final prophecies after stabbing herself and has made arrangements for her obsequies, she says in *PE* that she would continue to speak were it not that her time was running out, this latter idea being expressed in the extremely effective line *ef mér miǫtuðr málrúm gæfi* (*Sg.* 71/2-3). In *VS* she says much the same (*VS* 61/9-10), but here the effective line of the source becomes a lame *ef ek væra eigi sár*.

Gunnar's magnificent rhetoric when he defies Atli (*Akv.* 26-27) falls comparatively flat in the paraphrase (*VS* 71/18-20).

The almost plaintive remarks with which Hamdir and Sörli finally gave way to Guðrún's demand that they should avenge Svanhild, *ok eigi munu vér standask frýjuorð, svá hart sem vér erum eggjaðir* (*VS* 76/23-24), make a poor substitute for the plasticity of *Berið hnossir fram / Húnakonunga! / hefir þú okkr hvatta / at hiðr þingi!* (*Ghv.* 6).

Finally, Guðrún's apostrophe to Sigurd, in which she tells him to come to her from Hel (*Ghv.* 18/3-6) has lost all its magnificence in the prose paraphrase (*VS* 77/7-9).

XII

It has already been mentioned that the compiler shows not a little consistency in the construction of his narrative (cf. (35) above). The following considerations will serve to support the contention that he is in fact surprisingly consistent and logical in his handling of the material.

The compiler avoids referring to the Völsungs by any other name and thus avoids any possible confusion, e.g. the *Ylfingar* of *HH* 34/5 and *HH* 48/8 are changed to *Völsungar* (*VS* 16/10 and 17/11), the *Niflunga* of *Br.* 16/10 is rendered as *yðr* (*VS* 59/30, the sentence is remodelled), and that in *Akv.* 11/2 is simply omitted (*VS* 67/30). Niflung in *VS* is the name of Högni's son (spelt Hniflung in *PE*).

In *HH* 14-15 the shield-maidens arrive after the fighting is over. It must have seemed illogical to the compiler for such female warriors to appear at the end of, rather than during, hostilities, and accordingly he attempts to dissociate them altogether from the battle with the words, not in the source, *ok er Helgi ferr frá orrustu, þá fann hann við skóg einn (konur margar . . .)*. If, as is likely, the phrase *ór úlf íði* (or its equivalent in the MS used by the compiler, there is some doubt as to the precise reading) of *HH* 16/2 means 'from the field of battle', the fact that the compiler cuts it out is an instance of his consistency, since he has already changed the scene of the encounter between Helgi and the shield-maidens (*VS* 15/4).

Helgi's vantage point, from which he observes the approach of his allies, is referred to in the source as both *Brandey* and *Trönoeyrr* (*HH* 23/3 and 24/4 respectively). To avoid confusion the compiler omits altogether the second of the names (*VS* 15/26). For reasons best known to himself he has changed the first of the names to *Rauðabjörg* (*VS* 15/21).

Sigrún originally comes down from the sky to help Helgi when his ship is in danger of foundering (*HH* 30). As shown in (3) above, this supernatural element is avoided in

the Saga and Sigrún is described as appearing on the shore. The compiler must have thought that the sudden mention of the shore would be inconsistent with his reference to the perils of the deep unless these could be brought into proximity with the shore. He therefore adds *áðr þeir kæmi at landi* (VS 16/1) to his statement 'they were then on the verge of foundering'.

The lines *spákr þætti mér | spillir bauga, | ef hann fíorsega | fránan æti* (Fm. 32/5-8) can hardly be taken to mean anything but that the bird considers it would be a wise thing for Sigurd to do if he ate the dragon's heart. But the obvious interpretation of the VS equivalent: *Þat* (the heart) *skyldi hann sjálfr eta. Þá mundi hann verða hverjum manni vitrari* (VS 34/1-2) is that Sigurd would grow in wisdom if he were to eat the dragon's heart. Here is a significant difference, an alteration which seems to have gone unremarked. Why did the compiler make the change? It is at least possible that he had in mind the scene in which Sigurd gives Guðrún to eat of the dragon's heart, where we hear *ok síðan var hon miklu grimmari en áðr ok vitrari* (VS 48/3). This consideration may also explain why, when Sigurd says to Brynhild '*kenn oss ráð til stórra hluta*', the compiler lets her reply '*þér munuð betra kunna*' (VS 35/24).

Of course, these differences could be ascribed to the influence of the *Sigurðar saga*, so could, no doubt, much else, but there is no proof and if the compiler is the innovator, then here at least he shows a high degree of consistency in handling his sources.

The compiler avoids possible confusion by unhesitatingly identifying the sleeping valkyrie as Brynhild, Gunnar's wife to be, though there is no such identification in his immediate source (Fm. 42-44 : VS 34/9).

The compiler followed Sg. in his narration of Sigurd's death, and thus tells of Guðrún's presence at the time of the murder. His reintroduction of Guðrún into the story is based on *Br.* 6, where Guðrún asks what has become of

Sigurd. Since in the Saga she already knows, her question becomes a statement of her knowledge (VS 59/22).

The sense of Brynhild's last dying utterance (Sg. 71/5-8) is not fully rendered in the paraphrase (VS 61/9-10). Her words in *PE* contain a reference to her lack of breath and to her imminent death. These two references could hardly be retained with any consistency by the compiler who goes on in a passage not in the poetic source (and this could well be derived from *Sigurðar saga*) to describe how Brynhild makes further dispositions before she finally mounts Sigurd's pyre.

In VS Sigurd is murdered indoors, and consequently the compiler entirely passes over the references in *Gðr. II* 11-12 to Sigurd's body lying out in the forest (VS 62/1-2).

In the conversation between Gunnar and Atli's emissary there are references to Gnitaheld (*Akv.* 5-6) which clearly imply that there is gold there, and that this belongs to Atli. The compiler knows full well that Gnitaheld is the scene of Sigurd's fight with Fáfnir, and that any gold there was part of Fáfnir's hoard which was taken by Sigurd and after his murder passed into the possession of Gunnar himself. In the interests of consistency and logic the compiler suppresses these references (VS 65/20-21).

Högni in *Am.* 57/3-4 charges Atli with having slain his mother, and the context clearly implies that Atli did so before Brynhild's death. Since the Saga has already shown his mother to be very much alive after Brynhild's death, the compiler very logically changes the *móður* of the original into *frændkonu* (VS 70/2).

Am. is rather confused as to who had the greater share in the actual slaying of Atli. *Am.* 89/7-8 lays the emphasis more on Högni's son, and *Am.* 91 more on Gudrún. The compiler does not hesitate to indicate clearly that it was Gudrún who struck the fatal blow (VS 73/14-15).

It is strange that Wieselgren, who notes in one connection or another many of the points discussed above, should

fail to draw a general positive conclusion as to the care taken by the compiler in putting together his material. That he should come to the opposite conclusion and talk of the compiler's indifference to consistency,²⁰ remarking particularly on his inconsistency in subsidiary detail²¹ is astonishing. Where is the proof of his contention? Admittedly, there is some confusion over names in *HH*, though Wieselgren does not comment unfavourably on this. Again, it might be argued that the compiler is inconsistent in including two different versions of Brynhild's betrothal to Sigurd — but Wieselgren gives some praise (probably justified) to the way this was done.²² There are admittedly some structural faults, e.g. the varying nature of Brynhild's residence, though this may be partly due to a later interpolator,²³ and some criticism could be levelled at Brynhild's statement to Gunnar that the fatal ring was given to her by Budli — though in the circumstances she would hardly wish to tell Gunnar of its true origin.

It would thus seem that Wieselgren's criticism of the compiler's lack of consistency is ill-founded.

XIII

The compiler does not always follow the exact arrangement²⁴ of stanzas as found in *CR*. Some of the differences may be due to his use of a lost MS of *PE* which had a slightly variant arrangement, though occasionally he may have introduced some changes himself.

He places, for instance, *Fm.* 22/1-3 after *Fm.* 15 (*VS* 32/8-10), where it does not fit in particularly well. But

²⁰ *op. cit.*, I 14 f.

²¹ 'Nebensachen', *ibid.*

²² *op. cit.*, I 51.

²³ cf. my edition pp. ix, xxxvi.

²⁴ The compiler includes a number of stanzas in the original verse form, particularly of *Sd.*, which are also in a different order from that of *CR*. Wieselgren believes it likely that these *Sd.* stanzas were quoted in full in *Sigurðar saga* in the same sequence as *VS* of which, he believes, *Sigurðar saga*, not *PE*, may have been here the immediate source (see Wieselgren, *op. cit.*, III 248).

the compiler discarded altogether the last half of *Fm.* 22, and the transferred first half, if left in its original position, would rather spoil the effect of Sigurd's last words to Fáfnir (*VS* 32/30).

Another small, and logical, change in *VS* seems to be the transfer of *Fm.* 4/1-3 to a position between *Fm.* 1 and 2. These lines contain Sigurd's statement that no man knew of his family, and it is more appropriate in its new position at the beginning of Sigurd's speech in which he refused to tell Fáfnir his name, than in the speech in which Sigurd does in fact reveal his identity (*VS* 31/10).

The compiler places the content of *Fm.* 18 before that of *Fm.* 16-17, thus linking the two halves of Fáfnir's speech telling of the terror he inspired. They were originally separated by a retort from Sigurd, which is just as appropriate in its new position (*VS* 32/11-18).

Again, the compiler places *Fm.* 21/1-3 between the two halves of *Fm.* 20, thereby breaking up a single speech of Fáfnir's — whether for better or worse must be left to the judgement of the individual, though here the Saga reads completely naturally (*VS* 32/9-23).

The compiler does not use both the scenes in which Sigurd overhears the conversation of the birds, but only the first. It is, however, the second of the two that contains the reference to the sleeping valkyrie and since he cannot omit the reference, the compiler transfers what he needs from the stanzas concerned (*Fm.* 42-44) to the first scene, viz. immediately after *Fm.* 34 (*VS* 34/9-10).

The content of *Sg.* 14/7-8, in which Gunnar summons Högni, comes after the compiler's paraphrase of *Sg.* 15, with the effect that Gunnar's remarks to Högni on how much Brynhild means to him are (not inappropriately) turned into a brief soliloquy (*VS* 57/17-19).

Sg. 36, 38, 39 (37 is altogether omitted) are much abbreviated, but the order in which they occur in the Saga (*VS* 59/38 - 60/2) seems to be more logical than the original sequence in *CR*.

The compiler's version of *Sg.* 53/5-8, the first part of Brynhild's dying prophecy in which she tells Gunnar that things will go ill with him, even though she dies, appears after his paraphrase of *Sg.* 39 in the middle of her first speech after Sigurd's death, from which her original reference to her own death (*Sg.* 40/5-8) is omitted (*VS* 60/2-3).

The compiler's fusion of *Akv.* with *Am.* and his probable introduction of material from *Sigurdar saga* in this part of his narrative has caused a slight rearrangement in the order of some of the early *Am.* stanzas, viz. *Am.* 1-5, *Am.* 8 (followed by *Akv.* 2-8), *Am.* 9, *Am.* 6 (followed by material presumably derived from *Sigurdar saga*), *Am.* 7 (*VS* 65/6 - 66/8).

Am. 26 which tells of Glaumvör's dream of a river is placed after *Am.* 14 and thus transferred to Kostbera (*VS* 66/28).

The consideration of *Am.* 26 leads to a further point. Not only is it transferred, it is also repeated, for a slightly different version of it appears some few lines earlier (*VS* 66/23). In short, Kostbera twice dreams the same or a very similar dream — to little purpose.

XIV

There are a very few further examples of repetition. Two versions of *Fm.* 10/1-3 appear: in *VS* 31/31 where it is to be expected, and in *VS* 32/28 where it is a repetition, but reasonable in the context. *Fm.* 25/4-6 appears twice: *VS* 33/7-8 where it is to be expected, and *VS* 33/20-21 which is a quite needless repetition. There is an element of repetition *VS* 34/5-12 which seems due to the transference of details from *Fm.* 42-44 to this point of the narration.

Finally, *Sg.* 20/1-2 are used in *VS* 57/29-30, and seem to be repeated in *VS* 58/7, though the source of the passage in which the latter instance occurs is lost.

There can be little doubt that the compiler would have done well to avoid these few repetitions.

This study of the compiler's treatment of his sources leads to a very clear conclusion. He must have seen it as his task to write a new saga which told the story of the Völsungs and Gjúkungs, a work which would replace the older *Sigurðar saga* by expanding it on the basis of certain lays of *PE*. To perform his task competently it was essential for him to avoid to the best of his ability any hint of poetic diction in his paraphrase of the lays he chose to make use of, and here that ability has been shown to be considerable: surprisingly few traces of poetic style or vocabulary remain. It is, of course, unfortunate — and irritating — that his enthusiasm for his main task, allied to his desire to avoid too much unnecessary detail, should have led him to ruin quite needlessly a number of particularly striking effects, obtained not by their poetic form, but by their content. Yet it is perhaps unfair to over-censure the compiler for this fault which is at least partly off-set by the skill with which he fuses together his sources, poetic and prose, making small changes and additions which are usually appropriate in their context and are often of a clarifying or explanatory nature and yet introduce no new element into the 'received' legends,²⁵ for such was not his purpose.

There can be little doubt that the compiler has very largely achieved his object, for he has created from his various sources a unified prose narrative that lacks neither a certain vigour, nor yet considerable consistency. Throughout this study the term 'compiler' has been used. Should it not perhaps yield to 'author'?

²⁵ Except in one instance: Sigurd's growth in wisdom conditional on eating Fáfnir's heart.

BERGR SOKKASON'S *MICHAELS SAGA* AND ITS SOURCES

By CHRISTINE FELL

FROM the main source of information about Bergr Sokkason we know that he was the author or translator of many lives of saints.¹ We also know enough about his own life to be able to hazard a guess at their dates of composition. These facts are mainly to be found in the *Laurentius Saga Hólabiskups*² written by Einar Hafliðason. Not only did Einar himself know Bergr personally, but since Bergr was also apparently a close friend of Bishop Laurentius, Einar naturally had cause to make fairly frequent references to him. Einar Hafliðason was himself educated at Þingeyrar and at Hólar, and refers in his writing to the quality of the academic community he worked in. He mentions authors, translators, fine scholars, masters of Latin prose, and verse-makers, both at Þingeyrar and at Hólar, mainly casual references, but sufficient to show that Einar was impressed by the scholarship surrounding him. He suggests that a monastery filled with such monks as were at Þingeyrar might well be considered a fine one,³ but in spite of his references to academic activity he gives few names of specific works or specific authors. It is therefore worth noting that the work of Bergr Sokkason apparently impressed Einar to such an extent that he makes two direct references to Berg's achievements in the field of hagiography. First he writes that Bergr compiled in the northern tongue, and with great eloquence, the lives of

¹ Abbreviations of texts are:

Bps. *Biskupa sögur* (gefnar út af hinu íslenzka Bókmentafélagi, 1858-67).

Hms. *Heilagra Manna Sögur* (ed. C. R. Unger, 1877).

Isl. Ann. *Íslandske Annaler indtil 1578* (ed. G. Storm, 1888).

I have used a normalised orthography throughout.

² *Bps.* I 789 ff.

³ "Sannliga mátti þat segja, at fagrlikt var þat klaustr, sem svá var skipat af slíkum munkum, sem þá var at Þingeyrum" (*Bps.* I 832).

many holy men,⁴ then with even greater enthusiasm he says that Bergr compiled in the northern tongue the sagas of many holy men "which will be seen and known as long as this land is inhabited".⁵ As well as these indications of Berg's actual work Einar notes also his qualities and talents. Bergr is praised for his "scholarship, writing, singing and eloquence",⁶ and a manuscript variant also mentions that he was an impressive preacher.⁷

Einar also provides some useful details and dates. He mentions that Laurentius had taught Bergr at Munkaþverá, and tells us also that the period when Laurentius was there was from the spring of 1312 to the following year. Then in the Lent of 1317 when Laurentius and his son became monks, Bergr also joined the Þingeyrar community. It seems very possible that it was while he was at Þingeyrar that Bergr did some, perhaps much, of his work of translation. In 1322 Laurentius appointed him head of the monastery at Munkaþverá in matters temporal and spiritual, and the care of that monastery, temporarily without an abbot, must then have left him little time for other activity. Einar gives the impression that he threw himself into the work with customary energy.⁸

In the winter of 1324-5, as Einar records, Laurentius chose Bergr to be abbot of Munkaþverá and consecrated him at Hólar the next year, but we learn from the various annals⁹ that Bergr resigned that position a decade later. Nothing appears to be recorded of his activities from then until 1345 when he resumed his position as abbot of the same monastery. Possibly the years of his resignation, 1334-1345, were again quiet ones in which he was able to

⁴ "— hann setti saman margar sögubækir heilagra manna í norrænu máli með mikilli snild" (*Bps.* I 832).

⁵ "Samansetti hann margar heilagra manna sögur í norrænu sem birtaz mun ok auðsýnaz meðan þetta land er bygt" (*Bps.* I 850).

⁶ "— klerkdóm, letr, söng ok málsnild" (*Bps.* I 850).

⁷ *Bps.* I 891.

⁸ "Samdi bróðir Bergr þar þá þegar ágæta síðu" (*Bps.* I 840).

⁹ *Isl. Ann.* 349: "Bergr ábóti at Þverá lagði ábóta vald fyrir lítillætis sakir."

continue the work of translation. Of other references to Bergr there is one, that of Arngrímr¹⁰ in *Guðmundar drápa*,¹¹ which again indicates the regard which Berg's contemporaries had for him. Einar may have only contempt for Arngrímr, who when sent on a mission to Norway spent his time learning to make organs, but the two are united in their praise of Bergr. It seems probable that Arngrímr as well as Einar knew Bergr personally, and the stanzas about Berg's work in Arngrím's *Guðmundar drápa* indicate the extent to which it had impressed him.

Of the works which are at present associated with Bergr Sökkason there are only two which usefully contain his own statement of authorship. He has written a prologue to his redaction of *Nikolaus Saga* which opens with the sentence,

To all the friends of God, and of himself, who see or listen to this little book, brother Bergr Sökkason sends God's greetings and his own.¹²

In contrast the acknowledgement of authorship in *Michaels Saga* is delayed until the last chapter.

I who have put together this account ask humbly that those godfearing men who hold in their hands this little book, remember the soul of brother [Bergr] Sökkason on the feast-day of Michael with some prayer or alms-giving.¹³

This is the version as it appears in the only complete manuscript of the saga, AM 657 a-b 4to but the anonymous request of AM 657c 4to, which asks only that the godfearing men "minnist sálu minnar", is likelier to represent the original. That Berg's work was well known is evident, and a scribe would presumably be more inclined to insert than delete an indication of authorship.¹⁴

¹⁰ On the identity of Arngrímr see Jón Helgason in his Introduction to *Byskupa Sögur in Corpus Codicum Islandicorum Medii Ævi* XIX (1950), 15.

¹¹ *Bps.* II 197.

¹² "Öllum guðs vinum ok sínum, þeim sem þenna bækling sjá eða heyra, sendir bróðir Bergr Sökkason kveðju guðs ok sína" (*Hms.* II 49).

¹³ "Bið ek litillátliga, er þessa ræðu samsetti, at þeir guðhræddir menn, er þenna bækling hafa með höndum, minniz sálu bróður [Bergs] Sökkasonar á hátíðardegi Mikhaelis meðr nökkurri bæn eða ölmusu" (*Hms.* I 713).

¹⁴ Cf. *Bergsbók*, Holm. fol. 1, in which *Óláfs Saga Tryggvasonar* is introduced by a suggestion that *Bergr dðóti* compiled it. The probable connection of Bergr Sökkason with the work is discussed by Gustaf Lindblad in his introduction to the facsimile edition of *Bergsbók in Early Icelandic Manuscripts in Facsimile* V (1963), 12-13.

In considering the relationship of *Michaels Saga* to its sources it is necessary to consider something of Berg's attitudes to his material and his aims. His interest in his work seems on the whole to be more that of editor or compiler than just translator. Whether or not he may have been responsible for any of the saints' lives in Icelandic which are direct translations from a single Latin original is not possible to determine, but where texts are associated with his name they are not of this kind. In the *Nikolaus Saga* the extent of his reading is partly indicated by the number of authorities to whom he refers, John of Naples, Isidore of Seville, Gregory, Augustine, the *Ecclesiastica Historia*, and there are presumably others whom he does not name. Certainly the *Nikolaus Saga* contains one passage on the nature of dreams taken directly from the fourth book of Gregory's *Dialogues*,¹⁵ but Bergr does not mention Gregory here, though elsewhere he has mentioned historical and doctrinal points taken from Gregory's work. In the *Michaels Saga* there are fewer explicit references, but there is obviously the same degree of background reading. Bergr is drawing on all available sources, drawing together scattered references, and attempting to weld them into one coherent whole. The verbs he uses of his own work are, at the beginning of the *Nikolaus Saga*, *snara* (*Hms.* II 49/17), in the *Michaels Saga*, *skrifaðr ok samansetttr, saman lesit, and samsetti*¹⁶ (*Hms.* I 676/2, 677/4, 713/6). Similarly the references to Berg's work in *Laurentius Saga* use the words *setti saman* and *samansetti* (*Bps.* I 832, 850), the verb in *Bergsbók* is *snaraði*.¹⁷ The cumulative effect of these references is clearly enough that Bergr and others thought of his work in terms of compilation, not straightforward translation.

Berg's own approach is further indicated in his Prologue

¹⁵ Umberto Moricca, *Gregorii Magni Dialogi* (1924), 309, cf. *Hms.* II 86.

¹⁶ *samsetti* here is Unger's editorial emendation from AM 657 a-b 4to which has *samsæti*. AM 657 c 4to has the variant *saman setti*.

¹⁷ For a discussion of the use of the verb *snara* in connection with Berg's work, see Gustaf Lindblad, *op. cit.* 12-13.

to *Nikolaus Saga* where he says he wishes to write it *heldr fullari* (*Hms.* II 49/18) than it has previously been found written in the old books. The extent to which he achieved this ambition is indicated by a simple comparison of the number of pages in the older *Nikolaus Saga* and in Berg's redaction, as printed in *Hms.* The older saga consists of 28 pages, Berg's consists of 109. The extra pages are not entirely composed of new material however. It is Berg's practice to expand his source and to insert comments of his own, as he warms to the dramatic possibilities of his subject-matter.

Michaels Saga is shorter than *Nikolaus Saga* and it is evident that the author was to some extent held up for lack of relevant material. Some of what he associates with Michael has little obvious connection, and the other angels, fallen ones included, come in for possibly more than their share of attention. What might be considered standard Michael material consists only of the Apocalypse statements, the appearances of Michael on Mounts Garganus and Tumba respectively, plus a few sentences from Gregory's thirty-fourth homily about the angelic nature. Bergr uses these, but adds to them almost any story or incident containing either the name of Michael, or even an anonymous angel. In his opening chapter he explains some of the difficulties attendant on writing the saga of an archangel as opposed to that of a simple human saint. Origin, genealogy, powerful connections are things of this world, not relevant to the angelic being, and Bergr suggests an author should use words concerning angels with more than usual care.

It probably results from Berg's awareness of the gaps in his material that, wherever incidents are available to him in two different sources, he chooses to work from the fuller one. This is easily demonstrable since it is evident that he knew and used the *Speculum Historiale*¹⁸ by Vincent of Beauvais. He states when writing about

¹⁸ I have used the edition published in Venice, 1591.

Charlemagne that the *Speculum* is his source and a comparison of his text with the corresponding section of the *Speculum* corroborates his statement. It is therefore reasonable to assume, even allowing for some manuscript variation in copies of the *Speculum Historiale* that Bergr also had access to the rest of the material on Michael contained in this compilation. And the *Speculum* does contain, though scattered from book to book, much of the basic material which Bergr has used elsewhere in his *Michaels Saga*. Five of the main incidents that make up the body of the saga, mainly appearances of Michael to various people, all occur in the *Speculum Historiale*.¹⁹ But for none of these is Bergr content to rely on the limited and abbreviated statements supplied by Vincent. It is demonstrable in each case that he has worked from a fuller version, and it seems probable that this represents his deliberate choice, that it was his wish to write his saga as fully as possible.

After the Prologue to the *Michaels Saga* Bergr turns to Biblical material, and draws a brief account of the creation from *Genesis*. Then he goes on to the creation specifically of angels. His material on Lucifer gives the impression of being drawn from popular not patristic sources, since his statements are of the vivid and picturesque kind developed rather in preaching manuals than patristic literature. The names by which he describes Lucifer after the Fall, Noctifer and Pestifer, are not recorded elsewhere in Icelandic, and his translation of Noctifer,²⁰ *náttberari* is a *hapax legomenon*.²¹ Lucifer

¹⁹ The material in *Michaels Saga* also found in the *Speculum Historiale* is:

- (a) The vision of Duggall : *Mich.* ch. 8 ff. *S.H.* Book 27, ch. 88 ff. (wrongly given as Book 28 in the index).
- (b) The death of Roland : *Mich.* ch. 11 ff. *S.H.* Book 24, ch. 18 ff.
- (c) Apparition on Mount Garganus : *Mich.* ch. 13 ff. *S.H.* Book 20, ch. 102.
- (d) The legend of Bonus : *Mich.* ch. 21 ff. *S.H.* Book 7, ch. 97 (index reference, *Mariæ miracula*).
- (e) Apparition on Mount Tumba : *Mich.* ch. 24 ff. *S.H.* Book 23, ch. 137.

²⁰ The only use recorded in *NED* is from 1667: "Lest . . . he hurl you Lucifers out of the Heaven of your sinful felicity, and make you Noctifers and Mortifers of misery and contempt".

²¹ My thanks are due to the editors of the *Arnamagnæanske Kommissions Ordbog* for permission to use their files.

material is associated with the Michael story in the *South English Legendary*²² though not in precisely the same form as Bergr has it, and the ideas that Lucifer was transformed from angel to devil (*Hms.* I 678/17) or that God dividing the light from the darkness represents the division of good and bad angels (*Hms.* I 677/35), are of such frequent occurrence that it is impossible to assign them to a specific source.

The next incident Bergr discusses, an anecdote from the *Vitæ Patrum*, is simply an illustration of the powers of angels in general and has nothing specifically to do with Michael. It may well be that he is tending to think in terms of "Michael and all angels", especially since he probably uses among other things the lections for that feast day. In this episode, one of the desert fathers, Moses, goes to visit another, Isidore, in order to explain that he cannot stay in his cell because he is so beset by devils. Isidore advises him to go back and conquer them, but finding Moses unwilling to do this, he demonstrates from his own lodging a window towards the west from which one can see a great multitude of devils, but then another window towards the east where one can see the great forces of good angels, with which sight Moses was so strengthened that he was able to return to his cell.

There is a full translation of the *Vitæ Patrum*²³ in which this episode follows the Latin almost word for word. Berg's version gives the impression of being an independent translation, and a much freer one. There are no similarities of vocabulary that would indicate he was using an already existing translation, though it would certainly have been available in Iceland in his day. The ordinary version of course is part of the whole sequence of episodes, but Berg's introduces itself with some information taken from an earlier part of the *Vitæ Patrum*: "Two holy fathers, called abbots, lived in Egypt in the

²² ed. Charlotte d'Evelyn and Anna Mill, *Early English Text Society*, 1956.

²³ *Hms.* II 335 ff.

desert . . .'.²⁴ The location on the one hand in Egypt, and on the other in the desert, occurs in separate sentences in the Prologue to the *Vitæ Patrum*.²⁵ A point in which Berg's version follows the Latin more closely than the other is in the name given to the place, *Petra* in *Michaels Saga* and in the Latin text, *Liger* in the other translation.

The main difference between Berg's version and the other two is simply one of length. He adds no new material, but everything that the Latin allows to remain implicit Berg chooses to make explicit. In the *Vitæ Patrum*, Latin and vernacular versions, Isidore suggests that Moses should return to his cell. Berg adds to the simple instruction the encouragement that he "will conquer in the strife". In the original it is not thought necessary to explain Moses's reluctance to obey, "noluit abbas Moyses pergere ad cellulam suam", but in *Michaels Saga* there is emphasis on his feeling of helplessness in the face of such enemies. These additions are typical of Berg's attempts to increase the dramatic elements in his material, but a less explicable change is in the direction of the windows from which the devils are seen. In all three versions the angels are seen from a window facing east, but whereas the other two versions place the devil-haunted window facing west, Berg changes it from west to north, perhaps because he has already associated Lucifer's realm with the northern regions in accordance with Biblical tradition.²⁶

The text then covers a number of episodes in which good and bad angels are set against each other, typical exempla of the kind used frequently in homilies, culminating in the story of the Irishman named Duggall (Tnugdál, Tundal).

²⁴ "Tveir heilagir feðr meðr ábóta nöfnum bygðu í Egiptalands eyðimörkum, annarr Moises en annarr Ysodorus ábóti" (*Hms.* I 679).

²⁵ *Hms.* II 337, lines 1, 13, 21, 33.

²⁶ It is worth noticing, however, that when Berg comes to the apparition of Michael on Mount Garganus, where the Latin describes two doors leading to a crypt of which the southern is the larger, Berg again alters his text and makes the northern door the larger of the two. It is perhaps possible that he had a particular building in mind, and changed his directions accordingly.

Duggal's whole story appears elsewhere by the name of *Duggals Leizla*. It is a typical warning about the after-life. The man Duggall appeared to have died, lay in a trance for three days, astonished everyone by proving not to be dead after all, and recounted the adventures his soul had experienced during that time with both angels and devils. There appear to be three possible sources that Bergr could have used for this tale, the Latin original, the Norse translation, or the abbreviated *Speculum Historiale* version. Of these the *Speculum* was clearly not the source, since the *Michaels Saga* and the other texts share details not found in the *Speculum*. Between the three other texts there is extremely close correspondence, and especially between the two vernacular texts there is such similarity of vocabulary and syntax, even frequent identity, that it would be unreasonable to posit independent translations from the Latin. For example when Duggall lay in a trance the signs of death which came on him are listed in a sentence that corresponds point by point and almost word for word.

Michaels Saga

því næst fellu öll dauðamörk á hann: hár hans fell, enni hans hrokknæði, augun um sneruz, nasraufar byrgðuz, varrar bliknuðu, haka hans ofan signæði, ok allir hans limir kólnuðu.

Duggals Leizla

því næst fellu öll sönn dauðamörk á hann: hár hans fölnæði, enni hrokknæði, augu hans um sneruz, en nasraufar hans byrgðuz, varrar bliknuðu, haka ofan seig ok allir líkams liðir hans kólnuðu.²⁷

This is a particularly helpful sentence. First of all it demonstrates clearly that the *Speculum Historiale* can be discounted as a source since it has only "Assunt omnia signa mortis", and omits the list. Secondly the two vernacular texts are alike in having the same deviation or mistranslation from the full Latin version, thereby supporting the suggestion that the translations are related

²⁷ *Hms.* I 686/28; *Hms.* I 331/34.

rather than independent. The Latin text has "crines candent".²⁸ C. R. Unger, editor of *Hms.*, has emended the verb in *Duggals Leizla* to *fölnaði*, but records in the footnotes that he has no manuscript authority for this, AM 681a 4to having *fell en*, and AM 624 4to, the manuscript of *Duggals Leizla* consistently closest to the *Michaels Saga*, having *fell i* corresponding to the verb *fell* of *Michaels Saga*.

It is therefore the Norse *Duggals Leizla* that may be assumed to be the source of *Michaels Saga*. The *Michaels Saga* itself cannot be the earlier of the two texts, since in some details *Duggals Leizla* is fuller, and it is the fuller version which corresponds to the Latin. Also the *Duggals Leizla* contains the whole story, not merely an excerpt from it as the *Michaels Saga* does.

There are other grounds for assuming that the *Duggals Leizla* is the earlier of the two texts. It is associated in a preface with *Hákon konungr* who had it translated from Latin. C. R. Unger in his preface to *Hms.* says that there can be little doubt that this was Hákon gamli. Certainly, since it is known that Hákon gamli encouraged translation, it is very possible that he was responsible for ordering the translation of *Duggals Leizla*, in which case the date would fall within the years of his reign 1217-1263, but even if the Hákon referred to were Hákon V (1299-1319), this still would put the translation of *Duggals Leizla* earlier than the composition of *Michaels Saga*.

It seems as if there is every reason to assume that for this material Bergr made use of an already existing translation, and if this is accepted, it throws further light on the way Bergr handled his sources. The lack of expansion, elaboration and moralisation is unlike his practice elsewhere, and it seems a possible reason for this that he is copying from the vernacular rather than translating Latin. It is obviously easier to add independent flourishes if one is translating than to rework an

²⁸ *Hms.* I 359/26, also 331, footnote.

original in one's own language. It should therefore be possible to use this evidence elsewhere, in helping to determine other occasions on which Bergr has used vernacular sources.

After the Duggall episode, Bergr introduces his next chapter with the words, "as we read in the *Karlamagnus Saga*",²⁹ and still on the same subject, refers in the chapter after that to "the book called *Speculum Historiale*"³⁰ which provided some of his material on Charlemagne. He makes it clear however that he has more than one source, and his sources are sometimes contradictory: "some Norse books say differently about this matter".³¹

It is not too difficult to follow Bergr's treatment of his sources here. He opens with a sentence about the two kings Marsirius and Deligandus sent to Charlemagne, which is directly translated from the *Speculum Historiale* version of the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*. Then Bergr moves away from the *Pseudo-Turpin* account of Roncevaux. That he refers to Roland's horn as *Olivant* is helpful since this is the name given to it in the *chansons* but never in the *Pseudo-Turpin*; that he says of the horn, "the horn which is called Olivant, and which Játmundr, son of King Agulandus of Africa had owned",³² indicates that he was using the *Chanson d'Aspremont*, which provides the relevant information that Roland obtained both Durendal and the Olifant from Aumont son of Agolant.³³ But then Bergr translates directly from the *Speculum Historiale* when he comes to Roland's dying moments. His treatment is interesting again. Instead of giving the information that Roland had received the sacrament earlier that day before the battle, as part of a conversation between Roland and Balduin, he ignores

²⁹ "Svá er lesit í Karlamagnús sögu mikla keisara" (*Hms.* I 690).

³⁰ "sú bók heitir Speculum Historiale" (*Hms.* I 692).

³¹ "þó at sumar norrænubækir segi öðruvísi af því efni" (*Hms.* I 692).

³² "lúðr þann, er Olivant heitir, ok átt hafði Játmundr son Agulandi konungs af Afríka" (*Hms.* I 690).

³³ "Aumont ocist qui fu fix Agolant / Et Durendal conquist et l'olifant" (Louis Brandin, *La Chanson d'Aspremont* (1919), I 1237-8).

Balduin's presence entirely, and provides the information in the context of Roland's thanks to God.

S.H. Bk. 24, ch. 19

Acceperat autem eodem die Rolandus eucharistiam

Hms. I 691/13

þakkar hann himneskum guði þá miskunn. þvíat um morgininn fyrir orrostuna hafði hann bæði skriptaz ok tekit corpus domini.

Similarly Bergr, though translating the last words almost exactly, changes Roland's prayer "pro omnibus" who died at Roncevaux to "fyrir öllum sínum bræðrum" (691/26) and alters the simple "obiit" to "sofnar í friði guðs" (691/27).

Then Bergr leaves all sources on Roland to draw his own parallel between the deaths of Roland and Marsirius, using quotations from the Psalms to support his point. After this he returns to the *Speculum Historiale* for the vision of Turpin, concerning the soul of Roland being escorted to heaven by Michael, the only reason for his inclusion of the Charlemagne material.³⁴

From here the saga goes on to standard Michael material, that is the two apparitions of Michael on Mounts Garganus and Tumba. Again there are versions of these not only in the *Speculum Historiale*, but also in standard compilations such as the *Legenda Aurea* and the *South English Legendary*. Berg's version of the story is translated, as usual, not from the later compilations but from the full Latin original. The complete story of the Garganus apparition as printed by the Bollandist editors, is taken "ex quinque aut sex mss. vetustissimis, collatis inter se et cum aliis nonnullis".³⁵ The editors also provide the information that the author is anonymous.

A comparison of Berg's work with the story printed by

³⁴ For a full discussion of the relationship of the Charlemagne material in *Michaels Saga* to the *Karlamagnus Saga* see P. G. Foote, *The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle in Iceland: A Contribution to the Study of the Karlamagnus Saga* (1959), 22-25.

³⁵ *Acta Sanctorum Septembris VIII* (1865), 61.

the Bollandists makes it clear that a copy of this must have been available to Bergr. It is not only that the two share details which are not in the abbreviated versions of the *Speculum* or the *Legenda Aurea*. Bergr, as is his normal practice, expands, but it is expansion of points in the same order as the original, and addition not of fact but of suggestion. For example, the words Michael speaks when he appears and explains who he is, are at first translated exactly by Bergr.

Hms. I 694/27

ek Mikhael höfuðengill, er jafnan stendr í auglitu guðs .

Acta Sanctorum

Ego enim sum Michael archangelus, qui in conspectu Domini semper adsisto.

But when Michael goes on to explain that he wants this particular place on the hill to be preserved in his honour, the Latin word simply indicates that it shall be kept safe — *tutum* — which Bergr expands into “pure and holy, free from all defilement and shedding of blood”.³⁶ Then, where the Latin text continues with the story, Bergr pauses in his account to explain to his readers how it comes about that Michael can be at the same time standing for ever in the presence of God and also appearing to the bishop. The whole of Bergr’s next chapter — about fifteen lines — is devoted to saying in greater detail what the original says in two short sentences, namely that the bishop on waking gave thanks for his vision, went to the hill and saw two doors leading into a crypt which he was not yet permitted to enter. Bergr’s expansion is mainly on the subject of the bishop’s emotional reactions to his situation — praise, thanks, fear, wonder and so on. It is this kind of expansion which can be misleading with regard to Bergr’s sources. He sometimes gives the impression, when he has more or less trebled the length of his original, that he must have been supplementing it from somewhere. But

³⁶ “hreinn ok heilagr, frjáls af allri saurgan ok blóðsúthelling” (*Hms.* I 694).

on the contrary the more detailed the comparison one makes, the clearer it becomes that, sentence by sentence and point by point, Bergr is following the one original text, and that all the intervening material is inserted to emphasise motives, or to increase dramatic tension, or to arouse greater awe and piety in his audience.

After this apparition Bergr goes on to a legend about Bishop Bonus of Clermont. Here the relationship of texts has complications of a different kind, since Bonus is not usually connected with Michael material, but with the Mary cycle of legends. In fact the story concerns a miracle performed by the Virgin in a church of Michael, which tenuous connection was sufficient for Bergr to utilise the legend. He strengthens the connection by inserting the occasional thanks or prayers of Bonus to *heilagr Mikhael* (702/24, cf. 702/37).

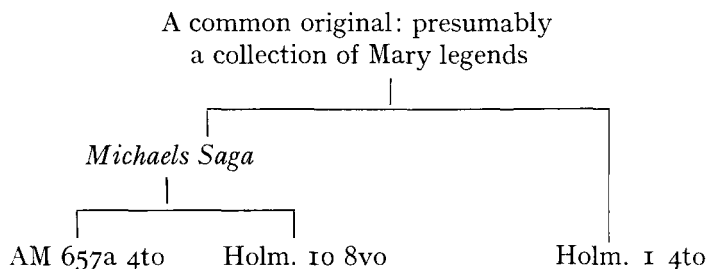
This legend of Bishop Bonus turns up twice in the Norse versions of the Mary legends,³⁷ once in a version that has no connection with *Michaels Saga*, being apparently a direct translation from the *Speculum Historiale*, but secondly in an account almost identical with the *Michaels Saga*, except in so far as, being back in its rightful setting, Mary's name, not Michael's, occurs in the prayers and thanks.

The relationship between the Icelandic versions of the Bonus legend has already been investigated by Mattias Tveitane³⁸ who reaches the conclusion that the Mary text here is based directly on the *Michaels Saga*, a hypothesis which seems doubtful on the grounds that it is not entirely probable that a collector of Mary legends would look to *Michaels Saga* for a source, whereas it is evident that Bergr is willing to use any material that he can make appear relevant. Also the person putting the legend back in the Mary cycle would need to have some evidence

³⁷ C. R. Unger, *Mariu Saga* (1871), 544 ff. and 1168 ff.

³⁸ 'Bonus, et latinsk Maria-dikt i norrøn prosaversjon', *Maal og Minne* (1962), 109-21.

that this was where it belonged and the only evidence possible would be a version with the original setting. Mattias Tveitane also suggests that the manuscript of the Mary text goes directly back to the main manuscript of *Michaels Saga*, that is that Holm. 1 4to must go directly back to AM 657a 4to. Here, however, the evidence of the fragment of *Michaels Saga* contained in Holm. 10 8vo, fragment V 1r-2v, should be taken into account. Not all of the fragment is legible, but of the part which is there are a few sentences from the Bonus legend. The manuscript is very close to both the others. Its date has been placed "circa 1400"³⁹ which makes it later than the other manuscripts of the *Michaels Saga* but earlier than Holm. 1 4to. The divergences between the three manuscripts are very slight, but since there are points in which Holm. 1 4to is closer to Holm. 10 8vo than to AM 657a 4to, this would seem to indicate that the suggested direct relationship between Holm. 1 4to and AM 657a 4to is improbable. It seems likelier that the two descend from a common original, an original which may well have been a series of Mary legends. A possible stemma in this case would be:



Such a stemma would account for the features which Holm. 10 8vo has in common with both the other manuscripts. If the source of the *Michaels Saga* version were a vernacular collection of Mary legends, Bergr may well have been copying exactly, as he does with the Duggall material.

³⁹ See Ole Widding, Hans Bekker-Nielsen, L. K. Shook, 'The Lives of the Saints in Old Norse Prose: A Handlist'. *Medieval Studies* XXV (1963), 326.

There is another occasion when Bergr has given an account of an incident found elsewhere among Mary legends. This is the story of the Dragon of Christchurch, which comes in the *Nikolaus Saga*, and for which Professor Turville-Petre⁴⁰ posits one, possibly more, translations of an original Latin text from which both the Mary and the *Nikolaus Saga* versions were derived. It seems on the basis of Professor Turville-Petre's evidence that Bergr might well have been acquainted with a vernacular collection of Mary legends, and this may have been the one from which Holm 1 4to was derived. One piece of evidence that encourages this hypothesis is that the two Mary miracles of which Bergr makes use are in the same two manuscripts of Mary legends, and only in those two. Of these two, one is a late paper manuscript AM 634-5 4to, which contains that version of the Bonus legend taken from the *Speculum Historiale*, the other is Holm. 1 4to. Tenuous as the evidence is, it seems to point to an Icelandic collection of Mary legends from which Holm. 1 4to is derived, and which Bergr knew and drew on both in the *Michaels Saga* and the *Nikolaus Saga*. The composition of *Mariu Saga* itself is associated with Hólar by its ascription to Kygri-Björn Hjaltason,⁴¹ and the subsequent presence of one copy of a *Mariu Saga* there is attested by the 1396 inventory.⁴² That a collection of miracles already in the vernacular should have been there in Bergr's time is therefore a not unreasonable conjecture.

Bergr is by now almost coming to the end of his saga. He has one more apparition to record, the apparition of Michael on Mount Tumba, which to some extent deliberately duplicates the Mount Garganus story. Again he takes the full Latin original⁴³ and provides it with moral,

⁴⁰ 'Legends of England in Icelandic Manuscripts', *The Anglo-Saxons: Studies . . . presented to Bruce Dickins* (1959), 104-121.

⁴¹ "Var Kygri-Björn mikilsháttar klerkr, sem auðsýnaz má í því, at hann hefir samsett Mariu sögu" (*Bps.* II 186). See G. Turville-Petre, 'The Old-Norse Homily on the Assumption and the *Mariu Saga*', *Medieval Studies* IX (1947), 133-4.

⁴² *Diplomatarium Islandicum*, III 613.

⁴³ *Acta Sanctorum Septembris VIII* (1865), 76.

dramatic, and emotional highlights. Whenever one of the participants has visions of Michael, the Latin has the brief "visio apparuit cuidam homini" whereby the man was warned or advised or exhorted. Bergr turns all these episodes into dialogues, giving Michael lengthy speeches of explanation, usually including the words, "Þvíat ek er Mikhael höfuðengill", and prefaced by some indication of the brilliance and glory of Michael's appearance.

Finally Bergr brings the saga to an end with material from the Apocalypse about Michael's fight with the dragon, and some statements adopted with acknowledgement from Pope Gregory about the name Michael, and the angelic nature and duties of angels as messengers of God to mankind. These statements come from Gregory's thirty-fourth homily, but since this is standard liturgical material for Michael's day, and excerpts from it occur in the lections of various breviaries, it seems quite likely that it was from a liturgical source that Bergr adopted it, especially since he puts it together with the relevant Biblical material on Michael.

The references to sagas in the church inventories indicate to some extent the interest in and demand for hagiographical texts which Bergr was concerned to supply. Between 1354 and 1394 there are sixteen churches which are specifically mentioned as owning a *Nikolaus Saga*, and one 1394 entry refers to the church's possession of two copies of *Nikolaus Saga*, one new, the other old.⁴⁴ In 1394 the church at Reykir in Tungusveit, only a few miles from Hólar, owned a *Michaels Saga* and the church of Selárdalur in Arnarfjörður had in 1354 both the *Michaels Saga* and the *Nikolaus Saga*.

The evidence of inventories is by no means conclusive, since the entries do not always make it clear whether the reference is to Latin or vernacular versions, so that, for example, the 1354 entry cannot be held to determine the date of composition of the *Michaels Saga*. But enthu-

⁴⁴ "Nikolaus saga ný og önnur forn" (*Diplomatarium Islandicum*, III 526).

siasm was expressed for Berg's work by his contemporaries, Einar and Arngrímr, and it seems quite likely that it was popular. After all Berg was a populariser. His main concern in the presentation of his work is to make an effect or stimulate a response. All the changes he makes in his material are of this kind. If he sometimes seems to be stating the obvious, it is because he wishes to make material fully or immediately comprehensible, to reduce to simplicity confusing theological matters. And because to say simply "a man had a vision" seems to him to lack dramatic impact, he tries to present the incident in visual terms. His material may seem dull to a modern audience, but he himself is clearly excited by its potentialities, and if his rhetoric sometimes becomes oppressive, it is compensated for by the genuine eagerness and interest with which he explores and exploits his sources.

BOOK REVIEWS

STUDIER I SNORRES MYTOLOGI. By ANNE HOLTSMARK. Skrifter utgitt av Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo. II Hist.-Filos. Klasse, Ny Serie No. 4. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1964. 86 pp.

Professor Holtsmark studies the Prologue to Snorri's *Edda* and many sections of the *Gylfaginning* in order to show how much Snorri owes to pagan tradition and how much to his learning as a medieval Christian. She is particularly well equipped to undertake such a study by her intimate knowledge of the earlier Christian literature of Norway and Iceland. She detects numerous phrases and concepts in the *Gylfaginning* which Snorri must have derived from homilies and other Christian sources.

At the outset, Professor Holtsmark makes it plain that Snorri knew more about Norse myths than we can hope to know, but his object in compiling the *Edda* was not purely scientific. He must teach young poets to appreciate the allusions to myth made by their ancestors. Snorri did not believe in heathen gods, nor must his readers believe the stories which he tells in any other way than he explains at the beginning of his book.

In his presentation of the northern Olympus, Snorri adopts a variant of Euhemerism. The heathen gods, the *Æsir*, were men, and they had come from Asia. They settled down in Sweden and, by the force of their magic, caused themselves to be worshipped as gods, apparently as the gods whom they themselves worshipped.

The frame of the story told in the *Gylfaginning* is provided by Gylfi (Gangleri), King of the Swedes. He was a magician, but the magic of the *Æsir* was better than his, and they were able to deceive him. The instruction given to Gylfi by Hár, Jafnhár and Þriði is in the form of question and answer. This form is not uncommon, and at least two precedents must have been known to Snorri. The one was the pagan or pseudo-pagan poem, *Vafþrúðnismál*, in which Óðinn and the aged giant Vafþrúðnir ask each other questions, and the one who cannot answer must lose his head. The motive of the wagered head is not carried through in the *Gylfaginning* but, before the questions start, Hár tells Gylfi that he will not get out of Hávahöll unharmed unless he shows himself the wiser. In the end, after they have told about the Ragnarök, Gylfi's informants vanish, as Professor Holtsmark observes (p. 17).

The model for the dialogue form may be sought first in the *Vafþrúðnismál*, but Professor Holtsmark lucidly demonstrates the influence of another work as well. This is the *Lucidarius* (*Elucidarius*), ascribed to Honorius Augustodunensis. This

handbook of theology was translated into Icelandic in the twelfth century and Snorri can hardly have failed to know it. This is also in dialogue form, the disciple asking questions of the master, and Professor Holtsmark mentions a number of phrases and concepts which Snorri must derive from that book.

Once he is inside the frame of his story, Snorri is freed both of the strictures of the Church and of scientific critics, and he describes the heathen religion partly as an inverted Christianity, as Professor Holtsmark shows in her book (pp. 35 ff.). The arch-fiend, Óðinn, is set in place of God; he dwells in his kingdom, ruling everything great and small. He sits in Hliðskjalf, which Snorri, following Christian imagery, sees as a throne (pp. 39 ff.).

If Óðinn, the Alföðr, were the heathen God the Father, there must be angels. The good ones were the *ljósalfar* (light elves), and the place of the bad ones was filled by the *dökkalfar* (dark elves), who were blacker than pitch. The term *dökkalfar* is not found elsewhere, and Professor Holtsmark suggests (pp. 37-8) that Snorri devised it for his own purpose.

The study of the pagan and Christian elements in the *Gylfaginning* is complicated especially because the sources which Snorri used were themselves influenced by Christian conceptions. The *Völuspá*, one of the chief of Snorri's sources, is deeply coloured by Christian symbolism. The god, Baldr, although known in pagan times, was nearly a Christian figure and, as may be gleaned from Professor Holtsmark's pages (pp. 72 ff.), he grows more Christian in Snorri's hands. He resembles a Christus Judex. Gefjun, an erotic, fertility goddess for the pagans, becomes a virgin, and adopts qualities of Mary (pp. 69 ff.).

Many scholars half a century ago placed too much faith in Snorri's *Gylfaginning* as a source of religious history. The reaction was carried to extreme lengths by E. Mogk, who was partly followed by W. Baetke. The danger now is rather that the value of Snorri's work should be underestimated. Snorri knew more Old Norse poetry than we know, and perhaps formless tradition as well. The cow Auðumbla is not (despite Professor Holtsmark's statement to the contrary, p. 28) named in the *Grimnismál*, and cannot be traced to any extant source, Christian or pagan, which Snorri is likely to have known,¹ but parallel figures from Egypt, Persia and India suggest that Snorri learned of Auðumbla from tradition, whether poetic or not.

Professor Holtsmark and most modern critics are satisfied that, when he described the flood, in which all giants (*hrímpursar*) but Bergelmir and his family were drowned in the blood of the wounded Ymir, Snorri was thinking of the biblical Deluge, of which he probably read in the *Veraldar Saga* of the twelfth

century.² It is, however, difficult to think of two floods more dissimilar, and Snorri's story has more in common with stories of floods recorded among unlettered peoples than it has with the story of Noah.³ It is possible that, in making four dwarfs uphold the sky, Snorri was influenced by the corner pillars (*hornstafir*) of medieval architecture. But at least one dwarf (Austri) seems to have upheld the sky in pagan times. I would think that the term *dvergr* (dwarf), used in medieval architecture for king-post or queen-post, upholding the ridge-beam of a building, derives from the pagan conception, rather than that the conception of the dwarf upholding the sky derives from architecture.

Professor Holtsmark's work is a most valuable contribution, not only to the study of Snorri as a mythographer, but also to the study of Norse mythology.

G. TURVILLE-PETRE

¹ Auðumbla (oldest of cows) is named in a *pula* (*Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning*, ed. Finnur Jónsson, I B (1912), 669). It is doubtful whether this *pula* is old enough for Snorri to have known it.

² p. 53; cf. Professor Holtsmark's paper in *Maal og Minne* (1946), esp. 53 ff.

³ I have discussed this question briefly in *Collection Latomus*, XLV (*Hommages à Georges Dumézil* 1960), 209 ff.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF OLD NORSE-ICELANDIC STUDIES 1964. Edited by HANS BEKKER-NIELSEN and THORKIL DAMSGAARD OLSEN in collaboration with the ROYAL LIBRARY, COPENHAGEN. *Munksgaard, Copenhagen*, 1965. 72 pp.

It is good to welcome the second issue of the *Bibliography of Old Norse-Icelandic Studies*. Perhaps I may be allowed to paraphrase Dr Ole Widding's description, on p. 15, of the publication of Rafn's edition of *Fornmanna Sögur* and say that not the least admirable aspect of *BONIS* is that each issue has come out on schedule, and that it is an admirable example of scholarly co-operation. It is gratifying to see how willingly scholars round the world comply with the request to submit details of their publications. The result this year is 430 entries, occupying pp. 27-64 of the bibliography. This is prefaced by a short excellent article on Carl Christian Rafn, written by Ole Widding.

Items Nos. 398 and 407 could perhaps have been added to the list of references under "Bibliographies" in the index. Skúli Þorsteinsson is inadvertently italicised in the same index on p. 70. It is hard to see why Hugh Smith should appear as "Smith, A. H." and "Smith, A. H[ugh]" in successive entries.

J. A. B. TOWNSEND

GRADED READINGS AND EXERCISES IN OLD ICELANDIC. By K. G. CHAPMAN. *University of California Press*, 1964. 72 pp. 14/-.

Up to now most students of Old Icelandic in this country have acquired a rudimentary knowledge of the language either by working through some of the extracts in E. V. Gordon's *An Introduction to Old Norse*, or simply by reading a text. Mr Chapman's book is designed to spare the student some of the initial difficulties which this method entails. It contains fifteen chapters, each based on a short text (they get progressively longer and more complex) taken from some better known works of medieval Icelandic literature. The first of these are printed side by side with a fairly literal English rendering, and all are followed by little scraps of grammatical information. Chapter 1 for example tells us that the nom. and gen. sing. of some masculine nouns end in *-r* and *-s* respectively. The syntactical points arising out of each text are then discussed, and there are exercises based on the material introduced in the chapter concerned. Finally there is a "review vocabulary".

By the time the student has worked through the book he may well have a comprehensive knowledge of Old Icelandic morphemics, but he is also likely to be exasperated.

Mr Chapman's book will doubtless be a help to some students, but for those who know about grammatical inflection, particularly that of the old Germanic languages, it is more likely to impede than assist rapid progress. Surely the best thing to do when beginning any language is to obtain an overall picture of its structure. In the case of highly inflected languages this can be followed by a systematic study of the various inflections. In my view it is of little value knowing that the "nom. and gen. sing. masc. and neut. of weak adj." are *-i*, *-a*, and *-a*, *-a*, respectively (Ch. 3), if one knows nothing about the dat., acc., fem. or plur. and cannot view the forms given as part of a whole. This is, however, a quarrel with the method used by Mr Chapman. Within the limitations of this method his book is competently written. The extracts are carefully chosen to illustrate the grammatical points, which for the most part are dealt with in a clear and precise manner. In Ch. 1.2, however, it says of the nom. sing. inflection of strong masculine nouns: "If the stem ends in *l*, *n* or *s* preceded by a stressed short vowel, the ending *-r* is added as usual: *dal-r* 'valley', *vin-r* 'friend'." The third example is lacking and I think it would be difficult to find. Furthermore when the student is invited (p. 42) to "write the 3 sing. pres. forms of the following verbs" on the same principle, it cannot be right to include the verb *vaxa* among them.

I have only found a few printing errors (Glendenning and Fornritafélag for Fornritafélag p. v, sogunni for sogunni p. 28, and sett for sett p. 31), but the fact that þ always looks like a capital and ð as though it were italicized somewhat mars this good impression. The price of the book is rather high for what it contains, and it is to be hoped that the remaining sections of the complete course in Icelandic, of which this comprises the first volume, will not be as expensive.

MICHAEL BARNES

STUDIER I KRONOLOGISK METODE I TIDLIG ISLANDSK HISTORIE-SKRIVNING. By ÓLAFIA EINARSDÓTTIR. CWK Gleerup, Lund, 1964. ix, 377 pp.

The dating of events from medieval sources has always been a source of great difficulty for the modern historian. The modern system, standardized in the West, of using the birth of Christ as a fixed point, though based on the work of early scholars such as Dionysius and Bede, was not consistently used until comparatively late times. The year itself was reckoned as starting at different points in the calendar, sometimes as now on 1st January, often in September and occasionally in March. The difficulty of reconciling the varying preferences of the different chroniclers adds considerably to the confusion. In the present volume an attempt is made to examine and establish the dating systems used by early historians of Scandinavia. The concentration is inevitably on Icelandic works as the prime chronological, as well as historical, sources.

Mrs Einarisdóttir differentiates between learned systems, based mainly on Easter tables and usually consisting of a constructed time scale, and other and more popular methods which make greater use of time intervals between important events. The sagas, on the whole, prefer the popular method, whilst Ari Þorgilsson, Sturla Þórðarson and the author of *Prests saga Guðmundar góða* tend to make use of the more scholarly time scale, though this is not their exclusive practice.

The first attempt to establish a chronology for the North was probably made by Sæmundr Sigfússon from Oddi, but so little of his work has survived that Mrs Einarisdóttir reserves the name of father of Scandinavian chronology for Ari Þorgilsson, whose *Íslendingabók* she examines with great care. Naturally, like Sæmundr, he made use of foreign models and sources, many of them probably English. Crucial on this point is the use made of

the saga of St Edmund, which Mrs Einarsdóttir would still equate with the life written by Abbo of Fleury, though this is disputed by Ellehøj who favours *De miraculis Sancti Eadmundi* by Hermannus.¹

According to Mrs Einarsdóttir, Ari has four fixed dates in the skeleton of his time scheme. The first is the death of St Edmund of East Anglia in 870, the second the fall of Olaf Tryggvason in 1000, the third the defeat of Olaf Haraldsson in 1030, and the fourth the end of a lunar cycle in 1120. From these two points of interest arise: first, that all refer to foreign and not Icelandic events, and second, that they are all round figures. Why did Ari choose them? The answer to the first must be that they were well-established fixed points which satisfactorily covered the period on which he was writing, and to the second that round figures were the most convenient since Ari must have been using Roman numerals. The actual date for the death of Edmund, established for us by the Anglo-Saxon chronicle, must have been A.D. 869 in our modern reckoning, since the Chronicle at this point began the year on 1st September. Ari was aware of this because he dates the fall of Olaf Tryggvason as the year 1000, but according to our reckoning it must have occurred in A.D. 999, which must also be the year for the introduction of Christianity into Iceland. The difficult figure 999 would not have suited Ari, so he is careful to date not the coming of Christianity in June but the death of Olaf Tryggvason in September. The same reasoning led Ari to the extended discussion of the date 1120 in connection with the death of Bishop Gissur, which he was well aware took place in 1118.

After Ari, however, the basis of reckoning seems to have changed. Mrs Einarsdóttir maintains that Bede's chronological system was not used again in Iceland until we reach the works of Sturla Þórðarson. Instead the bishoprics of both Skálholt and Hólar seem to have accepted the chronology worked out by the Franco-German Gerlandus,² by which the birth of Christ occurs in the year 8, so that there is a discrepancy of seven years between the dates supplied during this period and our modern reckoning.

In the so-called Family Sagas and in Sturla's *Íslendinga saga* a popular, more relative, chronology is preferred, but in *Prests saga Guðmundar góða* and Sturla's biographies of Hákon and Magnus there is a return to a more scholarly system. The late thirteenth-

¹ Svend Ellehøj, *Den Ældste Norrøne Historiekrivning* (1965), 64ff.

² See also Jón Jóhannesson, 'Tímatál Gerlands í íslenskum ritum frá þjóðveldisöld', *Skirnir* CXXXVI (1952), 76-93.

century Icelandic annals are based upon the earlier sagas. Mrs Einarsdóttir adds the attractive suggestion that the seeming unanimity of the annals down to the year 1280 shews their main source after *Íslendinga saga* to be *Hákonar saga* and *Magnús saga*. She prefers this to the postulation by Storm of a proto-annal composed at the end of the century.

This is an important, well-documented volume which, though difficult to read, is easy to consult. The index is good and there are four useful appendices: the years of office of the law-speakers down to 1134, two charts facilitating the calculation of dates, and the chronological structure of *Prests saga Guðmundar góða*. At the end of the volume there is an excellent summary which, though sometimes a little obscure, presents a better than usual synopsis of the critical findings and some of the argument.

A. R. TAYLOR

VIKING COINS OF THE DANELAW AND OF DUBLIN. By R. H. M. DOLLEY. *The Trustees of the British Museum*, 1965. 32 pp., map and 53 illustrations. 5s.

As the volumes of the *Sylloge* (now appearing with commendable regularity from the British Academy and the Oxford Press) make knowledge of our early coinage more easy of access, there is great and increasing need for work by experts in the specific numismatic field which will bring home to the general reader the main conclusions of the specialist. Mr Michael Dolley has already done precisely this for the Anglo-Saxon series in his British Museum handbook *Anglo-Saxon Pennies*, and now performs a similar but even more difficult task for all interested in the Scandinavian invasions and settlements in Britain in his *Viking Coins of the Danelaw and of Dublin*. The booklet is attractively produced and the many illustrations of coins truly do illumine the text. There are two main chronological sections, the coinage of the Danelaw from the late 880's to a period shortly before the death of Eric Bloodaxe in 954, and the coinage of the Hiberno-Norse complex of York-Dublin from c. 995 to (in Dublin) c. 1135. The clarity of treatment (especially of the complicated political situation at York in the 940's) is to be commended. Scandinavian capacity to assimilate and to adapt permanently to the customs of the countryside is firmly demonstrated in Mr Dolley's analysis. Where coinage existed the Scandinavians copied, used, adapted; where it did not, they contented themselves over long generations with ancient forms of barter and bullion. The early Danelaw

coinages antedate by more than a century a native Danish coinage within the modern bounds of Denmark. Among many individual puzzles and curiosities the attention of the reader is drawn to the use of Ælfred's name on coins minted in areas under Danish control, the implications of the fine St Edmund memorial coinage in East Anglia, the old problems of *Cunnetti* and of *Orsnaforda* (not Oxford), the odd epithet *Ludo* attributed to Sihtric Caoc (Pl. IX, 30), the use of *Cununc* (rex), and the strange, belated imitation of the *Agnus Dei* at Dublin more than seventy years after its appearance in Ethelred's England (p. 30). This is a reliable, up-to-date guide to a body of primary evidence essential for a full understanding of the nature of the Scandinavian invasions of Britain.

H. R. LOYN