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HOW TO DO THINGS WITH TEARS. THE FUNERAL OF MAGNÚS INN GÓÐI

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ONE FUNERAL STANDS OUT AMONG ALL OTHERS in the corpus of Old Norse literature. In his mythological text *Gylfaginning* Snorri Sturluson describes the death and cremation of Baldr, the son of Óðinn. Baldr is killed accidentally by his blind half-brother, Höðr, at the instigation of the trickster god Loki. As the Æsir prepare Baldr's body for the funeral a third brother, Hermóðr, rides to Hel to ask the goddess to allow Baldr to return to the world of the living. Hel agrees on the condition that the whole world weep for Baldr. The gods and all other entities do so, but the attempt is frustrated by Loki who, having taken the form of a giantess, refuses to enact the appropriate emotion. In the guise of the giantess, he protests (*Edda* 2005, 48):

Þökk mun gráta þurru tárur
Baldrs bálfarar.
Kyks né dauðs nautka ek karls sonar:
haldi Hel því er hefir.

Þökk ['Thanks', the giantess] will weep dry tears for Baldr's fire-funeral. I got no benefit from the old man's son, neither living nor dead. Let Hel keep what she has.

Hel's command cannot be fulfilled and Baldr remains dead. This episode demonstrates the potential for tears to effect a powerful change in the course of events, but it is a potential that is never realised: Hel demands not only a performance of grief, but a collective performance. Þökk's refusal to weep disrupts the unanimity Hel requires and Baldr is consigned to the afterlife because of discord in the world of the living (cf. Lindow 1997, 122). Rejecting the performance of emotion that is required of her, Þökk seals Baldr's fate with the declarative utterance, *haldi Hel því er hefir* 'let Hel keep what she has', which articulates her rejection of the collective mourning project and thus condemns Baldr to Hel. In an episode which seems at first to trumpet the power of emotional expression as a means of reversing the natural order of life and death, it is instead the power of words which triumphs and allows the

outsider—the giant, the woman, the trickster god—to resist the wishes of the dominant group.

Such expressions of collective grief at the death of a hero are not uncommon in the corpus of Germanic mythology. Beowulf's death is likewise lamented by his followers in this way;¹ the Burgundians mourn as Gunnarr rides to Atli's court,² and the Huns weep as he dies in the snake-pit.³ In each of these cases, the hero's followers are united by their grief; in the latter example even the hero's enemies are drawn into the community of mourning. In Old Norse literature outside mythological and legendary contexts, however, instances of collective grief are far rarer. The *Íslendingasögur* contain notable examples of individual sorrow, as when Egill Skalla-Grímsson mourns his dead sons (*Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* 1933, 243–56) or Kari Solmundarson laments the burning of Njáll and his family-by-marriage (*Brennu-Njáls saga* 1954, 345–46); however, descriptions of communal mourning are rare. We must turn instead to the *konungasögur* to find instances of public mourning analogous to those described in the mythological and legendary texts. As the examples of Beowulf and Gunnarr attest, the death of a king had profound implications for the community he left behind. In particular, the death of Magnús inn góði, king of Norway and son of the royal martyr Óláfr inn helgi, stands out as an episode marked by a profound outpouring of grief on the part of the king's followers, who mourn with the same unrestrained passion as their mythological counterparts. Weeping, and in particular weeping in public, signifies more than the mere expression of sorrow in this episode. Weeping is the somatic manifestation of a complex psychosocial process; it provides the means through which the bereaved communicate their emotional experience to the wider community and differentiate themselves from those unaffected

¹ *Pa ymbe hlæw riodan hildedior, / æþelinga bearn, ealra twelf(e), / woldon (care) cwiðan (ond c)ýning mænan . . . Swa begnornodon Geata leode / hlafordes (hry)re, heorðgeneatas* 'Then the battle-brave men rode around the howe; the children of princes, twelve in all, wished to express their sorrow and mourn the king . . . So the hearth-companions lamented the fall of the lord of the Geatish people' (*Klaeber's Beowulf* 2008, ll. 3169–71 and 3178–79). All translations from Old English and Old Norse are my own.

² *Leiddo landrogni / lýðar óneisir / grátendr, gunnhvata, / ór garði hína* 'Weeping, the valiant people led the prince of the land, the warlike man, from the court of young warriors' (*The Poetic Edda* 1969, *Atlakviða* st. 12, ll. 1–4).

³ *Slá hann svá kunni, / at snótir gréto, / klukko þeir karlar, er kunno gørst heyra* 'He played with such skill that gentlewomen wept, men sobbed, those who most clearly heard it' (*The Poetic Edda* 1969, *Atlamál* st. 63, ll. 3–6). For more examples and a detailed discussion of grief in the mythological texts, see Párolí 1990.

by the death of the person mourned. The tears shed by the followers of Magnús are a public proclamation of the solidarity of those who mourn the king, but they offer at the same time a means of excluding those who do not weep. When harnessed by the political rhetoric of the skaldic stanza and the *konungasaga*, the public display of tears becomes a means of signalling resistance to Magnús's successor, Haraldr harðráði Sigurðarson, the heir who seeks too quickly to assume Magnús's crown after his death.

Skaldic Sources

Magnús inn góði died of an illness in 1047 while on campaign in Denmark. His body was laid out in splendour aboard a ship and returned to Norway to be buried in Niðaróss cathedral with his father Óláfr, whose status as a saint was by then widely promoted. The episode is recorded in several of the major Kings' Sagas, with the most detailed account forming part of *Magnúss saga góða ok Haralds harðráða* in Flateyjarbók and the related but fragmentary account in the *Morkinskinna* manuscript. Details of the funeral are also found in the texts of *Ágrip*, *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla*, which will be discussed in more detail below.⁴ The sagas all describe the intensity of the public demonstrations of mourning that accompanied Magnús's funeral voyage, citing as evidence two stanzas composed by Oddr kákinaskáld as well as an anonymous *lausavísa*; a single *helmingr* attributed to Þjóðólfr Arnórsson preserved in the *Third Grammatical Treatise* describes the scene in similar language and may have come from a longer poem, perhaps an *erfíðrápa* that is now lost. The stanzas are strikingly similar in their focus on the king's retainers' emotional reactions to his death: the poets describe not only the grief felt by the retainers, but also the grief they prominently displayed in public. Although composed by different poets and preserved in diverse manuscripts, the stanzas are strikingly similar in their use of lexis and imagery to describe these performances of mourning. Such similarities suggest the existence of an 'emotional community', a theory posited by Barbara Rosenwein: emotional communities are 'groups in which people adhere to the same norms of emotional expression and value—or devalue—the same or related emotions' (2006, 2). An emotional community need not express the values of the general population; indeed, Rosenwein observes that multiple emotional communities can often exist contemporaneously within the wider group, and that such communities may also be transformed

⁴ See *Morkinskinna* (I 174–77) for the full account. There are shorter versions of Magnús's death and funeral in *Ágrip* (37), *Fagrskinna* (248–49) and Snorri Sturluson's *Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar* (*Heimskringla* 1941–51, III 106–07).

dramatically over time. Rosenwein's focus is historical rather than literary, although she frequently uses literary texts as the basis for her investigation into the history of emotional expression. It is not assumed here that the emotions expressed in the skaldic stanzas composed about the death of King Magnús are necessarily reflective of the emotions actually felt by the king's followers. Rather, the cluster of emotional vocabulary used in these stanzas forms part of a common discourse of emotion attached to a particular time, place and person. Just as the gods' attempt to weep Baldr out of Hel binds the majority of the divine community together, the expression of grief in these stanzas plays a fundamental role in the articulation of group identity. The king's grieving followers and the poets who record their grief thus participate in the construction of an emotional community.

Two stanzas attributed to Oddr kíkinaskáld form the basis of the prose accounts and contain the fullest description of the emotions expressed by this community.⁵ In the first, Oddr describes the interment of Magnús by his retainers (*SPSMA* II, 33):

Felldu menn, þás mildan,
 mǫrg tǫr, í grǫf bǫru
 (þung byrðr vas sú) þengil
 (þeim, es hann gaf seima).
 Deildisk hugr, svát heldu
 húskarlar grams varla
 —síklings þjóð en síðan
 sat opt hnipin—vatni.

Men let fall many tears when they carried the generous prince to the grave. That was a heavy burden for those to whom he gave riches. The heart was in turmoil (*lit.* divided) so that the king's servants could hardly restrain themselves from weeping, and after that the king's people often sat downcast.

The mourners are bound together through the shared emotion of grief and the performance of that grief as part of the social ritual of the funeral procession. The first *helmingr* describes the moment at which the retainers carry their lord to his grave; this is the moment also described in the anonymous stanza and in Þjóðólfr's *helmingr*. No one person takes pride of place over

⁵ Only three stanzas attributed to Oddr kíkinaskáld are extant. The editors of *SPSMA* II assume that all three stanzas belong to the same poem, which they call 'Poem about Magnús góði' (31–34). Stanzas 2 and 3 of this poem describe the king's funeral while stanza 1 is a conventional battle-verse describing an earlier conflict with the Wends. Finnur Jónsson grouped the first two stanzas together under the heading 'Et digt om Magnus d. gode', printing the third stanza separately as a *lausavísa* (*Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning* 1912–15, BI 327–28).

the others in this verse: plural verbs and the general descriptors *menn* ‘men’ and *þeir es hann gaf seima* ‘those to whom he gave riches’ emphasise the collective, while the description of Magnús as *míldr* ‘generous’ emphasises the connection between the king and his men, between those who received riches and the one who gave them. The opposite but complementary actions of giving and receiving treasure mirror the similarly complementary acts of carrying and dropping: men carry the king’s corpse while they let their tears fall. The tension between carrying a heavy object and the men’s unsuccessful attempts to restrain their tears intensifies the emotion of the moment as the single word *þungr* ‘heavy’ unites the physical act of carrying the coffin with the mental anguish the retainers feel as they do so; it is an adjective that denotes both the literal weight of the burden and the emotional weight of sadness. Þorkell Hallkelsson expresses his grief in similar terms in *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu* as he mourns the death of his wife: it is *miklu þungara at bíða* ‘is much heavier to remain (living)’, he says, in the aftermath of such a bereavement (1938, 107).

Oddr’s second *helmingr* reiterates this conflation of mental and physical responses to loss. The contrasting actions of giving and receiving, raising and dropping gain their fullest expression in the poet’s description of mental and emotional anguish in the phrase *deildisk hugr* ‘the heart was divided’. Located at the centre of the stanza in line five, the phrase metaphorically suggests a mind or heart in turmoil even as the reflexive form of the verb *deila* literally suggests a heart ripping itself in opposite directions. The emotional burden is shown to affect the men’s bodies as they sit *hnipin* ‘drooping or downcast’ after the funeral. This adjective, like *þungr* in the first *helmingr*, has a physical application, describing the posture of the men’s bodies as well as their mental state. In his ‘Stanzas about Magnús Ólafsson in *Danaveldi*’, Þjóðólfr Arnórsson’s exultant announcement that Magnús’s actions in battle made women *hnipar* is a fairly straightforward use of the word to denote sorrow (SPSMA II, 88). In *Sólarljóð*, on the other hand, the narrator is *hræzlufullr ok hnipinn*, a phrase that suggests not only fear, but also a physical shrinking away or bowing down. Carolyne Larington and Peter Robinson translate this as ‘terrified and cowed’, a phrase that echoes nicely the narrator’s description of physical disorientation as he experiences the vision (SPSMA VII, 325; see also Cleasby–Vigfússon, 276 and *Lexicon poeticum*, 270). It is striking that Oddr’s image of the downcast retainers is, in the second *helmingr*, located after the moment of the funeral by the word *síðan* ‘after that’, extending the feeling of loss. The connection between king and company, introduced in the first *helmingr*, is reinforced in the second by the two phrases *húskarlar grams* ‘king’s

bodyguard' and *síklings þjóð* 'king's people'. The genitive case in these phrases emphasises a bond between the people and the king that survives even after Magnús's death, while the variation between the terms *húskarlar* and *þjóð* implies that the grief displayed by the bodyguard represents the sorrow of the country as a whole. It is notable, however, that the retainers' most expressive display of grief—weeping tears—is described as taking place only during the funeral ceremony. *Síðan* marks a sharp shift into the time after that public event and, while afterwards the men might sit downcast with their hearts in turmoil, such descriptions of grief are far more muted than the display of weeping that accompanied the interment itself. This shift suggests that the display of excessive emotion is only appropriate to indulge in—or perhaps, for the poet to describe—during the moment of the funeral itself. Afterwards, the poet implies, grief must be manifested by the body in subtler ways. Psychologists might identify here a difference between sadness, a profoundly felt but ephemeral emotion, and grief, an experience that lasts for a longer period of time and comprises a multitude of emotions, coping processes, and somatic responses (Bonanno, Goorin and Coifman 2008). Indeed, the transformation of sadness into grief may be seen in all of the stanzas associated with this episode.

In the second stanza Oddr moves away from the representation of general lamentation to describe his personal connection with the king and to express his own reaction to Magnús's death. As he does so Oddr follows in the footsteps of poets such as Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld and Sigvatr Þórðarson, notable for their *erfidrápur* 'funeral poems' mourning the deaths of Magnús's predecessors, the kings Óláfr Tryggvason and Óláfr Haraldsson, respectively. Oddr similarly grieves for his patron Magnús (*SPSMA* II, 33–34):

Mák, síz Magnúss ævi
móðfíkings þraut góða
– Odd hafa stríð of staddan—
stillis, harða illa.
Hvarflak hvers manns þurfi;
harmr strangr fær mér angrat;
þjóðs at dögling dauðan
döpr; því fõrum* aprir.⁶

I find myself sorely grieved (*lit.* I am very poorly) since the lifetime of Magnús the good, the ambitious king, ended. Sorrows have weighed Oddr down. I wander

⁶ *SPSMA* II omits *vér* from the final line to maintain the metre; Ármann Jakobsson and Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson retain *vér* following the text given in the Flateyjarbók and Hulda manuscripts (*Morkinskinna*, I 176–77).

around in need of the company of other men (*lit.* every man); strong sorrow distresses me. The people are dismal over the king's death; therefore we travel chilled.

As in the last two lines of the stanza discussed above, Oddr no longer describes the moment of the funeral but the time that follows; he explores the ongoing experience of grief rather than the immediacy of sadness. As he does so, he contrasts his present dolorous mood to the more joyful time of the king's reign, *Magnúss ævi / móðfíkinn . . . góða* 'the lifetime of Magnús the good, the ambitious'. Positive adjectives such as *góðr* 'good' and *móðfíkin* 'ambitious' are only applied to Magnús in this stanza, with the implication that when his life ended, these qualities too disappeared from the world. The phrases *harða illa* 'sore wretchedness' and *harmr strangr* 'strong sorrow', in which Oddr uses intensifying adjectives to emphasise the nouns of grief, describe his heightened emotional state after losing the king. This contrast between past happiness and present sorrow is reminiscent of the Old English elegies, which, as Stanley Greenfield argues in his well-known analysis, 'emphasise . . . the speaker's state of mind arising from his reflection on the contrast between past and present conditions' (1966, 143; cf. also Harris 1983). Like the Seafarer, Deor and other Old English exiles, in this stanza Oddr wanders through the world in search of companionship. Unlike his first stanza, the second is no general lament on the part of the king's followers but a detailed description of Oddr's personal reaction to the king's death. In this second verse, Oddr does not use the plural verbs and nouns that in the first denoted structures of community and inclusion. Rather, the poet announces his isolation through the use of verbs in the first-person singular; indeed, the verb *mák* 'I find myself' is the first word of the first line, while *hvarflak* 'I wander' similarly introduces the second *helmingr* in the fifth line. Plurals are reserved in most of this stanza not for the king's followers but for sorrow itself: *Odd hafa stríð of staddan* 'sorrows have weighed Oddr down', he says, the physical weight of the king's body described in the first stanza here becoming the metaphorical heaviness of grief. The death of the king has brought happiness to an end; it has supplanted the community that once followed him with isolation and sorrow. Oddr's poetic conceit implies that the community of the court died with Magnús, that the king was the only tie binding his followers together. The followers themselves have not died, but the community of which they formed a part, the poet here asserts, can never be whole again. In the final line of the stanza the poet adopts a formal, plural voice in the first person that extends his predicament of isolation to all of the king's followers. They are united only in their grief: *forum aprir*

‘we travel chilled’, he mourns.⁷ The sequence is thus a rhetorical *tour de force* on the part of the poet, who uses images of rupture and antithesis to insist paradoxically on the emotional unity of the bereaved retainers.

Both the anonymous *lausavísa* cited in *Morkinskinna* and Þjóðólfr’s fragmentary stanza in the *Third Grammatical Treatise* lack the intense personal expressions found in Oddr’s sequence discussed above. However, these poets too describe the public displays of sadness performed by Magnús’s retinue and explore the longevity of the emotional experience of grief. The anonymous *lausavísa* is cited just before Oddr’s verses in *Morkinskinna*, describing the journey of the king’s ship as it travels up the Norwegian coast (*SPSMA* II, 813–14):

Nú fara heim í húmi
herkunn fyr lög sunnan
daprar skeiðr með⁸ dauðan
dýrnenninn gram þenna.
Qld hefr illa haldit;
esa stríðvana síðan;
hulit hafa hirðmenn skylja
høfuð, þess’s fremstr vas jofra.

Now the dismal ships travel home in the twilight from the south by the famous law-districts with this very active, dear lord dead. The people have suffered wretchedness; there will be no lack of sorrow afterwards. The retainers of the man who was foremost among princes have covered (*lit.* hidden) their heads.

In this verse the ships function metonymically for Magnús’s retainers and the same language used by Oddr to describe human emotion is applied instead to the ships that carry Magnús’s body home to Norway. Rather than, as in Oddr’s image, the people bearing the king to his grave, the ships perform the same action in this verse as they hurry Magnús over the sea. While in the stanza just discussed Oddr noted, *þjóðs at dögling dauðan / dæpr* ‘the people are dismal over the king’s death’, in this anonymous stanza the ships themselves travel *daprar . . . með dauðan / dýrnenninn gram þenna* ‘dismal with this very active, dear lord dead’. The same adjective, *dapr*, is used

⁷ Oddr’s stanza contains the only recorded use of the word *apr* in the *Lexicon poeticum* (14). In prose texts this term is used to describe dangerous battles, while in modern Icelandic the cognate adjective *napur* is used in the sense of chilly weather or a snappish, sarcastic temper (cf. Cleasby–Vigfússon, 23). I therefore take it to refer not only to Oddr’s physical state but also to his mental unease.

⁸ The editors of *SPSMA* II here follow the Huldr and Hrokkinskinna manuscripts, which give the reading *með*. Flateyjarbók instead records *fyrir* and is the version followed by Ármann Jakobsson and Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson in *Morkinskinna* (I 175).

by Oddr in his second stanza, but in this verse it describes the personified ships rather than the king's retainers. The anonymous poet further echoes Oddr as he comments on the universality of grief as a reaction to Magnús's death—*öld hefr illa haldit* 'the people have suffered wretchedness'—as well as the duration of that emotion long after the moment of the funeral: *esa stríðvana síðan* 'there will be no lack of sorrow afterwards'. As in Oddr's sequence, the poet shifts his focus away from the sorrow of the funeral voyage to make dire predictions about the grief that is to follow. The emotional gloom felt by the retainers matches the literal twilight, *húm*, that the ships sail through on their way home. This poet also depicts the retainers sitting in grief long after the funeral itself. Echoing Oddr's image of retainers who sit *hnipin* 'downcast' after the king's death, the anonymous poet describes how the retainers have covered their heads to indicate loss. J. A. Burrow, writing on the use of gestures in the medieval period, notes the ambiguous nature of gestures made with the head (2002, 42–43):

Because heads can make fewer distinct movements than hands can, individual head-movements tend to carry a wider range of possible meanings than hand-gestures. Thus, lowering the head is not only a sign of grief or shame; it can also, by virtue of cutting off eye contact, signify anger.

Covering the head and face must signify grief in this context, but it is striking that the same action is also described in Sigvatr Þórðarson's *Bersöglisvísur* as the poet admonishes the young King Magnús, *Greyptr, þats hofðum hneppt, / heldr, ok niðr í feldi . . . þingmenn nös sum stinga* 'It is fearful when members of the *þing* hang their heads and force their noses into their cloaks (*lit.* into the cloak)' (*SPSMA* II, 23–24). In *Bersöglisvísur*, the retainers bow their heads to signify their dislike of Magnús and their grief that his father Óláfr has recently died. It is curiously fitting that an act that once signified defiance to Magnús is used in this later stanza to communicate sorrow for his death.

A fragmentary stanza by Þjóðólfr Arnórsson is similar in subject matter and language to all three stanzas so far discussed; it forms the fourth and final verse to engage with the emotional community associated with the death of Magnús. Although there is no prose context related to Magnús's funeral surrounding the verse, its similarity to the other stanzas is unmistakable (*SPSMA* II, 165):

Leiða langar dauða
limar illa mik stillis;
bórut menn inn mæra
Magnús í gróf fúsir.

The far-reaching (*lit.* long) consequences of the king's death weigh on me sorely. Men did not willingly carry the famous Magnús to the grave.

In this stanza the poet explores the emotional repercussions of Magnús's death by contrasting the sorrow felt by the poet to that experienced by the rest of the king's followers. In a typical skaldic understatement, the king's retainers are said not to be *fúsir* 'willing' to carry the king to his grave. It is a construction that appears elsewhere in similar contexts. Speaking of Óláfr inn helgi's death at the beginning of *Magnúss saga ins góða*, Sigvatr Þórðarson compares the loss of his patron to that of a man who has lost his sweetheart and is therefore *fúss* 'eager' for death (*Heimskringla* 1941–51, III 15). In *Orkneyinga saga* Arnórr jarlaskáld declares that he is *ófúss* 'unwilling' to take part in the conflict between his kinsmen, the jarls of Orkney (*SPSMA* II, 280). Thus, in Þjóðólfr's stanza, Magnús's followers are shown to grieve at his funeral in a way that is almost conventional. In contrast to this, however, the poet ominously describes how the consequences of the king's death will continue to affect him long after the interment. Þjóðólfr implies that the *langar limar* 'far-reaching consequences' of the king's death are uniquely perceived by the poet, the *mik* of line two. He exploits the multiple meanings of the verb *leiða* 'to lead', which is used not only to denote emotion but also to suggest the act of leading or dragging, often to the grave. That is, one might *leiða ástum* 'love' and *leiða konu í kirkju* 'lead a woman to church (marry)' in the sagas (see Cleasby–Vigfússon, 380); however, in poetry one might also *leiða til bana* 'lead to death', as in *Nóregs konungatal* (*SPSMA* II, 770). The verb has a particularly chilling resonance in the Eddic poem *Reginismál* in a stanza describing a river in Hel (*Edda* 1962–68, 174):

Ofrgiöld fá gumna synir,
þeir er Vaðgelmi vaða;
ósaðra orða, hverr er á annan lýgr,
of lengi leiða limar.

The sons of men, those who wade in Vaðgelmir, receive a fearful retribution.
When anyone lies about another, the consequences of untrue words stretch far.

Þjóðólfr's use of the word *leiða* in this stanza creates an image of the poet metaphorically being dragged on forever by his memory of the king's death. With its connotations of burial, the verb subtly echoes the physical act of carrying the king's body that his followers perform in the same stanza. The *limar*, which literally mean the limbs or branches of a tree but here take on the metaphorical meaning of 'consequences', are indeed far-reaching. As in the other stanzas discussed above, the poet's grief is represented as unending, continuing to affect him long after the moment of the king's burial. In both stanzas the poets show how the public display of sadness at the funeral is merely the first step in a much longer process

of mourning. The community that experiences this bereavement is bound together by its collective performance of tears and downcast bodies, gestures which signal the community's progress from sadness to grief.

Prose Sources

Stanzas such as those discussed above, which describe the funeral procession of a king and the profound expressions of grief provoked by his death, are unusual even in the corpus of Kings' Sagas. Certainly many deaths of kings are recorded by the authors of the *konungasögur*, but descriptions of emotion expressed during such episodes rarely exceed such formulaic expressions as *var hann it mesta harmaðr* 'he was greatly lamented' and *var mönnum mjök harmdauði* 'his death was greatly mourned by the people'. As William Ian Miller has observed, 'People's initial impression of sagas is that the saga world is coldly unemotional' (1992, 90). The *konungasögur* commonly record not the emotions expressed during the funeral itself but the location of the king's final resting place. In the case of pre-Christian kings, the location of the burial mound or stone monument is of paramount importance to the articulation of their descendants' power, as numerous cases in *Ynglinga saga* attest (cf. Lindow 2009, 23–48). In that saga, Óðinn commands his followers to raise memorial stones over the ashes of the most courageous warriors, while kings such as Yngvarr Eysteinnsson, Hálfðan hvítbeinn, Eysteinn Hálfðanarson and Hálfðan Eysteinnsson are all buried in mounds by their followers (*Heimskringla* 1941–51, I 9–83). Hálfðan svartí Guðrøðarson and Hákon inn góði Haraldsson are likewise covered in earthen mounds in *Fagrskinna* (58 and 94–95). In the case of Christian rulers, saga authors record the name of the church in which each king is buried: Snorri Sturluson, for example, notes that Óláfr kyrrí Haraldsson is buried in Kristskirkja at Niðaróss while Sigurðr Jórsalafari Magnússon was laid to rest in the southern wall of Hallvarðskirkja in Oslo (*Heimskringla* 1941–51, III 209 and 276). The author of *Fagrskinna* is similarly careful to locate the body of Óláfr Magnússon in Kaupang and that of Eysteinn Magnússon at Niðaróss (*Fagrskinna*, 113–14). Within such a context of dry detail and terse commentary, it is perhaps unsurprising that Magnús's funeral seems to have gained a reputation in the centuries that followed as an unusual event precisely because of the extent to which emotion was publicly displayed at his funeral. Of the few details recorded in the twelfth-century poem *Nóregs konungatal* about the reign of King Magnús, it is specifically noted that the king was *harmdauðr / hverjum manni* 'greatly lamented in death by every man' (*SPSMA* II, 783–84). Similarly, when King Eysteinn Magnússon dies, the unusual extent of public mourning

that greets this event is noted in both *Morkinskinna* and in *Magnússona saga* in *Heimskringla* (1941–51, III 263):

Ok er þat mál manna at yfir enskis manns líki hafi jafn margir menn í Nóregi jafn hryggvir staðit sem yfir grepti Eysteins konungs síðan er andaðisk Magnús konungr, son Óláfs ins helga (*Morkinskinna*, II 138).

And people say that never since King Magnús, son of Óláfr the holy, died have so many men in Norway stood sorrowing over any man's body, as at King Eysteinn's grave.

Echoes may even be seen in *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*. Hákon, like Magnús, died while on military campaign abroad, albeit in the Orkney Islands rather than Denmark; his body too was escorted back to Norway as part of a funeral procession. Sturla Þórðarson describes the procession in a skaldic verse that incorporates the language of collective grief in a manner highly reminiscent of the verses composed about the funeral of King Magnús some two centuries before (*SPSMA* II, 755):

Margr stóð málma fergir
—mikit stríð var þat—síðan
lýða grams yfir leiði
lítt kátr með brá váta.

Afterwards, many a conqueror of weapons (warrior) stood little cheerful with wet eyes over the grave of the lord of the people—that was a great sorrow.

The grief displayed at King Magnús's funeral thus seems to have functioned as an example of extreme and memorable emotion, becoming the bar against which subsequent displays of emotion were measured.

Despite the popularity of this episode, however, the presentation of it changes dramatically from one saga to the next. As noted above, not all the stanzas discussed here appear in the *konungasögur*, nor does each prose author draw upon the poetic sources in the same way. The *helmingr* attributed to Þjóðólf Arnórsson is cited only in the *Third Grammatical Treatise*; it therefore plays no role in the presentation of Magnús's death in the *konungasögur* now extant. The death of Magnús is mentioned only briefly in *Ágrip af Nóregs konunga sǫgum*, and no stanzas are cited (*Ágrip*, 37). Both Snorri in his *Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar* (*Heimskringla* 1941–51, III 105–06) and the author of *Fagrskinna* cite only Oddr's first stanza (248–49). In both cases, the stanza essentially fulfils an 'authenticating' function, cited as corroboration of the events related in the saga prose (cf. Whaley 1993). Oddr's two stanzas and the anonymous *lausavísa* are cited together as one sequence only in *Magnúss saga góða ok Haralds harðráða*, a text that forms part of the oldest Icelandic chronicle of the Norwegian

kings, *Morkinskinna*. It is highly probable that the episode describing Magnús's death and funeral once formed part of the *Morkinskinna* text, but the manuscript now extant, dating from the late thirteenth century, contains a number of lacunae. The section corresponding to *Magnúss saga góða ok Haralds harðráða* is missing six leaves and the story breaks off as Magnús lies on his death-bed; it resumes again only in the middle of *Halldórs þáttr Snorrasonar* (see *Morkinskinna*, I 167–77). The descriptions of public grief and all three stanzas have therefore been lost from this manuscript. However, as in the most recent *Íslenzk fornrit* edition of *Morkinskinna*, the text for this episode is commonly supplemented from the closely related redaction of the saga now contained within Flateyjarbók; it seems to have been added to that manuscript during the latter half of the fifteenth century (*Morkinskinna*, I vi–xxxiv; see also *Morkinskinna* 2000, 5–11). *Magnúss saga góða ok Haralds harðráða* is consequently considered to be part of the textual tradition associated with *Morkinskinna* and will be referred to as such for the remainder of this article, although the episode under discussion is, it must be admitted, largely absent from the *Morkinskinna* manuscript itself in its present state.

It should perhaps be no surprise that *Morkinskinna* cites more stanzas related to the death and funeral of Magnús inn góði than its later counterparts in the *konungasögur* genre. As Theodore Andersson and Kari Ellen Gade observe, the *Morkinskinna* author cites significantly more skaldic stanzas than either Snorri or the anonymous author of *Fagrskinna*, both of whom confine their use of the skaldic corpus to stanzas that contain concrete information about personal names, place names and particular events. Conversely, verses in *Morkinskinna* are notable for their lack of such information (*Morkinskinna* 2000, 25–26). Andersson and Gade also observe that, although *Fagrskinna* does not cite Oddr's second stanza directly, the language of the prose text closely echoes that of the verse and was therefore likely adapted from it (*Morkinskinna* 2000, 26). A desire for accuracy, detail and concision thus seems to govern later saga authors' use of the skaldic corpus within the genre of the *konungasögur*. This is not, however, true of the author of *Magnúss saga góða ok Haralds harðráða* nor of *Morkinskinna* more generally. The skaldic stanzas discussed above seem to have been incorporated into *Magnúss saga góða ok Haralds harðráða* for reasons other than to authenticate the facts of the narrative. I would argue that this is because displays of emotion, such as those described in the stanzas, have a social as well as a literary function, and that the stanzas are deployed by the *Morkinskinna* author to explore the social upheaval that followed Magnús's death. Indeed, psychologists

argue that emotional display fulfils at least two important social functions: the 'affiliation function' helps to maintain harmonious relations within a group, while the 'distancing function' enables members of that group to differentiate themselves from other groups and to compete with outsiders for status and power (Fischer and Manstead 2008, 457). As observed above, the stanzas associated with Magnús's funeral repeatedly emphasise the affiliative function of sorrow: the king's followers are bound together through the ritual of public mourning, and the poets repeatedly emphasise the collective nature of their emotional display. The affiliative function of emotion seems closely related to Rosenwein's theory of emotional communities in this instance; affiliation is effected both by the emotions displayed and by a common poetic discourse that describes the experience of grief particular to the mourning community. In this way, the stanzas represent both an emotional and a textual community, and one which appears particularly attractive to the author of *Morkinskinna*. This author, however, complicates the unified image of grief presented in the stanzas, emphasising not the affiliative but the distancing function of emotion. Social disunity and fragmentation followed Magnús's death. The author of *Morkinskinna* shows how the emotional display described in the skaldic stanzas came to function as a means of resisting the accession of Magnús's heir, Haraldr harðráði, to the Norwegian throne. In the prosimetric context of *Morkinskinna*, the emotional affiliation of Magnús's grieving followers works paradoxically to distance those loyal to the dead king from his successor.

The skaldic stanzas are not the only addition made to this episode in *Morkinskinna*; indeed, they are merely one part of a more general process of elaboration that significantly lengthens the story and emphasises the social and political discord that followed Magnús's death. The event is presented as a crisis of succession in all of the *konungasögur*. As the text of *Ágrip* notes, *Ok var þetta hvárutveggja landinu mikill harmdauði, því at engi lifði afspringr eptir hann nema ein dóttir, er hann fell í frá á ungum aldri* 'And in both countries his death was very much lamented because no offspring survived after him except a daughter, as he died at such a young age' (37). However, in this text as in *Heimskringla*, *Fagrskinna*, and most of all in *Morkinskinna*, there is an heir all too ready to claim power: Óláfr's half-brother and Magnús's uncle, Haraldr harðráði, had returned from his travels in the east a year earlier and demanded half the kingship of Norway while Magnús lived. With Magnús's death in Denmark, Haraldr was eager not only to claim fully the Norwegian throne but to press on with his advance into Denmark and to conquer that country as well. The texts of *Heimskringla*, *Fagrskinna* and *Morkinskinna* further agree that

Haraldr faced strong resistance to this project from within his own troops, particularly from a group of men from the north led by Einarr þambarskelfir. Son-in-law to Jarl Hákon Sigurðarson of Hlaðir, Einarr emerges in the sagas of Magnús and Haraldr as a charismatic but divisive figure of shifting political allegiances. Having once served Óláfr Tryggvason, he became close through his marriage to the sons of Jarl Hákon and fought with them against Óláfr Haraldsson. After becoming disenchanted with Danish rule and convinced of Óláfr's sanctity, Einarr travelled to Russia to ask Óláfr's son Magnús to return to Norway; Einarr then became foster-father and counsellor to the young king. When, a decade later, Haraldr too returned from the east and asserted his own claim to the Norwegian throne, Einarr argued strenuously against the power-sharing deal that was eventually adopted. It is therefore unsurprising that after Magnús's death, Einarr's relationship with King Haraldr quickly deteriorated. The *konungasögur* record that Einarr retreated to his northern holdings and assumed quasi-royal powers after Haraldr became king. He continued to challenge Haraldr's hold over the Trøndelag region until his death at the king's instigation soon after (see *Fagrskinna*, 261–63 and *Heimskringla* 1941–51, III 122–26). Thus, in the trajectory of the prose narrative, Magnús's death represents more than just a crisis of succession; it brings to an end the uneasy alliance between the royal family and the supporters of the northern jarls, prompting a fierce jockeying for power within the royal court. While Einarr's disagreement with Haraldr is recorded in all three of the major *konungasögur*, this power struggle between north and south becomes the focal point of the episode in *Morkinskinna*. The citation of three skaldic stanzas describing the public display of grief occasioned by the death of Magnús plays a crucial role in the articulation of this northern resistance.

In *Morkinskinna*, *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla*, Haraldr calls an assembly and urges the army to support him in the continued invasion of Denmark. He appeals to a proto-nationalist sentiment in his troops, using overtly imperialist language: *Bad þá liðit efla sik, lét at þá myndu Norðmenn vera yfirmenn Dana allan aldr síðan* 'Then he asked for the support of the army and said that the Norwegians would be the overlords of the Danes forever after' (*Fagrskinna*, 248). In all three narratives Einarr rejects Haraldr's expansionist agenda by asserting the importance of a proper burial for the dead king Magnús (*Fagrskinna*, 248):

Þá segir Einarr þambarskelfir, lét sér vera skyldra at flytja lík Magnúss konungs fóstersonar síns til graftar ok færa hann feðr sínum, enum helga Óláfi konungi, en berjask útlendis eða ágirnask annarra manna eign. Lauk svá sinni ræðu, at heldr vildi hann fylgja Magnúsi konungi dauðum en hverjum konungi annarra lifanda.

Then Einarr þambarskelfir said that he was more obligated to take the body of King Magnús, his foster-son, to be buried and to take him to his father, the holy King Óláfr, than to run off to foreign lands and lust after the goods of other men. He concluded his speech by saying he would rather serve King Magnús dead than any other king living.

Einarr's stinging rejection of any lord other than the dead king represents a direct challenge to the king's successor. However, this challenge is cunningly couched in terms of Einarr's duty to commemorate properly Magnús's death. In this way, the emotional displays that accompany Magnús on his funeral voyage communicate not only sadness, but also an ongoing refusal on the part of Einarr and his followers to participate in Haraldr's military project. Einarr contrasts the intimacy of father-son relationships with Haraldr's overbearing and unreasonable desire to covet the possessions of his neighbours: the king's hereditary right allows him to rule over Norway but no more. Such a reminder would have been pertinent not only during the political turmoil of the eleventh century, but also for a thirteenth-century Icelandic audience concerned about their impending loss of independence to the Norwegian king (cf. Rowe 1994, 149–76). In both *Heimskringla* and *Fagrskinna*, Einarr's defection suffices to convince Haraldr that his plan to invade Denmark is unsustainable, and the king returns to Norway. Oddr's first stanza is then cited as corroborating evidence that Einarr did indeed return Magnús's body to Niðaróss.

In *Morkinskinna*, however, the episode is much longer, as the conflict between Einarr and Haraldr verges on open warfare even as King Magnús lies dying. A three-way conversation between Magnús, Haraldr and Einarr takes place in which Magnús requests of Haraldr, *þess [vil ek] yðr biðja at þér séð vinir vina minna* 'I would ask this: that you be a friend to my friends' (*Morkinskinna*, I 168). Haraldr answers equivocally, and Einarr voices his doubt that the king will treat the Þrændir fairly after his nephew's death. Magnús then surrenders his claim to Denmark and advises Haraldr to return to Norway (*Morkinskinna*, I 169). In his subsequent resolution to continue the invasion, then, Haraldr acts contrary to Magnús's dying wish, while Einarr, in returning Magnús to Norway, fulfils the royal decree far better than the king who succeeds him. The seeds of discord have been sown even before the king is dead, and in the *Morkinskinna* text, Einarr is shown to be acting justly and in accordance with the dead king's wishes. This is further emphasised in an episode unique to the *Morkinskinna* text, which describes a vision experienced by Magnús's followers shortly before the king's death (*Morkinskinna*, I 170–71):

Ok litlu síðarr fyrir andlát konungs þá sofnaði hann líttat, ok var Haraldr konungr þar þá hjá honum. Ok við þann svefn opnaðisk munnr hans, ok

sýndisk mǫnnum sem fiskr renndi ór munni konungsins ok hafði gulls lit. Ok síðan vildi fiskrinn apr hverfa í muninn ok náði eigi ok veik sér þá í munn Haraldi konungi, er hann sat nær konungi, ok sýndisk mǫnnum sem þá væri hann dökkur álits. Ok þá vaknaði Magnús konungr, ok sögðu menn honum þetta. Hann segir: ‘Þetta mun vera fyrir skammlífi mínu, ok kann vera at sumum verði myrkari ok kaldari ráð Haralds konungs, frænda míns, en mín.’

And a little while later, before the king died he fell asleep for a while, and King Haraldr was there beside him. And as he slept his mouth opened and it appeared to men as though a fish jumped out of the mouth of the king, and it was the colour of gold. And after this the fish wanted to go back into the mouth and it could not, and it turned then to the mouth of King Haraldr, who was sitting next to the king. Then it seemed to men that it had a dark colour. And then King Magnús awoke and his men told him of this event. He said, ‘This means I do not have a very long time left to live, and that some men will find the counsels of King Haraldr, my kinsman, darker and colder than mine.’

This event represents a curious inversion of the more common episode in which a character dreams of his own death shortly before it occurs (cf. Vésteinn Ólason’s discussion of this motif in 2003, 154–55, as well as Salvucci 2005, 26–44). Just as Baldr dreams of his impending death in *Gylfaginning* (Edda 2005, 45), so Magnús in the related episode in *Heimskringla* dreams that his father, Óláfr inn helgi, comes to him to ask, *Hvárn kost viltu, sonr minn, at fara nú með mér eða verða allra konunga ríkastr ok lifa lengi ok gera þann glæp, er þú fáir annathvart bætt trautt eða eigi?* ‘Which would you choose, my son, to go away with me now or to become of all kings the most powerful and to live long, but to do such wickedness that you will achieve atonement for it either with difficulty or not at all?’ (*Heimskringla* 1941–51, III 105) With his saga of Saint Óláfr occupying a full third of the *Heimskringla* collection, Snorri’s interest in the royal martyr continues to be evident in the saga of his son; Magnús’s death as a young but virtuous man echoes his father’s decision to return from exile and die a martyr at the Battle of Stiklastaðir (see Bagge 1991, 158–60). However, by depicting not a prophetic dream experienced by Magnús but a vision witnessed by all of his followers, the author of *Morkinskinna* invites his audience to consider the consequences—both political and emotional—of the king’s death for those left behind. Magnús’s followers are drawn together through their shared sorrow at losing him, through their shared fear of Haraldr, and through a shared vision in which these emotions are metaphorically played out.

As Magnús’s followers prepare the king for his final journey, a second episode unique to *Morkinskinna* further explores the role emotion plays in the relationship between Magnús and those loyal to him. As

Einarr oversees the final preparations on the funeral ship, a blind man approaches and asks for a gift from the king. Einarr gives him a small ring in remembrance of Magnús's generosity, and in so doing unleashes the transformative power of emotional display: *Hann varð þessu grátfeinn ok helt gullinu upp fyrir augun sér, ok hrundu tárin á kinnr honum ok á gullit* 'He began to weep for joy at this, and held the gold up to his eyes and the tears ran down his cheeks and onto the ring' (*Morkinskinna*, I 174–75). Grief and joy are paradoxically merged in the blind man's weeping, as the tears themselves become the physical link between the man's eyes and the king's ring, between the object that performs the miracle and the body cured by it. Through this performance of emotion, the man's sight is miraculously restored, and grief becomes joy on the part of the king's followers as well: *Þessu urðu allir konungs ástvinir fegnir, ok lofuðu allir Guð hvat er hann þetta veitti fyrir Magnúss konungs verðleika ok fõður hans, ins heilaga Óláfs konungs* 'With this all of the king's loving friends became joyful, and they all praised God, whether he had done this because of King Magnús's merit or because of his father's, King Óláfr the holy' (*Morkinskinna*, I 175). Is King Magnús here taking his first steps along the road to sanctification (as suggested in Salvucci 2005, 49), or is the episode simply another example of St. Óláfr's miraculous healing abilities? The studied ambiguity about *who* has caused this miracle—King Magnús or his father Óláfr—emphasises not the identity of the saintly healer, but the means by which such healing has been accomplished. Diana Whaley has observed that traditional healing miracles such as the curing of blindness appear far less frequently in Icelandic hagiography than in comparable French and English accounts (1994, 177); in this context, the relatively unusual miracle of the healed eyes functions as an eloquent introduction to the account of the funeral voyage and to the citation of the skaldic stanzas, which follow immediately after. Tears, the text seems to say, may express grief, but through that expression of emotion they may also effect healing among members of the mourning community. On their own, the stanzas discussed above do not align the tears of Magnús's followers with miraculous events, but in the prosimetric context, the reader has been primed to accept tears as potentially transformative.

The long procession home with Magnús's body is framed in this way by grief and joy, by tears and miracles. In an echo of the ancient ceremony of the ship burial, Magnús's body travels north up the coast of Norway, escorted by Einarr and his men. However, while heroes like Baldr and Scyld Scefing are sent forth on their ships to the unknown land of the dead, Magnús's funeral procession delineates the very contours of the

land he formerly ruled, moving from the outer reaches of his kingdom to his father's tomb in Niðaróss cathedral. The funeral procession traces in this way his journey back to the spiritual and political heart of his country—and of the Trøndelag region as well. Writing on medieval processions, Kathleen Ashley has observed that such ceremonies 'produced meaning from *mode*: literal moving together conveyed the message that all participants shared a commitment to the same goal' (2001, 14). Oddr's two stanzas and the anonymous *lausavísa* are cited by the saga author as the ships journey north, interspersed by only the briefest linking prose paragraphs. The emotional community they construct gives meaning and identity to the members of this funeral voyage: social affiliation is effected through the ceremonial procession and through the collective displays of emotion that accompany it. Social distancing is accomplished through the highly emotional displays described in the stanzas as Einarr and his followers refuse to follow Haraldr further into Denmark. The citation of the three skaldic stanzas also disrupts the prose narrative at this point: descriptions of tears, of bowed heads, of cold and isolation interrupt the narrative trajectory of the saga, prolonging the time of the funeral voyage. Nothing happens in the verses cited; they obsessively repeat the same facts, the same scenes, the same language. Their function is not to add information to the saga narrative. Rather, the citation of the stanzas at this point forces the saga to pause during the moment of interregnum in which King Magnús is mourned, a moment during which King Haraldr cannot yet assume power. The funeral voyage is a *rite de passage* (cf. van Gennep 2004, 146–47); it is a moment of transition from one king to the next, from one protagonist to another. Magnús's followers exist in a liminal space of sorrow, bound together by the emotions of grief and sadness; they signal their separation from the world through the public display of these emotions. Tears at this moment affirm the solidarity of the mourning community and their refusal to be integrated immediately into a new social order.

The stanzas emphasise the emotional community of Magnús's grieving followers, but, as noted in the section above, the public expression of their grief is confined to the time of the funeral voyage itself; once Magnús has been returned to his father and homeland, his followers cease to express their grief through the excessive display of weeping. No more skaldic stanzas are cited in this episode once Magnús has been buried. His story concludes quickly after the final stanza, and the narrative briefly notes that Haraldr travelled north soon afterwards and took control of the land: *Sem Haraldr konungr kemr aptr norðr í Þrándheim stefnir hann Eyrarþing, ok var honum*

svarit land allt á því þingi, ok gørdisk hann þaðan af einvaldskonungr yfir öllu landi ‘When King Haraldr came north again to Prándheimr he called the Eyrarþing together and the whole land swore fealty to him at that assembly, and he became from then on sole ruler over the entire land’ (*Morkinskinna*, I 177). Haraldr is not *yfirmaðr* ‘overlord’ of Denmark, as he had initially hoped to be following Magnús’s death, but in becoming *einvaldskonungr* ‘sole ruler’ in this passage he finally gains supremacy over Norway and its troublesome northern regions. Not long after, he lures Einarr þambarskelfir and his son into a fatal ambush and, in a final attestation of the bond between king and subject, Einarr is buried beside King Magnús, in Niðaróss cathedral. As Snorri observes in *Heimskringla* (1941–51, III 126),

Eptir fall Einars var Haraldr konungr svá mjök óþokkaðr af verki þessu, at þat einu skorti á, er lendir men ok böendr veittu eigi atferð ok heldu bardaga við hann, at engi varð forgöngumaðr til at reisa merki fyrir bóandaherinum.

After the death of Einarr, King Haraldr was so greatly despised for the deed that the only thing to keep the land-holders and the farmers from organising an expedition and going to war with him was the lack of a leader to raise the battle-standard before their army.

Magnús’s most vocal, and most demonstrative, follower is dead; Haraldr’s supremacy over Norway is complete.

Conclusion

In his *De Doctrina Christiana*, St Augustine discusses the function of *verba visibilia* ‘visible words’ in human interaction (text and translation from 1996, 58–59):

Signorum igitur, quibus inter se homines sua sensa communicant, quaedam pertinent ad oculorum sensum, pleraque ad aurium, paucissima ad ceteros sensus. Nam cum innuimus non damus signum nisi oculis eius quem volumus per hoc signum voluntatis nostrae participem facere. Et quidam motus manuum pleraque significant . . . Et sunt haec omnia quasi quaedam verba visibilia.

Some of the signs by which people communicate their feelings to one another concern the eyes; most of them concern the ears, and a very small number concern the other senses. When we nod, we give a sign just to the eyes of the person whom we want, by means of that sign, to make aware of our wishes. Certain movements of the hands signify a great deal . . . All these things are, to coin a phrase, visible words.

The tears of Magnús inn góði’s followers are visible words: they speak eloquently of grief and loss, of loyalty to the king and of resistance to his successor. They are both performance and performative, a display of

communal mourning and a non-verbal means of resisting—if only for a short time—Haraldr harðráði's succession to the Norwegian throne and his control over the Trøndelag region. The text of *Morkinskinna* exploits the complexity of the skaldic stanzas which describe these visible words, and which must do so through the strictly regulated structure of poetic discourse: *verba visibilia* become *wordum wrixlan* 'words varied (in poetry)' (*Klaeber's Beowulf* 2008, l. 874). Skaldic poetry, in turn, becomes part of the prosimetric text, where the play of prose and verse marks the transition from one king to the next and the double function of the tears that are wept for him. As in the story of Baldr, the bereaved community weeps together, but Hel is rarely deprived of her own: tears are shown to effect social and textual disruption in this story, but they do not have the power to delay forever the inevitable course of life and death.

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PERSONAE OF THE PERFORMER IN *HÁVAMÁL*

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THE COLLECTION OF VERSES now known as *Hávamál* is problematic in many ways, but one of the few things about it of which we can be fairly certain is that it was intended, both by its original poet or poets and by the writer of the Codex Regius in which it is preserved, to be regarded as a spoken performance. The last stanza shows the performer stepping outside his character as Óðinn and the fictive location in Óðinn's hall to refer to himself as reciter and to his actual or projected listening audience:

Nú ero Háva mál qveðin,	Now the High One's words have been spoken
Háva hǫllo í,	inside the High One's hall,
allþorǫf ýta sonom,	most needful for sons of men,
óþorǫf iǫtna sonom;	useless to sons of giants;
heill, sá er qvað,	good luck to him who recited,
heill, sá er kann!	good luck to him who understands!
nióti, sá er nam,	may he who has learned them benefit,
heilir, þeirs hlýddo!	good luck to those who listened!

(*Hávamál* 164)

This suggests that even in the literary culture of the later thirteenth century, the manuscript was in some sense regarded as a recording of past performances and a recipe for future ones, and for the poets in the oral tradition whose work probably lies behind the preserved text, this must have been a basic assumption. In this paper I shall look at the personae adopted by the 'performing voice' of *Hávamál*, his uses of the first person pronoun and the fictive relationships with his audience that are suggested by use of the second person pronoun. (It is, by the way, worth noticing that the stanza I have just referred to is the only point in the text where the listeners are referred to as plural; elsewhere, the person addressed is singular, and must be as much a fiction as any of the personae adopted by the performer for himself).

I shall not be concerned with the vexed question of whether the text is a single poem, as has been argued, for example, by Klaus von See (see von See 1972a, 1972b, 1987, 1989, 1999), or an anthology of poems that were originally distinct, as maintained by Evans (1987, 1989), Larrington (1991) and others. My own view is that a number of poems, probably four, were interpolated by a collector of encyclopaedic lore and then by

an ‘editor’ who devised a framework that was designed to link the collection together (further, see McKinnell 2007). But when one looks at the personae of the performer, one needs a dual focus anyway: although there are enlarged initials at the beginnings of stt. 111 and 138, it is undeniable that the manuscript we have presents *Hávamál* as a single text, whatever its origins; but on the other hand, even those who maintain that it has always been a single poem have to acknowledge that it contains distinct major ‘acts’ or ‘movements’. One might argue about the exact contents or boundaries of these, but I would define them as:

1. A poetic sequence of gnomic advice (*Hávamál A*: roughly stt. 1–72 and 74–79);
2. A poem of sexual intrigue which balances the treachery of each sex against that of the other (*Hávamál B*: probably stt. 84 and 91–110);
3. A second collection of advice addressed to someone called Loddfáfnir (*Hávamál C* or *Loddfáfnismál*: part of st. 111, stt. 112–36 and probably st. 162,4–9);
4. A poem about Óðinn’s self-sacrifice and the eighteen magic incantations he acquired as a result of it (*Hávamál D* or *Ljóðatal*: stt. 138–41, 146–162,3 and 163).

Nor do I want to suggest that the performer necessarily adopts a single persona even within each of these movements; he is perhaps less like an actor inhabiting a role than an impressionist who can adopt whatever character suits the point he is making at any particular moment.

Hávamál A begins with a suggestion of the performer’s fear, before he even enters the hall, that his prospective audience may be hostile (st. 1). In the second stanza, he has come in, but is still unsure of his welcome:

Gefendr heilir!	Good luck to givers (of hospitality)!
gestr er inn kominn,	a guest has come in—
hvar scal sitia síá?	where is he to sit?
miȝ er bráðr,	the man is very anxious
sá er á brȝndom scal	who sitting on the woodpile
síns um freista frama.	has to try his luck.

(*Hávamál 2*)

Here, the speaker identifies himself as a guest—a newcomer who has yet to form a relationship with the company he has arrived in, and who therefore needs to wish good luck to any host who will give him hospitality. The question of where he is to sit is important, because the answer to it will indicate the status that his host accords to him. The sense of *á brȝndom*

is uncertain, but Evans produces persuasive evidence from Norwegian folklore to suggest that it refers to a woodpile beside the door, and that this was the least favoured place where a newcomer could sit (1986, 77). There is no need to assume that he is being tortured with fire, as happens to Óðinn in *Grímnismál*, especially as the next two stanzas list the comforts that an arriving guest has a right to expect: a fire, food, fresh clothing, water, a towel and a friendly welcome (stt. 3–4).

This scene is quite unlike the examples of Óðinn entering the hall of a hostile being that we find in *Vafþrúðnismál*, *Grímnismál*, *Gátur Gestumblinda* and the Rinda story in Saxo's *Gesta Danorum* III.iv.1–8,¹ in all of which Óðinn disguises his identity, usually adopting an alias which conceals his real identity without literally lying.² Here there is no alias (unless we take *Gestr* as a proper name), or any other sign of confrontation with his host. Unless we anticipate the last stanza, which seeks to impose a single speaker on the whole collection by identifying it as *Háva mál* 'the words of the High One', there is so far no reason to identify this speaker as anything other than a human guest.

Three instances of the first person pronoun in *Hávamál* A recount aspects of the experience of being a guest, and the first of them incorporates the only clear reference to Óðinn in this part of *Hávamál*:

Óminnis hegri heitir,
sá er yfir qlðrom þrumir,
hann stelnr geði guma;
þess fugls fiqlðrom
ec fiqltraðr varc
í garði Gunnlaðar.

He's called heron of oblivion
who hovers over drinking parties,
—he steals the minds of men;
in this bird's feathers
I was fettered
in the dwelling of Gunnlqð.

Qlr ec varð,
varð ofrqlvi
at ins fróða Fialars;
því er qlðr bazt,
at aprtr uf heimtir
hverr sitt geð gumi.
(*Hávamál* 13–14)

I got drunk,
got extremely drunk
in the house of the wise Fjalarr;
so the best drinking party
is when each man
fetches home his own mind.

¹ Friis-Jensen and Zeeberg 2005, I 204–09; Fisher and Davidson 1979–80, I 76–78.

² Thus *Gagnráðr* in *Vafþrúðnismál* 8 (N–K 46) may mean either 'the disputant' or 'he whose plans are successful' (Machan 2008, 76–77); *Grímnir* in *Grímnismál* (opening prose and st. 49, N–K 57, 67) means 'the masked/concealed one'; *Gestumblindi* probably means 'the blind visitor' (Tolkien 1960, 32 and note); and cf. also *Hárbarðr* 'grey-beard' in *Hárbarðsljóð* 10 (N–K 79) and *Vegtamr* 'exhausted by travel' in *Baldrs draumar* 6 (N–K 278).

The exact meaning of *Óminnis hegri* remains mysterious,³ but these two stanzas clearly make jocular reference to Óðinn's theft of the mead of poetry from the giantess Gunnlōð, and this has led many readers to assume that Óðinn must be the speaker throughout *Hávamál*, or at least throughout *Hávamál A*. But in its context, this story becomes merely an instance of the assertion that ale is not as beneficial to men as it is said to be (st. 12). Here Óðinn is little more than an example of the bad guest—a role which may suggest that for this poet he is no longer a god, but merely a traditional figure who can even become the butt of a deliberate comic 'misunderstanding' of the meaning of the myth in which he appears.

The first person as guest also appears in st. 39, in the idea that the guest should bring a gift for his host, and in stt. 66–67, where he complains that the expense of his upkeep is liable to make him unwelcome:

Fanca ec mildan mann	I have not found a man so generous
eða svá matargóðan	or so good about food
at ei væri þiggia þegit,	that an offering was not accepted,
eða síns fiár	or so giving
svá gíöflan	of his own property
at leið sé laun, ef þægi.	that payment was unwelcome, if it could be accepted.

(*Hávamál* 39)

Mikilsti snemma	Much too early
kom ec í marga staði,	I've come to many places
enn til síð í suma;	and too late to some;
öl var druccit,	the ale had been drunk,
sumt var ólagat,	or some was unbrewed—
sialdan hittir leið í lið.	an unwelcome man seldom hits the right moment.

Hér oc hvar	Here and everywhere
myndi mér heim uf boðit,	I would have been invited home
ef þyrptac at málungi mat,	if I'd needed no food at meals,
eða tvau lær	or if two hams
hengi at ins tryggva vinar,	hung in the dear friend's house
þars ec hafða eitt etið.	wherever I'd eaten one.

(*Hávamál* 66–67)

But these look like the experiences of two different guests: one who understands that accepting hospitality implies a corresponding obligation and has the foresight to arrive with a gift, and another who complains about his host's meanness and does not realise that nothing is for nothing.

The contrast between the good and bad guests has in fact been set up as soon as the performer's persona as guest has been established:

³ For a good survey of attempts to solve this problem, see Evans, ed., 1986, 80.

Vitz er þorfr,	Wits are needed
þeim er víða ratar,	by him who travels widely,
dælt er heima hvat;	everything's easy at home;
at augabragði verðr,	the man makes a spectacle of himself
sá er ekki kann	who knows nothing
oc með snotrom sitr.	and sits among wise men.

(*Hávamál* 5)

The following stanzas allow the performer to impersonate *inn vari gestr* 'the wary guest' (st. 7,1), who is sensible and taciturn (st. 6), observant (st. 7), popular (stt. 8–9) and level-headed (st. 10), and then the foolish guest, who is too inclined to get drunk (stt. 11,4–6 and 12–14).⁴ The following stanzas are more general, but many of them still imply the context of being a guest in someone else's hall. The sensible guest is a moderate drinker who says only what is to the point and goes to bed early (st. 19); he knows how to ask questions and reply to them (st. 28); he understands that in receiving hospitality he is accepting an obligation towards his host, and that a gift is always welcome (st. 39).

The foolish guest is introduced at the beginnings of stanzas as *aflapi* 'fool' (st. 17), *gráðugr halr* 'the greedy man' (st. 20), *vesall maðr* 'wretch' (st. 22) or *ósviðr / ósnotr maðr* 'the unwise man' (stt. 23–27). He mumbles to himself rather than engaging in sensible conversation (st. 17); he is gluttonous (stt. 20–21); he laughs foolishly at everything (st. 22); he thinks that everyone who laughs with him is a friend (st. 24) and is caught unprepared when questioned (st. 26); it would be better for him to keep quiet in company, but he never does, since he never knows when he has said too much (st. 27); he tries to mock other guests or quarrel with them (stt. 30–32); he neglects to eat before going to visit, so that he is too hungry to respond to questions sensibly (st. 33); he overstays his welcome (st. 35); he always arrives at the wrong moment (st. 66) and is unwelcome because of the amount he eats (st. 67). There are noticeably more stanzas about the vices of the bad guest than about the qualities of the good one, possibly because the bad guest offers more scope for comic impersonation by the performer.

It is, however, a series of variations on a theme rather than the impersonation of a character, since even within the category of the bad guest the poem presents characteristics that are incompatible with each other:

⁴ According to Dronke (2011, 38), 'the guest in the hall no longer interests the audience', but it is natural to take the opening of st. 8 (*Hinn er sæll*) to refer back to the previous stanza, so 'That (wary guest) is happy, who . . .'; and the repeated *brauto at* 'on the road' (st. 10,2, 11.2) also imply that the speaker is a traveller, who will therefore also need the hospitality due to a guest.

the fool who mumbles to himself can hardly be the same person as the empty-headed laughter who always says too much; and the unwary man who assumes that everyone is his friend seems quite different from the malicious mocker of his fellow guests. There are also a few reflections which excite pity for the guest, either because he is unavoidably dependent on his host's opinion of him (st. 8), or when he is forced to beg for hospitality because he has no home of his own (stt. 36–37), and these are distinct from either the good or the bad guest.

The central theme of the guest leads to a number of related personae, including that of the traveller, who in st. 47 draws a different type of contrast when he reflects on the difference between his immature youth, in which he relied only on himself, and his mature self, who has learned his need for a friend:

Ungr var ec forðom,	Once I was young,
fór ec einn saman,	I travelled alone.
þá varð ec villr vega;	then I went astray;
auðigr þóttomz,	I thought myself rich
er ec annan fann,	when I found someone else—
maðr er mannz gaman.	mankind's joy is man.
(Hávamál 47)	

The benefits of travel are also the subject of at least three other stanzas: only the man who has travelled widely can assess the nature of each person he meets (st. 18); those who do not travel are likely to be small-minded (the possible meaning of the enigmatic image of small sands on small seas in st. 53);⁵ a person's wits are kindled by encounters with another, just as one log catches fire from another (st. 57).

A particular case of journeying is travel to the *þing*. Stt. 25–26 concern two different ways in which a man may be ill-prepared when he arrives at the *þing*: he may assume either that everyone who has laughed with him will support him (st. 25), or that he knows it all just because he has a line of defence, when he is actually ill-prepared for unexpected questions (the likely meaning of st. 26). By contrast, the wise man can question and answer, and doesn't rely on keeping anything secret (st. 28). Stt. 61–65 form a second group of stanzas about travel to the *þing*: one should ride there combed, washed and fed, and not worry about the quality of one's clothes or horse (st. 61); the man who lacks supporters at the *þing* stretches his neck out like an eagle beside the sea (st. 62); every wise man should be able to ask questions, reply to them, and not expect anything to remain a secret (st. 63—a similar

⁵ See Evans, ed., 1986, 98–100, and more briefly Dronke, ed., 2011, 54.

sentiment to that of st. 28, although the two stanzas are not verbally very like each other); the wise man should use his power moderately (st. 64); a man often receives payment for his words to someone else (the probable implication being that one should be careful what one says in public, st. 65).

Leaving aside two first-person statements that are probably proverbial and therefore impart no persona to the speaker (stt. 73 and 77), there are two instances where it seems that the traveller has witnessed tragic situations as a detached observer, and these also contribute to the idea that wisdom can only be acquired through travel:

Betr er lifþom	It's better for the living
oc sællifðom,	and those living happily—
ey getr qvirc kú;	the live man always gets the cow;
eld sá ec upp brenna	I've seen a fire blaze up
auðgom manni	for a rich man
enn úti var dauðr fyr durom.	and he was outside, dead by the doors.

(*Hávamál* 70)

Fullar grindr	I've seen full sheep pens
sá ec fyr Fitiungs sonom,	belonging to Fitjung's sons—
nú bera þeir vánar vøl;	now they carry the beggar's staff;
svá er auðr	wealth is like
sem augabragð,	the wink of an eye,
hann er valtastr vina.	It is the most fickle of friends.

(*Hávamál* 78)

The themes of the guest and of travel lead naturally to that of gaining and visiting friends, and the speaker knows how to behave towards them:

Mikit eitt	It's not only something big
scala manni gefa,	one should give to someone,
opt kaupir sér í litlo lof;	affection is often bought cheaply;
með hálfom hleif	with half a loaf
oc með hóllo ker	and a tilted cup
fecc ec mér féлага.	I got myself a partner.

(*Hávamál* 52)

Like the theme of the guest, that of friendship is introduced with a contrast between one's feelings towards visits to good and bad friends:

Afhvarf mikit	It's a great detour
er til illz vinar,	to a bad friend's house
þótt á brauto búi;	even if he lives on the road;
enn til góðs vinar	but to a good friend's place
liggia gagnvegir,	the roads are straight
þótt hann sé firr farinn.	even if he has moved further off.

(*Hávamál* 34)

This contrast is maintained in stt. 41–46: one should repay one's friend with gift for gift, laughter for laughter and deceit for a lie (st. 42); one should be a friend to one's friend and to his friend, but never to the friend of one's enemy (st. 43); to get the best out of a good friend, you should confide in him, exchange gifts and visit him often (st. 44); but if you have a friend you don't trust, you should flatter and deceive him (stt. 45–46). Stt. 50–52 contain three more thoughts about friendship: a man cannot live long if no one loves him (st. 50); affection between bad friends is hot but brief (st. 51); a small thing can sometimes gain one a friend (st. 52).

This leaves only one other instance in the first part of *Hávamál* where the speaker uses the first person pronoun, and this is quite mysterious:

Váðir mínar	I gave my clothes
gaf ec velli at	on a field
tveim trémönnum;	to two men made of wood;
reccar þat þóttuz,	they seemed to be warriors
er þeir rift höfðu,	when they had clothing;
neiss er nøcqvíðr halr.	A naked man is despised.
(Hávamál 49)	

The two wooden men here can hardly be Ask and Embla (for whom see *Völuspá* 17–18, N–K 4–5), since both are masculine. They could be related to stories like that in *Þorleifs þátr jarlsskálds*, where Hákon jarl conspires with his goddess Þorgerðr Hördabrúðr to bring a wooden figure to life by implanting in it the heart of a murdered man, so that the automaton can go to Iceland and kill the protagonist.⁶ But this does not explain why there

⁶ *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar* ch. 173 (*Flateyjarbók* 1944–45, I 235); see also *Þorleifs þátr jarlsskálds*, ch. 7 (Jónas Kristjánsson 1956, 225–27, ed. from *Flateyjarbók*). Two other *trémenn* are partially vivified idols of pre-Christian gods: in ch. 323 of the *Flateyjarbók* version of *Ólafs saga helga* (*Flateyjarbók* 1944–45, I 447), St. Óláfr removes an idol of Freyr from the temple in which it is worshipped by the people of the Trøndelag and takes it to the local legal assembly, where he tells them that the devil will repay them with damnation if they continue to trust in this *trémaðr*. In ch. 20 of *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, Qgmundr and his men find a huge *trémaðr* in the woods on the island of Sámsey; the idol recites three stanzas, explaining that he was set up by the sons of Loðbrók and was once worshipped *tíl bana mönnum* 'for the slaughter of men', but that now he is 'struck by the clouds' weeping; neither flesh nor clothes protect me' (*FSN* I, 284 [*Ragnars saga* XI, 3]; see also *Skj.* II B, 261).

Because these examples all refer to heathen images, I resist the otherwise attractive idea of translating *trémenn* as 'scarecrows', an interpretation which would probably imply that the meaning of *Hávamál* 49 is that fine clothes can make even a scarecrow in a field look like a warrior. However, for an example in modern folk

should be *two* such figures here. At all events, there is no clear evidence to connect this speaker with Óðinn.

The ‘I’ figure of *Hávamál A* is therefore a shifting entity, a series of personae which illustrate the poet’s main thematic concerns: the good and bad guest, the traveller, and the theme of visiting good and bad friends. There is only one instance in which he is clearly represented as Óðinn, and that is no more than a playful example of the bad guest. *Hávamál A* uses the second-person singular pronoun only twice: in st. 19, where the performer advises that no one will blame ‘you’ for going to bed early; and in stt. 44–46, where he gives rather cynical advice on how ‘you’ should behave towards a good friend and towards an untrustworthy one. In both cases, the apparently personal advice actually has the effect of characterising the speaker as an experienced guest or traveller, and the performer may have picked out a particular member of the listening audience as the object of his advice—a device still used by some modern actors.

Loddfáfnismál, the other ‘advice’ section of *Hávamál*, begins with an enlarged initial such as the scribe usually employs only at the beginnings of poems. It presents us with two immediate problems:

1. St. 111 is eleven lines long, metrically peculiar and appears to be set in two different locations.

2. From st. 112 onwards, *Loddfáfnismál* is addressed to someone called Loddfáfnir, a name which appears nowhere else and which has not been satisfactorily explained.

The first three lines of st. 111 seem to locate the speaker in a sage’s seat beside the spring of Fate:

Mál er at þýlia	It is time to chant
þular stóli á,	in the seat of the sage
Urðar brunní at	at the well of Fate

The *þulr* need not be Óðinn, and Óðinn can hardly be either the speaker of the following lines or the source of the wisdom contained in them, which evidently comes from *manna mál*, the speech of a number of people. Lines 9–10 have a different location, inside Óðinn’s hall:

tradition where a scarecrow is brought to life and associated with the powers of evil, see Stanley Robertson’s telling of the folktale *The Tattie Bogle* (<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone/kist/search/display.php?srob02.dat>), where the advice on how to bring the wooden figure to life is given by ‘the laird o’ the daik airts’ (the lord of the dark arts or regions), who is probably the devil.

Háva hǫllo at,
Háva hǫllo í

at the High One's hall,
inside the High One's hall

and look like an addition elaborated from *Háva hǫllo í* in st. 109,4; again, the speaker can hardly be Óðinn, since he says that he remained silent, which the chief of the gods would hardly do in his own hall.⁷

The simplest explanation is that a revising 'editor' of *Hávamál* has added five lines in an attempt to link the following gnomic advice with Óðinn. When these are removed, we are left with a regular *ljóðaháttir* stanza in which an unidentified speaker tells how he listened to advice:

Sá ec oc þagðac,	I saw and kept silent,
sá ec oc hugðac,	I saw and I thought,
hlýdda ec á manna mál;	I listened to people's speeches;
of rúnar heyrða ec dæma,	I heard secrets discussed,
né um ráðom þögðo,	they did not keep silent about advice;
heyrða ec segia svá:	what I heard said was as follows:

(*Hávamál* 111,4–8, 11)

This would make a good, well-shaped opening for an advice poem (though it would not identify the speaker as Óðinn), and may have been the original beginning of *Loddfáfnismál*. Of course, this would not solve the problem for a performer of the whole text, but he could present himself as an otherwise unidentified wise *þulr* making *ex cathedra* pronouncements, from a seat beside the well of Fate, of wisdom which he has heard from various people inside Óðinn's hall (i.e. not in the same place as that in which he is making his pronouncements). This would be a rather over-portentous introduction to the advice that follows, which is often rather commonplace, but it would at least make sense, although it would also mean that the fictive speaker here cannot be Óðinn; rather, he is passing on to Loddfáfnir wise words that he has heard from a number of other people that he has gained as an observant visitor to Óðinn's hall—a role rather like that of the speaker as guest in *Hávamál* A. Apart from the refrain's repeated *Ráðomc þér, Loddfáfnir* 'I advise you, Loddfáfnir', he refers to himself only once more in *Loddfáfnismál*, in st. 118:

Ofarla bíta	I saw it bite mortally
ec sá einom hal	on one man,
orð illrar kono:	the word of a wicked woman:
fláráð tunga	a treacherous tongue
varð hánom at fiqrlagi,	was the death of him.
oc þeygi um sanna sǫc.	and yet the accusation was not true.

(*Hávamál* 118)

⁷ Further on the problems connected with this stanza, see Evans, ed., 1986, 26–27 and McKinnell 2007, 102–03.

This seems to cast the speaker in the role of the detached observer of a tragic event, just as he has been in stt. 70,4–6 and 78,1–3.

But most of *Loddfáfnismál* is dominated by the second person pronoun, the fictional ‘you’ who is identified with Loddfáfnir—which is rather unhelpful, since we have no idea who Loddfáfnir is. The first element of his name has been linked to *loddari* ‘jester’, ‘juggler’, ‘tramp’, or to OE *loddere* ‘beggar’; de Vries (*AEW*, 362) seems to favour the idea that it was a ritual term of abuse used during initiation into an Odinic men’s association, but this seems highly speculative. Sijmons and Gering (*S–G*, III: i 132) take the second element to mean ‘the embracer’, and interpret the whole name as ‘the one who ensnares with trickery’, which makes sense but does not seem appropriate to Loddfáfnir’s role. But in poetry the dragon Fáfnir is usually associated with the treasure on which he lay, and there are several gold-kennings of the type *Fáfnis miðgarðr* ‘Fáfnir’s world’ (*Bjarkamál* 4, *Skj.*, I B 170) or *Fáfnis setr* ‘Fáfnir’s seat’ (*Háttalykill* 24a, *Skj.*, I B 499); this raises the possibility that the name is ironic, suggesting a ‘dragon’ who sits, not on a hoard of gold, but on beggary. It is even possible that the poet of st. 162 of *Hávamál* thought of him as a giant, since the High One’s words are said to be *óþorft iǫtna sonom* ‘useless to sons of giants’, and it is suggested that Loddfáfnir will not be able to make use of the advice he has been given:

Lióða þessa	These songs
munðu, Loddfáfnir,	you, Loddfáfnir,
lengi vanr vera	will long be lacking
(Hávamál 162,4–6)	

But in the absence of any clear identification of the speaker, it would be hazardous to suppose that *Loddfáfnismál* reflects an otherwise lost mythic encounter between Óðinn and a giant; the confrontation may be merely between an anonymous wise man and a tramp.

The first of the two narrative sections of *Hávamál* probably begins at st. 84, with the rather enigmatic statement that women are not to be trusted:

Meyjar orðom	In the words of a maid
scyli mangi trúa,	no man should trust,
né því er qveðr kona;	nor in what a woman says.
þvíat á hverfanda hvéli	for on a whirling wheel
vóro þeim hiǫrto scǫpuð,	their hearts were shaped,
brígd í brióst um lagit.	inconstancy laid in their breast.
(Hávamál 84)	

As with the opening of *Hávamál A*, it is not yet clear who the speaker is, but the probable allusion to the wheel of Fortune implies a speaker who is up-to-date (in the twelfth century or later) and educated in European Latin

culture. This is the character who admits in st. 91 that ‘we’ (i.e. men) are just as duplicitous as women:

Bert ec nú mæli,	I speak plainly now
þvíat ec bæði veit:	because I know both (sexes):
brigðr er karla hugr konom;	men’s minds are deceitful to women;
þá vér fegrst mælom,	we speak most fair
er vér flást hyggjom,	when our thoughts are most false.
þat tælir horsca hugi.	That deceives wise (women’s) thoughts.
(Hávamál 91)	

His worldly-wise voice continues with a number of sentiments which may be loosely borrowed from Ovid’s *Ars Amatoria* and, in the acknowledgement of the power of *sá inn mátki munr* ‘that powerful thing, desire’ (st. 94,6) perhaps also from Virgil’s famous line *Omnia vincit amor, et nos cedamus amori* ‘Love conquers everything, and we too yield to love’ (*Eclogue X*, 69).

This then leads into an account of the speaker’s experience with *Billings mey* (stt. 96–102), in which the first person pronoun appears in every stanza. In st. 96 he tells how he waited among the reeds for the object of his desire, but never enjoyed her. This story does not appear in any other surviving Old Norse myth, but it does resemble some later ballads, like the Scottish *The Broomfield Hill* (Child 1882–98, I 390–99, no. 43), where the lover waits for his girl among the broom bushes, intending to take her virginity; but when she comes he is in a magically induced sleep, and she leaves a mocking token of her visit before making her escape.

Two similar Scandinavian ballads, including the Danish *Søvnerunerne* (Grundtvig 1853–1976, II 337, no. 81), move the encounter indoors and allow the lover into the girl’s bed, where he instantly falls asleep under the influence of a runic charm. This may explain the apparent incompatibility between *Hávamál* 96, which sets the encounter outdoors, as in the Scottish ballad, and st. 97, where the lover apparently has access to her bedroom, as in the Scandinavian ones, and is persuaded to postpone his visit until nightfall. The traditional story probably involved the lover being tricked out of the sexual encounter more than once, as happens in a story in the English *Gesta Romanorum*,⁸ where he is twice tricked by a magic charm concealed among the bedclothes, but is successful on the third occasion, when he throws the charm out of the bed.

But none of these stories is about Óðinn, and it comes as a surprise when *Billings mær* addresses her would-be lover by name (st. 98):

⁸ Herrtage, ed., 1879, repr. 1962, 158–65, 474–76.

‘Auc nær apni
scaltu, Óðinn, koma,
ef þú vilt þér mæla man;
alt ero ósöpp,
nema einir viti
slícan lōst saman.’

‘Near evening, Óðinn,
you must come once again
if you want to get yourself a girl by talking;
everything will be disastrous
unless only we two know
such shame between ourselves.’

Up to this point there has been nothing to suggest that the lover is Óðinn, and instead of assuming a lost myth, perhaps we might consider the possibility that the poet has attached Óðinn’s name to a traditional tale whose protagonist was usually anonymous, and then added further details of Óðinn’s repulse and frustration from a version of the myth of Óðinn and Rindr, but without the conclusion in which Óðinn seduces or rapes Rindr. This suggestion of an invented tale seems more likely in view of the fact that there are no other surviving myths that depict Óðinn as an unsuccessful lover.

When it came to successful deception of women, it was much easier to use existing myths. Here, there is no doubt that the persona is that of an exultant Óðinn who rejoices in his successful achievement of a dangerous mission, but in the last two stanzas of the *Gunnlōð* story there is an interesting change of perspective. After the protagonist-as-Óðinn has gained the mead of poetry for the realm of human beings (st. 107) and seduced *Gunnlōð* into assisting his escape (st. 108), the performer stands back and adopts the role of a detached observer watching the frost-giants’ fruitless attempt to catch the so-called *Bolverkr* (st. 109) and Óðinn’s deceitful oath (st. 110):

Baugeið Óðinn
hygg ec at unnit hafi,
hvat scal hans trygðom trúa?
Suttung svikinn
hann lét sumbli frá
oc grœtta *Gunnlōðo*.

An oath on the ring
I think Óðinn took—
how can his words be trusted?
With *Suttungr* betrayed
he left the feast,
and with *Gunnlōð* in tears.

(*Hávamál* 110)

The ‘I’ figure in the stanza might be a version of Óðinn, emphasising his own denial that he has any connection with that rascal *Bolverkr*, but it is perhaps simpler to see him as the performer, standing back from his witty impersonation of Óðinn the seducer as he reaches the end of his tale of sexual intrigue. In that case, he is revealing to us that his impersonation of Óðinn recounting his amorous adventures has been no more than an illustration of his worldly wise argument that neither sex should trust the other.

The performer’s identification of his role in the last major section of *Hávamál* is for the most part clearly identifiable as Óðinn:

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

(*Hávamál* 138)

I know that I hung
 on a wind-swept tree
 throughout nine nights,
 wounded with a spear
 and given to Óðinn,
 myself to myself,
 on that tree
 of which no one knows
 the roots from which it runs.

Here, at least, there can be no doubt that the performer is impersonating Óðinn in one of his most secret and mystical exploits, or that this characterisation of the first person is more or less consistent throughout this section of the text. In st. 140, he claims that he learned nine mighty songs or spells from ‘the famous son of Bölþorr, Bestla’s father (i.e. from Óðinn’s maternal uncle), and st. 141 then suggests that for every one of these he was then able to devise another for himself, which explains why stt. 146–63 describe eighteen spells, all but the first introduced by the first-person formula: *Pat kann ec annat / þriðia / fjórða* etc. ‘I know the second / third / fourth’ etc., and most of which use the first person pronoun several times, always with the implication that the speaker is Óðinn.

There is, however, one exception, in st. 143, in the account of the origins of runes:

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

(*Hávamál* 143)

Óðinn among Æsir,
 and for elves Dáinn,
 Dvalinn for dwarfs,
 Ásviðr for giants
 —I’ve carved some myself.

Whoever the first-person speaker is here, he contrasts himself with a number of other figures, one of whom is Óðinn, so he himself cannot possibly be Óðinn. The irregular jumble of metres suggests that stt. 142–45 are probably a recent encyclopaedic interpolation, as do the facts that the *rúnar* ‘secrets’ of st. 139,4 have probably been misunderstood as literal runes in stt. 142–43, and that Dáinn is elsewhere a dwarf-name rather than that of an elf. But a performer of the whole text who was confronted with this problem could easily escape it by momentarily stepping outside his character as Óðinn to deliver a humorous boast in his own person.

There is much less use of the second-person pronoun in *Hávamál D*, with the conspicuous exception of st. 162,4–9, where it appears six times. This is like the pattern of usage in *Loddfáfnismál*, and *Loddfáfnir* is also

named here; this may be either the original ending of *Loddfáfnismál* or a stanza composed in imitation of *Loddfáfnismál* by a poet who sought to ‘edit’ the whole of *Hávamál* into a single text. The only other use of the second person pronoun is in st. 146, at the beginning of the description of Óðinn’s eighteen magic spells:

hiálp heitir eitt,	one is called ‘Help’
enn þat þér hiálpa mun	and it will help you
við sǫcom oc sorgom	against lawsuits and sorrows
oc sútom gorvǫllom.	And troubles of every kind.

(*Hávamál* 146,4–7)

This looks like a brief reminder of the general usefulness of Óðinn’s achievement, addressed to no one in particular; the next stanza describes the second spell as necessary for doctors, but after this the performer presents us only with spells which the fictive ‘Óðinn’ claims as useful to himself, until the human performer finally reappears in the last stanza of the text, with which I began (st. 164).

My main conclusion is that from the point of view of a performer, it does not matter very much whether *Hávamál* is regarded as an anthology or as a single text—it could be performed as either—but that it is rather a collection of ventriloquist voices than a single impersonation of Óðinn. In some ways this may be unfortunate: for example, it means that the sequences of amoral advice in *Hávamál A* cannot be identified as characteristic of a specific ‘Odinic’ outlook, because in most of them there is no reason to think that Óðinn is the speaker. Even where Óðinn certainly appears, he is impersonated in a variety of ways that are not always compatible with each other: the drunken guest of stt. 13–14, the urbane and probably Latin-educated cynic of *Hávamál B*, the impressive magician of *Hávamál D*. But medieval poets had no responsibility towards modern historians of religion, and rather than regretting what the text cannot definitively tell us, we should enjoy the skill which produced this vivid kaleidoscope of voices.

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THE MAGICAL POWER OF POETRY

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The magical content of *dróttkvætt* verse might increase or diminish in importance over the centuries, but it was always there and it was always acknowledged.

ROBERTA FRANK 1978, 56

I

BY THE EARLY THIRTEENTH CENTURY the prestige and popularity of skaldic poetry was waning dramatically, particularly at the privileged locus of its consumption, the (royal Norwegian) court. Scholars have identified various reasons for this devaluation, both literary and political. In the second part of the twelfth century under King Magnús Erlingsson (ruled 1161–84), Norwegian kingship increasingly turned to the Church for its legitimisation. The recourse to the Church was detrimental to skaldic poetry in two ways, for it stressed the institution of kingship rather than the individual king (see Bagge 1996), whereas the skald's art was highly personal and situational. Second, with the ecclesiastical introduction of writing, kings began to move from the oral, occasional performance of praise poetry to anonymous written sagas (Wanner 2008, 76–79), a movement echoed by individual skalds who turned to delivering written praise poems to prospective patrons. Furthermore, during the reign of King Hákon Hákonarson (1204–63) the Norwegian court sought to align itself with continental ones (Schach 1973, xvii). This movement is observable in the increased diplomatic activity of Hákon's court but also in its opening to new literary models, which took the form of a programme of importation and translation of continental romances (e.g. the *riddara sögur*). According to Kevin Wanner, the Icelandic Snorri Sturluson personally experienced the devaluation of skaldic poetry and the concomitant loss of authority for his expression as skald. While *Íslendinga saga* shows the older generation of Norwegian nobles responding favourably to his praise poems (e.g. *Íslendinga saga*, 269), it fails to mention any reward from the younger clerically educated king (Wanner 2008, 73, 81). Wanner interprets this silence, all the louder for the reference in *Skáldatal* to Snorri as Hákon's

court poet, as a sign that ‘Snorri came, in short, with none of the cultural resources or capacities to which Hákon had grown accustomed to look to augment his power and distinction’ (Wanner 2008, 87).

For Icelandic poets such as Snorri who had invested time and resources in the acquisition of this difficult art, this process represented a grave threat to their livelihood. Indeed, as kings and other magnates ceased to find interest and usefulness in skaldic poems, they likewise ceased to reward their authors (cf. Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1953, 35–42; Bagge 1996; Wanner 2008) in the ways that were enshrined in Icelandic collective memory, notably in short narratives (*þættir*) dealing with the interactions of Icelandic poets and Norwegian kings (see Harris 1976; Lindow 2000). However, poets such as Snorri Sturluson attempted to buck this trend, and the *Prose Edda*, as Wanner has recently demonstrated, represents one such effort (Wanner 2008).

In what follows, I will attempt to show that Snorri and/or his thirteenth century colleagues, alongside other strategies, attempted to shore up the waning social prestige and authority of skaldic poetry by foregrounding the link between poetry and magic in order to represent skaldic verse as capable of bringing about valued or terrifying extra-linguistic effects. Before doing so, however, I will briefly consider the nature of poetry’s extra-linguistic powers in the period preceding the 1220s in order to show that the relationship between poetry and magic was not only a response to a literary problem but a social and political one as well.

II

Snorri, prior to his Norwegian trip, may have believed that poetry still commanded the type of authority it had enjoyed during the Viking Age, an authority that was visually actualised by the privileged seating poets were given at the court of King Haraldr hárfagri: *Af öllum hirðmönnum virði konungr mest skáld sín; þeir skipuðu annat öndvegi* ‘Among all his retainers, the king valued his poets best. They sat on the second high-seat’ (*Egils saga*, 19). Presumably, poetry and poets received this position of honour and power because they provided the king with a certain type of power, the power that words have to transform the world. Through a medium that was very difficult to master, and thus rarefied and prestigious, poets apportioned blame and praise, or in sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s words, they issued ‘acts of nomination’, which include insults, the ritual bestowal of titles and degrees (Bourdieu 1982, 99–100), and diagnoses (Lévi-Strauss 1958, 183–203), all of which—however symbolically—can be followed by spectacular non-linguistic effects.

Medieval Scandinavian law codes implicitly acknowledged the extra-linguistic power and efficacy of (some) acts of nomination, as the vigorous legal treatment of insults suggests. For instance, according to the *Staðarhólsbók* version of the Icelandic *Grágás*, *Pav ero orð þriú ef sva mioc versna máls endar manna. er scog gang varða avll. Ef maðr kallar man ragan eða stroðin. eða sorðin . . . enda a maðr vígt ígegn þeim orðum þrimr* ‘There are three words that all entail full outlawry, should the ends of men’s discussion get so bad; they are: if a man calls a man perverse, or used sexually by a man or sodomised . . . a man has the right to kill in retaliation for these three words’ (Finsen 1879, 392; on the semantics of *argr* ‘perverse’, see Meulengracht Sørensen 1983). As is made abundantly clear by Meulengracht Sørensen, such insults, if unrequited, could have very real consequences for their recipient (their gross empirical inaccuracy notwithstanding)—they experienced social death.

Skaldic poetry formally fits the general category of acts of nomination when it functions as praise or blame poetry. Accordingly, the law codes of Iceland—a land which had progressively monopolised the production of skaldic verse—dealt with the efficacy of such poetry (Clunies Ross 2005, 232–33). Not only did they deal with poetic abuse, but the article *um skáldskap* ‘Concerning Poetry’ of the *Konungsbók* version of *Grágás* legislates comprehensively against poetry *about a person*, distinguishing carefully between poetical blame, praise, and praise with mockery (Finsen 1852, 183–84):

Hvarke a maðr at yrkia *vm man* löst ne löf . . . Ef maðr yrkir þa víso *vm man* er eigi háþung í. oc varðar iii. marca sekþ. Ef hann yrkir fleira *vm man* oc varðar fiorbaugs garð. þot eigi se háþung í. Scog gang varðar ef maðr yrkir *vm man* hálfa víso þa er löstr er í eþa háþung eða lof þat er hann yrkir til haðungar . . . Ef maðr yrkir mansöng *vm cono* oc varðar scog gang.

A person is allowed to compose about another neither blame nor praise poetry . . . If a man composes a strophe about a man in which there is no mockery, the penalty is three marks. If he composes more about a man the penalty is lesser outlawry even if there is no mockery in it. The penalty is greater outlawry if a man composes a half strophe in which there is blame or mockery or praise which he composes in mockery . . . If a man composes love-verses about a woman, the penalty is greater outlawry.

While there is little that is mysterious in the social power of insults and blame poetry, the mention in the legal context of praise poetry is somewhat more difficult. Let us first note that nowhere in *Grágás* do we have a ban on prosaic praise. Second, the text does not identify a specific group of people (e.g. poets) as its potential targets, rather it uses *maðr*; anyone is

a potential offender. It would appear that for Icelandic legislators it was the medium (poetry itself) that represented the significant and potentially dangerous element: to utter certain poetic words could amount to issuing a 'performative speech act'—i.e. to do things with words rather than with work (Austin 1962, 4–7; the concept has been used by Old Norse scholars, e.g. Hastrup 1990, 201; Raudvere 2005, 181–82 in relation to both magic and poetry). According to anthropologist Gísli Pálsson, Old Norse magic was theorised by medieval Icelanders within a 'folk theory of speech acts' (1991, 158). However, it should be noted that the *um skáldskap* text itself does not make any explicit connection between poetry and vernacular categories of magic (ON *ffjölkyngi*, *galdr*, *seiðr*, etc.), which is discussed in the 'Christian Laws Section' of the code. The explicit connection between these two powerful practices, which will be the focus of the third part of this essay, was left to be made by other texts.

Law codes do many things, but one thing they are not good at is critical sociological analysis. According to Bourdieu, the magic of performative speech acts (i.e. the extra-linguistic efficiency of speech) is not to be located in the words themselves—here, the poetic utterances—but rather in the relationship between audience and speaker:

To try to understand linguistically the power of linguistic manifestations . . . is to forget authority comes to language from outside, as is recalled in practical terms by the *skeptron* ['sceptre'] given, in Homer, to the orator who is about to speak (Bourdieu 1982, 105; see also Lincoln 1994, 14–36).

In this perspective, whatever extra-linguistic efficiency (magic in a weak/etic sense) poets may have had was the outcome of the authorisation of the individuals concerned by the group. To illustrate this central point, I will turn to a short story preserved in *Morkinskinna*, *Sneglu-Halla þáttr*. *Morkinskinna* is a saga of Norwegian kings written in Iceland c.1220, which contains a number of short stories (*þættir*) about Icelanders (on their relationship with the main text, see Andersson and Gade 2001, 22–24; Ármann Jakobsson 2001). *Sneglu-Halla þáttr* narrates the tribulations of an Icelandic poet at the court of King Haraldr harðráði (r. 1047–66).

The tale begins with the arrival of the Icelandic, provincial Sneglu-Halli in Norway. Already a poet and rather free in his speech—*hann var skáld ok foryfildisk heldr fás í orðum sínum* 'he was a poet and shrank from rather few things in his words' (*Mork*, I 270)—Halli wishes to join King Haraldr's retinue. However, the king tells him '*vant verðr þat útlendum mǫnnum*' 'that is difficult for foreigners' (*Mork*, I 271), and subjects Halli to different poetic tests, which establish his poetic competence. After this period of 'hazing', which includes a conflict with an established court poet, Halli

wins the respect of the retinue and obtains the right to utter a praise poem to the king, thereby confirming his aggregation to the exclusive group of authorised court poets. The tale then immediately offers a passage which explores the power of poetry and poets in the mid-eleventh century, at least as this was perceived by the early-thirteenth-century author.

Halli learns that a powerful and violent chieftain, Einarr fluga, will shortly arrive at court. Upon learning that Einarr never pays compensation for the men he kills, Halli wagers that he will be able to obtain redress from him. One evening Einarr boasts that he has killed off the crew of an Icelandic ship for illegally trading with the Finns. Hearing this, Halli states (falsely) that one of his kinsmen was aboard the ship. He thus goes to Einarr and asks for compensation. The chieftain answers, '*Hefir þú eigi heyrt þat at ek bæti engan mann? Sé ek þess ekki á þér at þú þiggir bætr af oss heldr en aðrir menn*' 'Have you not heard that I pay compensation for no man? I do not see it on you that you should receive any more compensation from us than other men do' (*Mork*, I 280). Halli asks a second time but is rewarded only with threats. The poet makes a third attempt. This time, however, Halli changes his mode of operation. Rather than speak directly to Einarr, he addresses the king (*Mork*, I 280):

'Herra,' segir Halli, 'ek vil segja þér draum minn; þú ert maðr draumspakr. Ek þóttumk vera allr annarr maðr en ek emk; þóttumk vera Þorleifr skáld, en Einarr fluga þótti mér vera Hákon jarl, ok þóttumk ek níða hann, ok munða ek sumt í er ek vaknaða.'

'Lord,' said Halli, 'I wish to tell you my dream; you are skilled in interpreting dreams. I thought I was a completely different man than I am; I thought I was Þorleifr the poet and Einarr fluga seemed to me to be Earl Hákon, and I thought I lampooned him, and I remembered some part of it when I woke up.'

Halli then drifts away muttering. The king, who is constructed by the saga as well versed in the skaldic art, understands the threat Halli is making: unless Einarr pays, Halli will utter blame poetry about him (*níð*; on this term see Almqvist 1965; Meulengracht Sørensen 1983) as Þorleifr Ásgeirsson had done to Earl Hákon. The king (thus granting authority to the idea) presents the threat as dire, since '*eru dæmi til þess at níðit hefir bitit enn ríkari menn en þú ert, ok mun þat aldri niðr falla meðan Norðrlond eru byggð*' 'there are examples of lampoons having bitten more powerful men than you. It will never be forgotten while the northern lands are inhabited' (*Mork*, I 281). Consequently the king asks (*biðja*) Einarr to pay Halli compensation. To the extent that Einarr complies, this passage may be read as foregrounding the extra-linguistic powers of blame poetry itself, which can 'bite' the most powerful men, such as the mighty

Earl Hákon Sigurðarson, Norway's ruler between 975–95, even after the (socially inferior) poet's death.

There are, however, indications that the outcome has an entirely different explanation. Indeed, King Haraldr's speech exhorting Einarr to pay compensation ends, '*Gør þetta nú fyrir mínar sakar*' 'Do this now for my sake', to which the chieftain replies, '*Þér skuluð ráða, herra*' 'You shall decide, lord' (*Mork*, I 281). Why then does Einarr comply? Is it because he is afraid of being bitten by poetic *níð*, or is it not rather because he wishes to keep the king's friendship by obeying him? Indeed, the saga presents that friendship as having its ups and downs (*Mork*, I 278). Whatever the answer, the poet's threat is ultimately effective because he has been authorised by the king who has acknowledged him as (his) poet and thus given him a platform. Should Halli lampoon Einarr at court, his utterance would be (implicitly) endorsed by the king and his society (the retinue), and Einarr would lose face, if not far worse. Court poets were able to issue extra-linguistically effective speech acts because they were spokesmen; behind them loomed the power of the king just as, behind a priest uttering the performative speech act 'I pronounce you man and wife' during a wedding ceremony, there stands the entire ecclesiastical institution. The case of another royal patron of poetry, Haraldr hárfagri, corroborates this conclusion. While the sources indicate that he valued (*virði*) his *hirðskáld*, it appears it was not necessarily for their artistic brilliance—he was willing to employ a plagiarist (Auðun illskelda, *Egils saga*, 19 n.2)—but rather for their capacity to produce prestigious, authoritative and efficient pronouncements; a means of validating his own power, externalised in the persons of his poets.

III

By the beginning of the thirteenth century kings were increasingly turning to other spokesmen such as churchmen and/or saga writers. And since 'agents hold a power proportionate to their symbolic capital, i.e. the acknowledgement they receive from a group' (Bourdieu 1982, 101), poetic utterances lost much of their former effectiveness, and poets their prestige and opportunities for material rewards. In the years directly following the redaction of *Morkinskinna*, in the decade between 1220 and 1230, three texts—*Ynglinga saga*, *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* and the *Prose Edda*—were written which explicitly foregrounded a strong link between poetry and magic, in order, I submit, to reinvest skaldic poetry with extra-linguistic power. This time, however, the power in question had little to do with social dynamics, for it could be decidedly supernatural (that is, magic in a strong or emic sense).

The first text I will deal with is *Ynglinga saga*, the opening section of *Heimskringla*, the vast collection of royal biographies composed in the 1220s possibly by Snorri Sturluson. Its opening chapters deal with the establishment in Scandinavia of the euhemerised pagan gods, founders of the royal houses of Sweden and Norway. The dominant figure is Óðinn who receives a thorough portrait. Surprisingly in light of the saga's generic context ('history'), it focuses on the magical and poetical skills of Óðinn and his followers, in a section which is not corroborated by the saga's source, the ninth-century poem *Ynglingatal* by Þjóðólfr of Hvinir. In addition to their textual proximity, the text combines poetry and magic in different fashions. First, they have the same overall function: they contribute to Óðinn's reputation and power: *En þat er at segja, fyrir hverja sök hann var svá mjök tígnaðr, þá báru þessir hlutir til* 'And there is this to be said about for which reason he was so honoured; these things were the cause' (*Yng*, 17); the saga then enumerates his shape-shifting abilities, his competence in poetry and his battle-magic. Second, the text establishes a taxonomic relationship between the two: *Allar þessar íþróttir kenndi hann með rúnum ok ljóðum þeim, er galdrar heita* 'All these skills [including the power to quench fire or calm the sea with words only] he taught with runes and the poems (*ljóðum*) which are called magical incantations (*galdrar*)' (*Yng*, 19). Here *ljóð* 'lay', 'song'—a term emphatically used in the previous chapter to refer to poetry: *Hann ok hofgoðar hans heita ljóðasmíðir, því at [skáldskapr] hófsk af þeim í Norðrlöndum* 'He and his temple priests are called song-smiths, because poetry originated with them in the Northlands' (*Yng*, 17)—is a genus of which *galdr* is a species. Hence, according to *Ynglinga saga*, some poetry at least is magical. Third, the text indicates explicitly that uttering poems could have extra-linguistic effects (including on non-human objects): *hann kunni þau ljóð, er upp lauksk fyrir honum jörðin ok björg ok steinar ok haugarnir* 'he knew the poems which made the earth, cliffs, stones and mounds open up before him' (*Yng*, 19). Finally, magic and poetry are united in the semantic field of artisanship (*smið*), the same field selected by Bragi Boddason in his poetic description of the skald (*Skskp*, 83/27–84/2). Óðinn and his closest followers, as originators of the arts in Scandinavia, are called both *ljóðasmíðir* and *galdrasmíðir* (*Yng*, 17, 19), which suggests a common element in the elaboration if not in the essence of these skills.

The link between magic and poetry constructed by *Ynglinga saga* is shared by two contemporary texts often attributed to the same author, Snorri Sturluson: *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* and the *Prose Edda*. The first of these texts tells the tale of a man who is at once poet and magician

(*Egils saga* chapters 44, 57 and 72; cf. Dillmann 2006, 151). In the famous *Höfuðslausn* ‘Head Ransom’ episode (chapters 59–61), not only does the saga suggest that poetry has a place within magical practice, but it also constructs a comparison between the utterance of skaldic verse and the practice of *seiðr* ‘sorcery’ (Price 2002) that results in the blurring of their boundaries (see also William Sayers’s treatment of this episode (1995, 43–45)). Consequently, skaldic poetry is endowed in *Egils saga* with its own extraordinary effectiveness.

At the beginning of the passage, Egill is living quietly in Iceland after having been banished from Norway by the royal couple, which the Icelander answered with an elaborate ritual sequence involving blame poetry and the raising of a shame pole (*níðstǫng*). Significantly, the story can be read to imply that this ritual caused King Eiríkr’s subsequent exile to York. Back in Iceland, Egill feels strangely restless and decides to sail abroad. This decision is imputed to the magical powers of Queen Gunnhildr who wishes to get a chance to get rid of him once and for all: *Svá er sagt, at Gunnhildr lét seið efla ok lét þat seiða, at Egill Skalla-Grímsson skyldi aldri ró biða á Íslandi, fyrr en hon sæi hann* ‘It is said that Gunnhildr had magic performed so that Egill Skalla-Grímsson would never rest quietly in Iceland before she saw him’ (*Egils saga*, 176). And indeed, Egill ends up in the presence of her and Eiríkr. As expected, the king declares that only the poet’s death will satisfy him. However, Egill’s friend Arinbjörn, who is also the king’s retainer, suggests that Egill win back his head by uttering a praise poem, the structural opposite of his former *níð*. The story thus presents two contrasting sets: banishment opposed to magical blame poetry (Almqvist 1965, 118) and magical attraction (*seiðr*) opposed to praise poetry.

The episode contains a further opposition. Where the queen’s *seiðr* binds the poet, he releases himself by means of his poetry. Significantly, whenever he is in the royal couple’s presence he expresses himself solely through the medium of poetry. Accordingly, the queen—who knows about these things, being both a witch (*Haralds saga ins hárfagra*, 135–36) and an efficient wielder of words herself (of the inciter type)—does her utmost to prevent the poet from speaking even words of praise: *Vér viljum ekki lof hans heyra* ‘We do not want to hear his praise’ (*Egils saga*, 181), demanding that Egill be slain at once even though the hour is so late as to incur the charge of murder from Egill’s ally Arinbjörn: *því at náttvíg eru morðvíg* ‘because night killings are murders’ (*Egils saga*, 181). She further attempts to keep Egill silent by distracting him, magically transformed into a swallow, while he is trying to compose the praise poem. Interestingly, the terms used to describe the effects of the bird’s chatter on Egill are the

same as those referring to the effect of the queen's *seiðr*: the latter has *Egill skyldi aldri ró bíða*, the former *ek hefí aldregi beðit ró fyrir*. Egill is nevertheless able to compose a *drápa* whose utterance before the king, astonishingly enough in light of previous developments, wins him his life.

Queen Gunnhildr's behaviour during the whole episode suggests the reading that Egill's poetic actions before the king are perhaps more than mere art. This passage, by operating a comparison between Egill's and Queen Gunnhildr's skills, even if it is of a contrastive nature, creates a higher-order connection between *skáldskapr* and *seiðr*. While they are contrasted axiologically, one being socially sanctioned, the other illegal, both belong to the larger class of extraordinary, magically effective practices. This interpretation was likewise proposed by Sayers: 'In the head ransom scenes at York, Gunnhildr seeks to prevent or discount Egill's verses and have him killed, as if recognizing in poetry a power comparable, but not positively allied, with her sorcery' (Sayers 1995, 45). While *Egils saga* does not strictly equate poetry and magic (too much identity might lead to issues with the Church and the law), they are represented as sharing a number of features which opens the door to slippage from one to the other, in particular to a poetry endowed with extraordinary extra-linguistic powers. It is noteworthy, however, that this slippage is not mentioned in the verses the saga has preserved.

The third text of interest in the present context, Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda*, is likewise a product of the first half of the thirteenth century (c.1230). Conceived as a handbook of skaldic poetry, it distinguishes itself from other such efforts (e.g. Earl Rognvaldr kali's *Háttalykill* or Óláfr Þórðarson's *Third Grammatical Treatise*) in that it resorts to discourses of magic, which again contribute to a slippage between the two categories. The most obvious recourse to magic occurs in the characterisation of those narrators who give instruction about poetry as proficient in magic. Thus, the Æsir of Troy who in *Gylfaginning* are responsible for the teaching of skaldic poetry's raw material, pagan mythology, are possessed of the gift of prophecy (*spádómr*) and make use of visual illusions (*sjónhverfingar*). Likewise, in the *Prose Edda*'s third section, *Skáldskaparmál*, the didactic exposition of skaldic poetry's diction is assumed by Bragi (god of poetry according to *Gylfaginning* (26), who, like his fellow Æsir, possesses special knowledge and again wields visual illusions.

While the final part of the *Edda*, *Háttatal*—an exposition of skaldic poetry's metres in the form of a long praise poem—does not make use of a frame narrative, the text once more suggests a slippage between poetry and magic. This relationship is foregrounded by the conclusion of the

102-stanza-long poem, which introduces as its final metre the *galdralag*,¹ literally ‘incantation metre’, a technical name that appears to originate with this text (McKinnell 2007, 87). This metre seems to be defined by the (near-) duplication of its penultimate line, a device which is normally associated with ominous, but by no means necessarily magical, dream stanzas such as that cited in chapter 81 of *Haralds saga harðráða* (cf. *Háttatal*, 75–76). As was the case in *Ynglinga saga* with its *galdrasmiðir* and *ljóðasmiðir*, *Háttatal* constructs a link between poetry and *galdr*, a term for magic etymologically suggestive in that it derives from a root implying a marked mode of enunciation, cognate with the verb *gala* ‘to crow’ (de Vries 1977, 153), or according to the same *Prose Edda*, ‘to sing in a magical context’ (*Sköpp*, 22/20–22):

Þórr fór heim til Þrúðvanga ok stóð heinin í hǫfði honum. Þá kom til vǫlva sú er Gróa hét, kona Aurvandils hins froekna. Hon gól galdra sína yfir Þór til þess er heinin losnaði.

Þórr went home to Þrúðvangr and the whetstone was stuck in his head. Then the prophetess called Gróa, wife of Aurvandill the brave, arrived. She sang her *galdrar* over Þórr until the whetstone got loose.

Gylfaginning adds to this categorical slippage between magic and poetry by recasting the term *galdr* as a poetic classification similar to terms such as *mál* or *kviða*: *ok enn segir hann sjálfir í Heimdalargaldri* ‘and he further says himself in *Heimdalargaldr*’ (*Gylf*, 26/8), of which Snorri quotes only two lines, presumably as a means of illustrating the duplicating feature (*Gylf*, 26/9–10):

¹ *Galdralag*:

Sóttak fremð,
sótta ek fund konungs,
sóttak ítran jarl,
þá er ek reist—
þá er ek renna gat—
kaldan straum kili
kaldan sjá kili.

Njóti aldrs
ok auðsala
konungr ok jarl.
þat er kvæðis lok.
Falli fyrr
fold í ægi
steini studd
en stillis lof.’

(*Háttatal*, 39)

Níu em ek mæðra mögr,
Níu em ek systra sonr.

I am the boy of nine mothers,
I am the son of nine sisters.

There is yet another way in which *Gylfaginning* may be constructing the categorical slippage and its resulting supernatural empowerment of poetry. While it emphasises illusions of the visual sort—for instance the Æsir conjure up a mighty castle out of thin air—the conclusion of the frame narrative suggests that the Æsir’s utterances likewise partake of this magically illusory character (*Gylf*, 54/31–35):

Því næst heyrði [Gylfi] dyni mikla hvern veg frá sér, ok leit út á hlið sér. Ok þá er hann sésk meir um þá stendr hann úti á sléttum velli, sér þá ønga höll ok ønga borg. Gengr hann þá leið sína braut ok kemr heim í ríki sitt ok segir þau tíðindi er hann hefir sét ok heyrtr. Ok eptir honum sagði hverr maðr qðrum þessar sögur.

[Gylfi] heard a great noise all around him, and he looked to his side. And when he looked around some more, he was standing outside on a level plain; he could see neither hall nor castle. He then went on his way, came home to his realm, and told what he had seen and heard. People, based on his account, told each other these stories.

This passage allows Snorri to make two statements. First, he constructs the origins myth for the pagan religion of Scandinavia much as *Ynglinga saga* gave the origins myth of northern kingship, both functioning within an ‘euhemeristic’ paradigm. Second, to explain how these fabrications could attain the status of religious truth for Snorri’s pre-Christian forebears, he endows the stories about the divine Æsir just told in the main part of *Gylfaginning*—which function as the raw material of the kennings of skaldic poetry—with a particular power of persuasion, whose effectiveness was confirmed *ex post facto* (before the Conversion Scandinavians did in fact believe in the divine status of Óðinn and his friends). However, it is not a persuasion that operates by means of logic or convincing argument, rather it is comparable with the visual illusions (Gylfi told what he had *seen and heard*), i.e. by magic. Both the castle and the stories of gods are false, yet they conjure up, for a shorter or longer time, the magically persuasive semblance of reality.

The idea that the mythic contents of poetry partake of a magically persuasive nature is corroborated by the story of Þórr’s expedition to Útgarðaloki, which functions as a *mise en abyme* of the frame narrative. In the final part of a story that sees Þórr travelling across the great sea, the god arrives at a castle where he and his companions are invited to compete

in a number of contests (eating, running, drinking and trials of strength). However, during the visit, Þórr's party—like King Gylfi—is subjected by the master of the castle Útgarðaloki to visual as well as 'auditory' illusions. The castle itself eventually vanishes into thin air and Útgarðaloki's utterances, capable of creating a persuasive semblance of reality, are likewise dispelled as Þórr takes his leave (cf. Lindow 2000b, 182). These illusions consist in the attribution of names in such a way as to conceal the actual nature of the contestants thus named. For instance, *kallar Útgarðaloki til sín sveinstaula nokkvorn er nefndr er Hugi* 'Útgarðaloki calls to him a certain little fellow who is called Hugi', (*Gylf*, 40/15–16) who will compete in the running contest. Útgarðaloki later reveals that Hugi was none other than his *hugr* 'thought'. Þórr and his companions are persuaded to deal with Hugi as if he were a person.

Significantly, the frame narrative recasts these various illusions, linguistic and visual, within the category of magic: *Þá mælir Gangleri: 'Allmikill er fyrir sér Útgarðaloki, en með vælum ok fjölkyngi ferr hann mjök'* 'Gangleri then said: "Útgarðaloki is very powerful, and he deals much in tricks and magic"' (*Gylf*, 43/39–40). Furthermore, these verbal illusions have proved so persuasive that Þórr immediately embarks on another expedition in order to avenge it despite Útgarðaloki's admission of foul play.

William Sayers noted that the final lines of *Snorra Edda* tie poetry to magic, but dismissed any interpretation of the link as mere 'speculation' (1995, 56 n. 45). Considered alone, the *galdralag* ending of *Háttatal* does indeed seem surprising. However, when considered in connection with other such discourses from the *Prose Edda* as well as *Ynglinga saga* and *Egils saga*—texts penned within ten years of each other, probably under the guidance of the same person, in a particular political and literary context—it becomes far easier to entertain the thought that the link between poetry and magic they display represents a careful goal-driven construction to endow skaldic poetry with extraordinary—and desirable—power, a power used to win a kingdom, save one's life or conjure up the persuasive illusion of truth (the aim of propaganda).

IV

It will be readily apparent that such a link could function as a response to the waning interest in and exchangeability of skaldic poetry in Norway. Poets such as Snorri found themselves deprived of their traditional fount of power, royal patronage. They thus proposed magic as an alternative source of extra-linguistic efficacy for their utterances in order to convince

the king that skaldic poetry still represented a useful and meaningful instrument for his rule. Wanner has demonstrated that the *Prose Edda* represented Snorri's attempt to interest and instruct King Hákon in the usefulness of skaldic poetry. One way to do that was through the figure of Óðinn, which was constructed so as to bring together poetry and kingship. Wanner wrote (2008, 152):

The historical Óðinn, as a concrete representation of the melding of [Europe] (wisdom, prophecy, and poetry) and [Asia] (power, beauty, and wealth), was of central importance to Snorri's attempts to affirm the equal venerability, singularity, and worth of the hybrid institutions of Scandinavian kingship and skaldic verse.

In addition to kingship and skaldic verse, Snorri's (human, not divine) Óðinn was closely linked to magic, the two latter playing an important if not essential role in the construction of the Scandinavian royal institution, according to *Ynglinga saga*. Indeed, it is noteworthy that Óðinn's imperialist conquest of Sweden (*Yng*, 16) does not involve armed conflict, but rather the sorts of skills developed in chapters 6 and 7 of *Ynglinga saga*: poetry and magic. The saga can thus be read as stating that any king wishing to emulate the glorious founder of Scandinavian monarchy should equip himself with such instruments. More mundanely, the affirmation of a link between poetry and magic conferred upon the skald's utterances the type of extra-linguistic, magically persuasive powers that would be particularly felicitous for an instrument of diffusion of royal ideology.

A second problem this endowing of poetry with magical powers may have been meant to answer was the imperialist policy of Norway regarding Iceland that came to light around 1220. Deprived of the military or economic means to fend off the encroaching crown, which in 1220, according to *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* (ch. 59), was considering sending a naval expedition to attack Iceland, the islanders could only rely on discursive means to defend themselves. One such means was blame poetry. While Icelandic skalds could be employed to praise and further the cause of the Norwegian crown, they might also use their powers against princes who displeased them. Blame poetry and *níð* could be used to cause lasting damage to royal designs on Iceland. But since skaldic poetry's social prestige and relevance were on the wane in the early thirteenth century, it required something more to make it bite—in this case, magic. Significantly, a number of characters in both the *Prose Edda* and *Egils saga* utilise their magically powerful utterances to deal successfully with aggressive or unjust kings: the Æsir against King Gylfi (*Gylf*, 7/24); Útgarðaloki against a kingly Þórr, who enslaves farmers' children (an accusation also

made against King Haraldr hárfagri, see *Egils saga*, 8), and waging (offensive) war on the other side of the sea (*Gylf*, 45–46); Egill against King Eiríkr blóðøx, who violates the law and sacred places (*Egils saga*, 163; see Meylan 2010). These texts thus also spoke to Icelanders, assuring them that they (or rather their poets) had at their disposal effective means to resist and defend their community—thereby ensuring the continued prestige of poets at home.

V

Snorri's efforts were highly successful from a literary point of view. The link between poetry and magic was readily adopted by later writers of *Íslendinga sögur* (see e.g. *Fóstbræðra saga*, 169 and *Brennu-Njáls saga*, 37–38), and enjoyed a long post-medieval posterity in the figure of the *kraptaskáld* (Almqvist 1965 and 1974; Hastrup 1990). However, from the political and social perspective Snorri's discourse was bound to fail, for while he sought to recreate the type of authority poets had enjoyed in the Viking period, he was forced to locate the source of that authority in the wrong place, in the verses themselves. However, whatever extra-linguistic power poetry did have in the past had in fact been situated in the social role filled by the Viking-Age poet and in his relationship with kings, earls and other chieftains, a role now closed to Icelandic poets. Nowhere is this shift from 'social magic' to 'supernatural magic'—from a focus on the group to the medium—more evident than in the retelling of the story of the dealings of Earl Hákon and Þorleifr Ásgeirsson, to which Sneglu-Halli had so effectively alluded.

Þorleifs þátr jarlsskálds is a short narrative preserved in Flateyjarbók (1387–94), which has been dated to c.1300, except for its clerical prologue, which was probably written by the scribe of Flateyjarbók (Rowe 2005, 61n35, 69). The hero, Þorleifr Ásgeirsson, is a pagan poet who was schooled in magic in his youth. After a killing he leaves Iceland on a trading trip. In Norway he meets its ruler Earl Hákon who demands to buy his wares, but Þorleifr refuses. The earl is angered by his refusal and retaliates by plundering his wares, destroying his ship and murdering his crew. Þorleifr avenges this atrocity by means of a *níð* poem (the one Sneglu-Halli claims to have dreamed about). However, despite what *Sneglu-Halla þátr* indicates (*Mork*, I 280), the poem caused more than symbolic damage to Norway's ruler. Disguised as a beggar the poet begins to utter a poem about the earl, which appears to be full of praise. However, as Þorleifr utters the poem (called *Jarlsníð* 'Blame of the Earl') the earl is seized with strange (and embarrassing) itching. He then understands that

far from being a praise poem it is in fact *níð*, and demands he improve it. Þorleifr then utters the *Pokuvísur* ‘Mist Verses’ (*Þorleifs þáttur*, 222–23):

Þoku dregr upp it ytra,
Él festist it vestra,
Mokkr mun náms, af nokkvi,
Naðrbings kominn hingat.

En er hann hafði úti Þokuvísur, þá var myrkt í hollinni.

Mist draws from the outside,
Hail closes in from the west,
There is some reason for this;
Clouds will have come here because of the seizing of
the bed of the serpent.

When he had uttered the *Mist Verses*, the hall had become dark.

Having uttered this, he resumes *Jarlsníð*, which causes weapons to turn against their owners, and disappears from the hall.

Contrary to the allusion in *Morkinskinna*, *Þorleifs þáttur* places the power squarely in the poetry itself; the words bring about the uncanny darkness. There is no insult here, indeed the *Pokuvísur* are not addressed to a person—rather, Þorleifr is practising weather magic. Furthermore, the poet is himself a fully anti-social individual whose words lack any social backing. Not only has he come to court disguised as a wandering beggar (which medieval Iceland considered as a threat to organised society; Skórzewska 2011, 175), but he behaves in an unacceptable manner (he disrupts the feast by quarrelling with other beggars and ‘eats’ absurd amounts of food). Between *Sneglu-Halla þáttur* and *Þorleifs þáttur* there is thus a shift from symbolic to material effects, from socially significant poetry to magical verses, which correlates neatly with the changing status of skaldic poetry in medieval Scandinavia.

By way of conclusion, it may be of some interest to question statements such as that of Roberta Frank, quoted at the outset of this essay. Was skaldic poetry indeed always associated with magic? The response has often been affirmative, either implicitly or explicitly (e.g. van Hamel 1936, 143, Turville-Petre 1964, 40, 49, Almqvist 1965, de Vries 1970, 66, 73, Clunies Ross 1989, Raudvere 2002, 116). The present essay, however, has suggested that this link was foregrounded at a specific time, as a response to a particular situation. Consequently, it may be that in the period when it enjoyed high social prestige, poets usually did not feel the need to develop a supplementary discourse of power to justify and claim privileges, as is reflected in the verse attributed to Bragi Boddason (*Skskp*, 83/27–84/2):

Skáld kalla mik
 Skipsmið Viðurs,
 Gauts gjafroðuð,
 Grepp óhneppan,
 Yggs ǫlbera,
 Oðs skap-Móða,
 Hagsmið bragar.
 Hvat er skald nema þat?

They call me a poet:
 Viðurr's ship-smith,
 Getter of Gautr's gift,
 Lack-naught hero,
 Server of Yggr's ale,
 Mind-Móði of poetry,
 Skilled smith of verse;
 What is a poet other than that?

Bibliography and Abbreviations

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REVIEWS

GODS AND WORSHIPPERS IN THE VIKING AND GERMANIC WORLD. By THOR EWING. *Tempus*. Stroud, 2008. 160 pp. ISBN 978-0-7524-3590-9.

The chief merit of this book is its interest in pre-Christians as people. Some scholars seem to doubt that Germanic heathens existed or had any minds of their own. Thor Ewing, however, constantly probes the evidence for their mentality. He begins his search for what 'Viking and Germanic' paganism was like by laying out his methodology in a brief 'Introduction', in which archaeology perforce comes in second place to written historical sources, with folklore third. Then there are two parts, the first dealing with gods and their rites, the second with worshippers and their idea of society. Finally an 'Epilogue' brings us closer to rites of the dead. The survey is directed through chapters which lead from 'Sacrifice' to 'Invocation' to 'Gods, groves and temples' to 'Temples, priests and festivals' in Part I; and from 'Seeresses and seers', to 'Valkyries and norms', finally to 'Another society' in Part II. The material in each chapter is grouped under headings which give aspects of paganism as interpreted from the evidence: so, in the first chapter, 'Blood offering' makes the first heading, 'Sacrifice and law' the second and 'Other human victims' the third. Each case is supported with brief references to historical and archaeological record. The texts are given in translation, mostly the author's and not always close. While there are no footnotes, the bibliography hints at where references and ideas have come from. In its style, and not only because both authors have also written on early medieval clothing and textiles, this book resembles Gale Owen's *Rites and Religions of the Anglo-Saxons* (Totowa, 1981). Less closely, because of the greater use of archaeology, it resembles the books of Hilda Ellis Davidson, including her *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe* (Harmondsworth, 1964), as well as Gabriel Turville-Petre's less effective *Myth and Religion of the North* (London, 1964). These books are listed as sources, unlike their inspiration, Jan de Vries's classic but heavy *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte* (second edition, Berlin, 1956–57). The predominant archaeological source for Ewing's book, which is richly illustrated, is *The Viking Way* by Neil Price (Uppsala, 2002), so its vision of Scandinavian material culture comes well grounded. Not unlike Price, Ewing seeks to define Germanic paganism as religion in practice, which is surely the best approach.

The book opens with a search for ritual, disclosing a shambles of human and animal sacrifice of various kinds which is found not only in ancient bogs but also in the eleventh-century hearsay of Thietmar of Merseburg or Adam of Bremen. This and the next chapter concentrate the mind on horror almost as if we were party to human sacrifice in sixteenth-century Mexico. However, unlike the detailed and relatively objective records that survive for the Aztec version, the evidence for Germanic sacrifice is ambiguous because it reaches us in random sample. Exhibit nos 1–3, bodies preserved in bogs in Denmark and Drenthe, testify to murders carried out either religiously or under form of law, or both, or perhaps without any ritual purpose. In his attempt to find system in physical evidence such as the

Tollund man, the Yde girl or the unfortunate couple in Windeby, in the far north of Germany, Ewing is forced to speculate about early Iron-Age society, its attitudes to adultery and physical abnormality, and whether it or its victims regarded punishment and sacrifice as the same. The more he does so, the less alien these ancient people begin to appear. There again, the more like us they are, the more chaotic the picture and the less chance there is of Ewing's reducing the evidence to a system. Wisely enough in these circumstances, he argues for the general identity of secular with religious values in the pre-Christian period. After much discussion of the people and their relation to the gods of Germanic paganism, Ewing concludes that Norse and other Germanic worshippers rendered a duality in their divine world, one between Æsir war-mongers and Vanir elves, with a balance in their own world between the moral majority and a parallel society of three types of 'magico-religious practitioner'. In general, this conclusion seems not unreasonable, given the Æsir–Vanir balance in Old Norse mythology. The devil lies in the detail, however.

There is a learned range of detail in this book, but the way in which the supporting evidence arrives without context might pose problems for the beginner. Nor is the evidence always weighed up or qualified. Poems of the *Poetic Edda* are cited alongside ecclesiastical history, late antique artefacts or other works from the potpourri of sources which every historian of Germanic religion must consult, but without the qualification which would tell us—here I guess that 'us' means archaeologists and social historians—what is relatively reliable and what is not. Even in an introductory book, we need to know for what ideological purpose a statement was written and why therefore it may have to be treated cautiously. Ewing, however, seems to treat the historical and literary evidence as of equal value, in all cases but that of the thirteenth-century Icelandic sagas. Even there, he reveals an optimistic streak in suggesting that stories may be based on something real that existed or took place. Thus, partly because it seems to have a priest, the *hof* with the choir and altar-piece in *Eyrbyggja saga* may have 'some basis in authentic tradition' (p. 64). Then, although the *Prose Edda* with its entertaining myths is almost completely left out, the paraphrase of King Dómaldi in the fabulous *Ynglingatal* is accepted as history in Snorri's account in *Ynglinga saga*, as if the Icelander had no motive with history other than to record it. The ensuing claim that it 'seems likely that the early Yngling kings were once routinely sacrificed' (p. 118) cannot be true of Swedish history as we know it—even if it seems plausible a long time earlier. Most misleadingly of all, Ewing reintroduces the notion of a Germanic 'priesthood', despite noting that anyone could sacrifice in the Viking world. If there is one constant in Germanic heathendom, Scandinavian or otherwise, in all cases but those where Roman or Christian commentators saw their own rites reflected in Germanic ones, it is the absence of priests. The language in this case seems unduly influenced by that of the older Penguin Classics, in which the word *godi* in the sagas is translated as 'priest', though it means 'chieftain'.

Although this book covers acres of time and space, there is little reference to history. In order to read systems, through a maze of mostly unreliable literary

sources, into widespread cults in the long heathen Germanic era, a book is best advised to offer its reader a sketch of the main historical developments from before Tacitus up to and beyond the Icelandic Conversion. One reason for this precaution is that Christian cults probably influenced Germanic non-Christian ones. What we have for the period here, however, is the constant implication of stasis, an unchanging and ubiquitous background. Be it the forests of Germania or the bustle of Birka, shallow graves in Jutland, *Rus'* funeral mayhem on the Volga or Wulfstan hitting the apocalyptic in London, the Germanic religious world is presented as much the same. Cut loose from the Icelandic context, 'Odin', 'Thor', 'Frey' and the other gods and goddesses do service for the whole thousand years. The more one type is adduced to explain another, the more the sibyls, *disir*, *norns* and *valkyries* begin to blend. Towards the end of the book, as the author constructs his hidden régime of Vanir-related magicians partly out of the latter *mélange*, he makes special use of Wulfstan's citation of 'valkyries' (*wālcyrrian*) alongside regular witches in the *Sermo Lupi*, then makes a cross-reference to goading women on battlefields in Tacitus' *Germania* (pp. 99–100). A little more magic and less battle, however, and he could have read popular irony into the use of 'valkyries' as a term for women who stick pins in dolls. In short, a survey on paganism needs more contextual circumspection, and the conclusions of this one, though broadly plausible, do not yet have their basis in proof. Ewing's book is an interesting and readable new rendering of the hoary old topic of Viking and Germanic paganism, but as with most other books of this kind, its readers will have to remain cautious.

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THOR. MYTH TO MARVEL. By MARTIN ARNOLD. *Continuum*. London and New York, 2011. xiv + 225 pp. ISBN 978-1-4411-3542-1.

Martin Arnold's fifth book continues his line of research into the cultural history and reception of Scandinavian mythology, exemplified by papers such as '*Hvat er tröll nema þat?*: the Cultural History of the Troll' (in *The Shadow Walkers. Jacob Grimm's Monstrous Breeds*. Ed. Tom Shippey (Tempe, 2006), 111–55) and 'Strength, Work, Duty, Truth, Honor Bright': Pan-Scandinavianism, Pan-Germanicism and the Myths of Thor the Thunderer' (in *The Survival of Myth. Innovation, Singularity and Alterity*. Ed. P. Hardwick and D. Kennedy (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2010), 136–51), and building upon such works as Andrew Wawn's *The Vikings and the Victorians* (Cambridge, 2000) and the essay collection *Old Norse Made New*, edited by David Clark and Carl Phelpstead (London, 2007). It is a concise but comprehensive overview of the myth of Thor and its reception in medieval, post-medieval and modern times, which was listed as one of the *Times Literary Supplement* Books of the Year for 2011. For the scholar or student it is useful both on its own, as a thorough study of the subject, and as a general

introduction to the field, its plethora of notes and its extensive bibliography serving as a guide for further in-depth exploration. The book's seven chapters take the reader from the origins of Thor's myth, found in Germanic, Latin and Romance sources, via its appropriation by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century nationalist movements and by the powers of Nazi Germany, to its demise in Marvel comic books.

The book's narrative splits naturally into two parts. The first part, Chapters 1 to 3, presents Thor himself, his myth, the religious practices related to Thor of early Scandinavians, and their belief system in general. Chapter 1 gives the overview of Thor mythology as it is attested in Old Norse and Scandinavian sources, such as the *Elder Edda* and *Snorra Edda*, skaldic verse and stone sculpture. The inconsistencies in the portrayal of Thor as a mythological character are discussed; his overarching function is shown to be that of a protector of humankind. Chapter 2 contains a modern analysis of Thor's myth, where Arnold discusses the applicability of Levi-Strauss's and Dumézil's approaches to the Old Norse material. Data from non-Scandinavian sources, such as works by Adam of Bremen and Tacitus, is presented, and Thor's roles as a god (god of fertility, god of air etc.) are explored, as are the Indo-European parallels. Those written Old Norse sources where Thor plays an insignificant role compared to that of Odin (such as the *Eddas*), are contrasted with other evidence which makes Thor a much more important god in real-life pagan belief. Chapter 3 lays out the evidence for worship of Thor, including the attendant bloody sacrifices, from sources both local, such as sagas (e.g. *Eyrbyggja saga*), and foreign, such as French chronicles. It then turns to the conversion of Scandinavians to Christianity, where the sources reveal Thor as a much more pronounced opponent of Christ than Odin is. Arnold concludes this part by pointing out that Thor as a power, whether identified with the devil or not, clearly survived the Conversion, helped by both enemies of heathenism and keepers of cultural heritage such as Snorri, and was only awaiting the opportunity for a revival.

The second part, Chapters 4 to 7, discusses the later reception history of Thor and his myth. Thor himself is largely absent from Chapter 4, which discusses local Scandinavian attempts to use the myth as a means of gaining prestige for the respective states, and the movement of Gothicism. These early attempts are shown to have been followed by an increasing understanding of the need for access to more reliable sources (hence the growing importance of Icelanders as translators and purveyors of manuscripts), and the general internationalisation of efforts to 'put Scandinavia on the cultural map' of Europe. Arnold concludes the chapter by lining up the fundamentals of the ultimate success of this undertaking: the 'noble savage' theories of Rousseau that helped to remove the taint of paganism from the myths, the monumental work of the Swiss Paul Henri Mallet, in both its original French and the English translation by Bishop Percy, and, unexpectedly but crucially, the Ossianic hoax of Macpherson.

Thor makes a return in Chapter 5, to the extent that its heroes—romantic poets and writers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries such as

Klopstock, Ewald, Oehlenschläger, Tegner and Atterbom—falling prey to the Ossianic hoax and the emotions it stirred, make him the rallying point for a decisive appropriation of Old Norse myth. Instead of being revived as a heritage common to all Scandinavian countries, it becomes an exclusive heirloom for the nation state of each particular author. Arnold guides the reader through the influential writings of that time, showing how Thor, the arch-enemy of Christ in Chapter 3, not only reclaims the status he had had in pre-Christian Scandinavia but transcends it, becoming the Redeemer himself (p. 111). With so many nations claiming the patronage of a Thor reborn, a competition was inevitable; it was won by the Germans and is described in detail in Chapter 6. The reader meets Thor the German hero of Ludwig Uhland; encounters the ‘dark side’ of the great German philologist Jakob Grimm, as he called for annexation of Schleswig and furnished the ideology for a specifically German appropriation of Scandinavian medieval heritage; and sees the nationalist fervour spurred on by the thunderous success of Wagner’s *Ring*. With pan-Germanic or rather pan-German ideas surging, Arnold shows Thor’s banner to be increasingly flown by lunatics rivalling those of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (discussed in Chapter 4), such as George Stephens, the English runologist based in Copenhagen; Friedrich Marby of ‘runic gymnastics’ fame; and finally the Nazis and that assiduous student of sagas and Old Norse myth, Heinrich Himmler.

The fall of the Nazi regime spelled the end of Thor as a nation-state god, and yet his credentials as protector of humankind earned him a rather unexpected second chance as a superhero, as discussed in Chapter 7. This reads as a postscript; starting with a concise review of the history of the reception of Old Norse and particularly Viking history and lore in the USA, including the movie industry, it traces this diminished Thor’s career in American comic books. Arnold discusses the emergence of Superman and other superheroes, tying them to works of early science fiction and to the remoter influence of Nietzsche, as well as to the context of war with Germany, then traces the evolution of the superhero genre up to the appearance of Mighty Thor, simultaneously god and human, and otherwise bizarre even by superhero standards. Arnold concludes that the Mighty Thor series, despite spanning some fifty years and recently resulting in a blockbuster movie by Kenneth Branagh (2011), signifies the end of the meaningful story of the reception of Thor, as the interest is no longer in the Norse myth or history of Thor as a god who was once believed in, but rather in the exotic Norse trappings that the mass pop industry can endlessly recycle.

In this way the book manages to grasp the entirety of Thor’s mythical history. Its only drawback, if it has one, is that it is shorter than one would like it to be. One aspect of which the reader would wish for a longer treatment is the reception of Thor by nationalist movements in continental Scandinavia. In this regard, the book mainly concentrates on the situation in Denmark up to the mid-nineteenth century, and only hints at what was going on at the same time in Norway and Sweden (mentioned briefly in Chapter 5) and later, in the second half of the nineteenth and in the twentieth century, especially during the major Thor ‘surge’

in Nazi Germany. The latter subject, one of the key ones in the history of Thor's reception, is covered in Chapter 6, and the bibliography directs the reader to further studies of the German aspect; but the book would have benefitted from a comparably full treatment of continental Scandinavia. Arnold's analysis clearly shows that similarly-inspired nationalisms were boiling equally fiercely on all sides of the Baltic and the North Sea in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, indeed feeding off each other, with, for example, the Danish Ewald influenced by the German Klopstock. One could also wish for more space to be dedicated to Thor's fate in Iceland and Great Britain, although figures such as Matthew Arnold and Thomas Carlyle, whose connection to Hitler is pointed out, Asbjørnsen and Moe, and even Jón Sigurðsson do appear, and the notes indicate ample opportunities for further reading. Fuller treatment could also have been given to how the ideas about Thor and 'national patrimony' were faring outside the narrow circle of the cultural élite, whose thoughts are the main sources for the narrative of Chapters 4 to 6. The reader gets a tantalising glimpse of a wider perspective in the brief mention of the activities of N. S. F. Grundtvig as a mass educator, producing a Norse-myth-based curriculum (p. 113; similar efforts during Nazi times have recently been researched, e.g. in a paper by Michael Irlenbusch-Reynard, entitled 'Die deutschsprachigen Fassungen und Verarbeitungen der Jónsvíkinga saga von den 1920er bis zu den 1940er Jahren', in *Á austrvega. Saga and East Scandinavia. Preprint papers of the 14th International Saga Conference* (Uppsala, 2009), 420–28).

The limit placed by the publisher on the book's length seems to have been the culprit here; a longer second edition, in which some of these issues will, one hopes, be discussed in more detail, has been agreed upon, to appear at an as yet undecided date in the future. While English-speaking scholars are awaiting a second instalment of Martin Arnold's Thor story, German readers can now enjoy the first in a translation by Holger Kliemannel, entitled *Thor: Von der Edda bis Marvel* and published by Edition Roter Drache in 2012 (accompanied by 23 black & white illustrations).

Arnold's book concludes with the claim that, after the Thor-infused upheavals of the mid-twentieth century, 'the reception history of the Thunder god is, in any meaningful sense, at an end' (p. 160). It remains to be seen if that is indeed the case. To give one example: Russia, a country where the Nazi-wielded Thor's hammer once smote hard, is currently experiencing another period of nationalist fervour, and one is hardly surprised to find among Russian white supremacists a minor leader, who rose briefly to prominence during mass protests against the 2011 elections, whose *nom de guerre* is Thor. One is inclined to think this is nothing more than a 'prolonged echo', a decadent pretence rather than any real attempt at engineering another rebirth of the Thunder god, hardly worthy of a footnote in a book such as Arnold's; and yet, while a longer book would be welcome, it is to be hoped that Arnold's final claim stands.

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THOU FEARFUL GUEST. ADDRESSING THE PAST IN FOUR TALES IN FLATEYJARBÓK. By MERRILL KAPLAN. *Folklore Fellows' Communications* CXLVIII, 301. *Academia Scientiarum Fennica*. Helsinki, 2011. 236 pp. ISBN 978-951-41-1068-9.

The title of this volume expresses succinctly the topic under consideration: how four tales, presented close to one another in *Flateyjarbók*, in which an unnerving visitor appears with 'news' from the past at the courts of Kings Óláfr Tryggvason and Óláfr helgi, address the issue of how the pagan Nordic past is to be viewed from the enlightened post-Conversion perspective of *Flateyjarbók* (as seen through the eyes of the two kings). The tales in question are *Nornagests þáttir*, the Ögvaldsnes episode, 'Óðinn kom til Óláfs konungs með dul ok prettum', and *Tóka þáttir Tókasonar* (Kaplan notes that two of these tales do not have accepted *þáttir* names in Norse scholarship; and the inadequate and unequal treatment of these tales within scholarship is a *leitmotiv* of her study).

Kaplan's emphasis is upon these tales as 'irruptive': a 'guest' appears at court, hailing from some distant point in the past, causing a direct confrontation between past and present; as Kaplan notes, 'they would have helped the Christian Icelanders of the fourteenth century think about the conceptual problem they faced in remembering the pagan past and reusing the intellectual goods associated with it' (p. 16). Kaplan's treatment of her theme is perceptive and certainly productive in increasing our understanding of the workings of *Flateyjarbók*. The ingenuity of her interpretation may be said to crystallise around her discussion of just what a *gestr* is, which extends well beyond being a visiting 'guest'. Just a couple of the interesting points raised might be mentioned here, but a full reading of the many ramifications investigated is really a necessity to do justice to Kaplan's achievement. Clearly the *gestir* in these tales are no ordinary visitors, but preternaturally longaeval humans, or apparitions of the god (devil) Óðinn. The sense of unease is elucidated by Kaplan's consideration of what the Norwegian king's *gestir* were, as revealed by *Konungs skuggsjá* and other texts: more or less his secret police, feared 'guests' who would impose themselves on hosts to spy on them for the king's sake, but who were not really welcomed by the king either. As might be expected, another important aspect of the *gestr* is his Odinic character, which is present in different ways in all the tales. In this context, Odinic indicates demonic, and all the tales circle around the problem of how to salvage something from the pagan past while rejecting or overcoming the Odinic bearer of the tradition (in other words, its non-salvific origin). Yet the concept of *gestr* is taken still further, and onto a different level of interpretation. In a brilliant turn, textual interpolations are seen as 'guests': the four stories are, in a sense, interpolations or guests within the text of *Flateyjarbók*, just as the subject of each is a human guest that arrives at court. The analogy may not wholly work elsewhere, since there is a difference between a deliberate 'interpolation' and one undertaken by a scribe with no authorial warrant, yet the point is provocative and illuminates our understanding of the workings of medieval texts such as *Flateyjarbók*.

Many other matters that arise from these tales are dealt with in interesting and challenging ways. One example is the use of Eddic verse, of which *Nornagests*

bátrr offers a rare glimpse. Kaplan questions whether any reliance can be placed on the source as depicting anything historically true about Eddic performance, and goes on to emphasise what the performance means within its context: she convincingly argues that Eddic verse is intended to represent a form of speech adopted by legendary figures from the *fornöld*, and hence quoted verse gives direct access to this age (which is one more ancient than that of, for example, *Íslendingasögur*, where the use of skaldic verse functions in a similar manner—which has interesting implications for the way the two verse forms were conceived at the time of *Flateyjarbók*).

Kaplan devotes a notable amount of energy to railing against the inadequacies of the traditional philological approach to the tales in question, noting for example that they have generally been divorced from their context, have been subjected to an inquisition on their reliability as sources for pagan tradition, have been found wanting, and hence have been sidelined. She is, of course, right to emphasise that these tales must be read in their context with the aim of discovering how they work within their artistic framework, and uncovering what purpose they serve there (regardless of just how much actual paganism they preserve—which Kaplan, in so far as she considers the problem, regards as minimal). Kaplan is to be commended for the detailed study on just this topic that constitutes the present volume, but I would not feel quite so jaundiced myself about the apparent lack of awareness of the need to view things contextually within Norse studies (and certainly, the presentation of manuscript editions has moved on considerably from some of the treatments that she rightly finds worrying), though there is certainly a need for more studies of this type.

Towards the end of the book Kaplan discusses the wider historical context of the *Flateyjarbók* setting. Óláfr Tryggvason and Óláfr helgi were already well established in tradition as royal missionary figures (a sort of ‘John the Baptist’ and ‘Christ’ of the North), which would explain their being chosen as the interlocutors with the threatening past of paganism. This is fine, but her arguments over the context of *Flateyjarbók* itself are somewhat less convincing, and too short. Even if—and it is a fairly big if—the intended recipient of the volume was the namesake Óláfr, son of King Hákon and Margaret, which would establish some sort of personal connection with the earlier kings of the same name, we are not given any explanation of why the irruption of a threatening pagan past that needed to be dealt with in some way should be a current issue in either Iceland or Norway around 1400.

If I were to pick on general weaknesses, I would note that some of the discussion appears unnecessarily laboured, or tends to be repeated in different parts of the book, or is tangential, in a way which detracts from the clarity of the argument. To choose a slightly flippant example, a bit less on Starkaðr’s molar might have been welcome (ch. 4). There are also rather more minor mistakes than one would wish for; apart from quite a few general typos we find ‘Othere’ (*recte* Ohthere), ‘adtestio’ (*recte* adtestatio), ‘Widsþ’ consistently wrong with macron only on second i, and so forth.

Yet, over all, the book makes a substantial contribution to answering the questions of how we approach Norse sources, and how they actually worked, and

forces us to rethink how we assess the value of sources, as both historical and aesthetic documents.

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LES *BERSERKIR*. LES GUERRIERS-FAUVES DANS LA SCANDINAVIE ANCIENNE, DE L'ÂGE DE VENDEL AUX VIKINGS (VIE-XIE SIÈCLE). By VINCENT SAMSON. *Septentrion*. Villeneuve d'Ascq, 2011. 446 pp. ISBN 978-2-7574-0353-2.

Samson sets out to provide an up-to-date, holistic and interdisciplinary synthesis of the state of research on *berserkir*. No such work currently exists in print, so it is pleasing to see this book, which is set out thematically, each chapter dealing with a different aspect of research into *berserkir*. Despite Samson's intention of providing a fully interdisciplinary work, these aspects are predominantly literary, with the archaeological and epigraphical evidence reserved for the final chapter. The introductory material sets out Samson's stall clearly. He defines *berserkir* by their frenzy and by the wearing of animal skins, as is indicated by the subtitle of this book: *Les guerriers-fauves* 'wild warriors'. This shapes the interpretation in the rest of the book.

Chapter I is a literature review which provides a judicious assessment of the relative merits of the arguments put forward by scholars from the earliest work of Olaus Verelius to those of the present day. In particular, Samson's discussion on the opposing camps of von See, Kuhn, Güntert, Höfler and Weiser is a useful introduction to the topic of *berserkir* as members of a cultic group or *Männerbund*.

Chapter II gives a thorough account of attempts to provide an etymology of *berserkr* and carefully assesses the worth of each. Samson begins with the early-eighteenth-century etymologies based on ON *bardaga* and *yrkja* and progresses to the two etymologies that now vie for acceptance: *berr* or **beri/berr* + *serkr*, meaning respectively 'without armour' or 'wearing a bearskin'. Samson states a preference for the latter, citing the existence of composite forms like **hoss serkr* or *iárnserkr*, which means that the main philological arguments against **beri/berr* are not valid. He concludes that an etymology supporting the wearing of animal skins is preferable because it relates to the etymology of *úlfhedinn* in both form and function, which accords with his analysis of *berserkir* as animal-warriors.

Chapter III provides a detailed analysis of the poem *Haraldskvæði*, including its reconstruction by the Norwegian philologists Unger and Munch in 1847 from elements quoted in *Heimskringla*, *Snorra Edda*, *Flateyjarbók* and *Fagrskinna* (Munch and Unger, ed., *Oldnorsk læsebog med tilhørende glossarium* (Oslo, 1847)). Samson reviews how well the parts form a coherent whole and considers the extent to which we can trust this reconstruction. In discussing this, Samson discards von See's contention that Þorbjörn hornklofi invented the terms *berserkr*

and *úlfheðinn*. In doing so, he makes the case for an etymology and for a real category of Viking-Age warriors, who wore bearskins, although he defines them more by their fury than by their apparel.

Chapter IV is a short discussion of examples of *berserkir* in sagas with a focus on those set in Norway, reflecting Samson's suggestion that the *berserkr* was a feature of society more in Norway than in the other Scandinavian countries. The greatest attention here is given to the genealogy of Egill Skallagrímsson, showing how names such as Bjálfi ('fur, hide') may be evidence of the existence of ancestors who wore animal pelts and were thus *berserkir*. Drawing a connection with Kveld-Úlfr, chapter V covers the evidence for *berserkir* as lycanthropes and as members of ecstatic cults. This chapter concludes that lycanthropy or werewolfism in Scandinavian tradition is not reflected in the traditions about *berserkir*, because *berserkir* did not physically change shape, but instead adopted the savagery of animals as a mind-set that would carry them through battle. In the following chapter Samson discusses the relationship that *berserkir* had with Óðinn as shown in Snorri's writing and through the etymology of Óðinn's name. He also examines the history of the tradition of the warlord surrounded by a retinue of 'furious' warriors, the evidence for Indo-European traditions of age-set warriors and ecstatic practices, and how these might inform Viking-Age traditions.

Chapter VII focuses on the stereotyped roles of *berserkir* in the Icelandic sagas. Samson's analysis shows how the role of *berserkir* evolved from elite warriors to outlaws and then became associated with *blámenn*, giants and other monsters. He concludes the first part of this chapter with an examination of the virtuous or Christian *berserkr*, thus demonstrating the rehabilitation of the word. He does not discuss the extent to which these concepts were contemporaneous, nor does he consider whether the medieval Scandinavians had a more nuanced understanding of *berserkir*. Samson then examines how *berserkir* were depicted and includes discussion of their particular habits, such as shield-biting and invulnerability, before discussing the vocabulary of transformation. Samson concludes that literary representations of *berserkir* show clear links with beliefs both past and present, and that the roots of the pagan *berserkr* in Scandinavian religion, warrior-brotherhood and animal mimesis are clearly shown to persist until the first half of the eleventh century with the depiction of Þórir hundr, whom he discusses in chapter VIII. Samson's analysis of Þórir shows that he was the last of the pagan *berserkir* to be recorded.

In chapter IX Samson evaluates the archaeological and epigraphical evidence using animal skins as an indicator that *berserkir* are being depicted. The frequent presence of images of Óðinn on the same artefacts reinforces that connection and supports Snorri's statement about the association of *berserkir* with Óðinn. By making these connections Samson is able to link the literary *berserkr* with a tradition of wolfskin warriors that existed across the pre-Viking-Age Germanic world as represented on helmet plates and bracteates. The case he makes is not sufficiently explicit in the text, but is nevertheless convincing. The epigraphical evidence also relates to *úlfheðnar* rather than *berserkir*, relying on the link created by the statement in *Vatnsdæla saga* that *úlfheðnar* were a sub-set of *berserkir*.

The links are not well articulated initially, so it is difficult to see how this chapter relates to the previous ones until one has read further through it.

Overall this is a useful book. It sets out a detailed historiography of research into *berserker* and collects the different threads together in a way that permits easy examination of the themes. The over-emphasis on frenzy and lack of control is less useful. It indicates that Samson has presumed frenzy rather than questioning whether *berserksgangr* might be interpreted differently. The discussion of sagas lacks differentiation between genres and appears to consider all such literature as a homogeneous product capable of shedding consistent levels of light upon the subject. It would have been good to see more awareness of the generic differences, and analysis of how those differences might affect Samson's interpretations. Nevertheless, this book represents a solid contribution to this area of study and will be of interest to anyone interested in understanding the current state of knowledge about *berserker*.

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RÓMVERJA SAGA. Edited by ÞORBJÖRG HELGADÓTTIR. 2 vols. *Rit 77. Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum*. Reykjavík, 2010. I (Introduction) ccxx pp., 5 black-and-white facsimiles. II (Text) vii + 413 pp. ISBN 978-9979-654-11-7.

The Old Icelandic translations of Latin historiographical works about the ancient world were long regarded as poor relations among the great families of sagas. In relatively recent years, however, editions and studies of *Alexanders saga* and *Gyðinga saga* in particular have begun to redress this neglect and to show that careful analysis reveals much about thought and taste from the late twelfth through to the fourteenth centuries. Now along comes this excellent edition of *Rómverja saga*, almost twenty years in the making, and opens up the way to further study of the corpus.

There have been three earlier editions of the saga, that by Konráð Gíslason (*Fire og fyrretýve for en stor Deel førhen utrykte Prøver af oldnordisk Sprog og Literatur* (Copenhagen, 1860)), that by Rudolf Meissner (Berlin, 1910) and the facsimile edition by Jakob Benediktsson (*Catilina and Jugurtha by Sallust and Pharsalia by Lucan in Old Norse. Rómverjasaga. AM 595 a–b 4to* (Copenhagen, 1980)). Of these, the last two remain serviceable, indeed Þorbjörg makes enthusiastic though duly critical use of their introductions at relevant points of her own work, but they offer only the longer version of the saga, which is uniquely represented in MS AM 595 a–b 4to. Þorbjörg, like Konráð, edits not only the 595 text but also the shorter version, which in fact preserves more details of the Latin sources at some points, despite its abridgement, and thus indicates that the longer version cannot be the original text of the saga; the 595 text, furthermore, is fragmentary, with many leaves missing at the beginning and the end and with several large lacunae in between. The two versions are printed semi-diplomatically, one above the other, in the edition (vol. II), the basis for the shorter text being that preserved in MS AM 226 fol., which

appears to contain the whole of this version (I, p. lxxvi). The readings of the five other significant witnesses to the shorter version are collated in the *apparatus criticus* below the two main texts, all this being executed with meticulous care and precision.

Rómverja saga is perhaps the oddest of the Sagas of Antiquity inasmuch as it is largely comprised of two fairly close translations of prose works by Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum* and *Conjuratio Catilinae*, together with a much abridged paraphrase of Lucan's highly rhetorical epic poem, *Pharsalia*. No medieval manuscripts of these Latin works have been preserved in Iceland and it is impossible to know the exact state of the texts available to the translator(s); in furnishing her edition with Latin texts for the purposes of comparison, therefore, Þorbjörg has had to settle for approximate best fit on the basis of careful analysis. The transmission history of Sallust is complex, but Þorbjörg has identified the family of manuscripts that seems closest to the saga (I, pp. lxxvii–lxxx); she offers, at the foot of each page in the Sallust sections, the *textus receptus* as found in the Ernout edition (*Salluste: Catilina, Jugurtha, fragments des histoires*, 10th edition (Paris, 1974)) and notes the relevant variations shown in Ernout's *apparatus criticus*, with occasional readings from the Reynolds edition (*C. Sallvsti Crispi Catilina, Iugurtha, Historiarum Fragmenta Selecta, Appendix Sallustiana* (Oxford, 1991)) where these seemed significant. The case of the Lucan paraphrase is rather different because the translator clearly had access to a commentary, perhaps in the form of glosses, and has incorporated many remarks from this lost source. For the text of the poem itself, Þorbjörg has opted to quote the relevant lines from the Shackleton Bailey edition (*M. Annaei Lucani De Bello Civili libri X* (Stuttgart, 1988)), having identified four manuscripts in which the variant readings are close to what is found in the saga, whilst for the additions she notes that some of the commentary presented in Weber's edition of Lucan (*Marci Annaei Lucani Pharsalia*. 3 vols (Leipzig 1821–31)) corresponds to some of the saga prose. The relevant passages of Latin commentary, however, have not been included in the quoted source material, 'for the sake of clarity and to avoid cluttering the page with excessive detail' (I, p. lxxxii); this is surely a decision that is to be regretted (even though the Weber is available online) in view of the fact that Þorbjörg's edition otherwise provides within itself such a full basis for study.

In addition to the long sections corresponding to the three major sources, there are three shorter passages that present severe problems with regard to source analysis, which Þorbjörg has addressed with great determination. The first is the bridge between the two Sallust works: no single source for this is known but it relates at many points to details in *Pharsalia* and related *scholia*; Þorbjörg has accordingly printed individual lines and phrases from Lucan with passages from the commentary by Arnulf of Orleans and that found in MS Codex Berolinensis Nr. 34. The second is the link from the Sallust translations to the *Pharsalia* paraphrase: this includes a section that has often been regarded as the source for similar passages in *Veraldar saga*, *Clemens saga* and the world chronicle contained in MS AM 764 4to, but Þorbjörg argues that all these, including the passage in *Rómverja saga*, descend independently from a lost *summa historiae* (I, pp. lxxxvii–lxxxviii and cix–cxii); in order to convey an idea of what this lost text may have been like she prints all four

Old Icelandic passages in parallel columns in her Introduction (I, pp. lxxxix–cviii) whilst in the body of the edition she includes the 764 text again, even though it is not part of *Rómverja saga*, since the 595 version is fragmentary at this point, and she offers passages from several *accessus* (i.e. preambles) to Lucan, which, though definitely not the sources for the Old Icelandic text, go some way to indicating the nature of what was actually used. The same *accessus* are again pressed into service to underpin the final section of the saga, which relates events after those narrated in *Pharsalia*, although the *accessus* are again not the actual sources; other Latin texts that show some correspondences to parts of this section are extracted and discussed in the Introduction (I, pp. cxvii–cxxvi). Apart from these three linking or framing passages, mention should also be made of a brief section, on Romulus and Remus, inserted into AM 595 at ff. 29v and 30r but omitted by Meissner, the source for a part of this material being a chronicle by Martinus Oppaviensis.

As can be seen from the above, careful attention must be paid to the edition's Introduction if the relevance of texts printed as source material is to be properly understood in any particular case. Fortunately all the information is laid out in copious detail and with often dense but unhurried argumentation, the Introduction filling the first volume and running to some two hundred pages. The substantial responsibility for rendering all this into English has been discharged by Anthony Faulkes, as indicated in the editor's Preface and by the signature on p. cc but not noted on the title page.

Falling into three main sections, the Introduction deals systematically with the manuscripts, the sources and the Old Norse translation of the Latin texts. The section on manuscripts (I, pp. xiii–lxxvi) tackles the longer version of the saga first, as it is also likely to be the earlier, and it gives a physical description of AM 595 a–b 4to, stating that all but the inserted section mentioned above 'is taken to have been written by a single hand' (I, p. xix), which is then analysed with regard to palaeography and orthography divided up into consideration of vowels, consonants, abbreviations and some miscellaneous points of interest. At this juncture the analysis turns back to consider whether the supposed single hand may not after all have been several, as Meissner believed (I, pp. xxix–xxx)—and here it would have been helpful if Þorbjörg's own conclusion could have been announced more definitely. The issues of the inserted section are then discussed, after which Þorbjörg considers the probable date and provenance of the manuscript. Apart from the matter of the hands, and wherever the extent of the medieval material allows, much the same pattern of analysis is then applied to the significant manuscripts of the shorter and younger version, i.e. AM 226 fol., AM 225 fol. (a copy of 226, briefly dealt with) and the fragments Holm perg 24 4to, AM 598 III α 4to, AM 598 III β 4to and AM 598 III γ 4to; the relationships between these manuscripts, 595 and several datable documents that show some similarities are discussed. In conclusion a stemma for the shorter version is offered (I, pp. lxxvi).

The issues of the section on sources (I, pp. lxxvii–cxxvi) have already been dealt with above in connection with the edition itself. Here it remains to consider the Introduction's third section, on the translation (I, pp. cxxvi–cc), in which priority and the greatest weight are given to the longer version of the saga. The pattern

of analysis is set up in the discussion of the *Bellum Jugurthinum* translation and repeated for the renderings of *Conjuratio Catilinae* and *Pharsalia*: shortenings and omissions are investigated first, then speeches, then additions and amplifications; inaccuracies, deviations and misunderstandings are addressed next, followed by issues of vocabulary and grasp of style; finally aspects of grammar are considered. All this analysis works by means of representative examples rather than through exhaustive listings, but the examples are plentiful and the discussions leave the reader with a detailed understanding of the characteristics of each translation; in any case, although it may have been possible to produce hard statistics that are meaningful for the Sallust sections, the translations here being relatively close, this would hardly have been feasible for the Lucan paraphrase. Turning to the shorter version as represented in 226, Þorbjörg applies the same pattern of analysis, plus an extra section on descriptions of characters, to the beginning of the Jugurtha translation, which is missing from 595 and hence from the longer version, in order to 'gain an impression of whether the same method of translation applies' (I, p. clxiv); following the pattern for the last time, she then makes an overall three-way comparison between the text of 226 and those of 595 and the Latin originals in order to 'get some impression of the redactor's working method' (I, p. clxx). At the end of this long discussion of the translation, taking everything into consideration, the specific conclusions are far from sensational (I, pp. cxci–iv): the saga surely came into being in stages; the translator of the Jugurtha section seems to have been inexperienced, but the Catilina translation could easily be the work of the same man, now more practised in the art; the Lucan translation is different in some ways but similar in others and could be the work of a different man or the same one responding to a very different task. The mass of information presented in the course of the analysis, however, is very impressive and will be invaluable to any future scholars who may wish to extend the enquiry—for example, into the ways in which the translations respond aesthetically to the rhetorical figures and tropes of the Latin originals.

The Introduction ends with a delightful flurry of informed speculation or not quite certain inference: that *Rómverja saga* may have been produced in Abbot Jónsson's Þingeyrar (I, p. cxcv); that it may have become associated with Abbot Brandr Jónsson's *Alexanders saga* in Þykkvabær and been altered by the monks there (I, p. cxcviii); that the shorter versions of *Alexanders saga* and *Rómverja saga* may well have gone together from the first (I, p. cxcix); and that the shorter version of *Gyðinga saga* may well have accompanied those of *Alexanders saga* and *Rómverja saga* from the beginning, as it does in AM 226 fol., since this is more likely than that the saga was shortened at a later stage in order to fit into something like the 226 compilation (I, p. cc). In view of these thoughts, then, it is especially pleasing that Þorbjörg's splendid edition now joins excellent modern editions of *Alexanders saga* (2009) and *Gyðinga saga* (1995) so that these closely related works can be studied together, as they were in the Middle Ages.

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HÁKONAR SAGA HÁREKSSONAR. Edited by MARIANE OVERGAARD. *Editiones Arnarnæanæ* Series B, 32. *Museum Tusculanum Press*. Copenhagen, 2009. xii + 155 + 69 pp. ISBN 987-87-635-3125-2.

Hákonar saga Hárekssonar is an interesting, well-structured *þáttur*, which concerns the adventures of a young Norwegian at the Danish and English courts in the mid-eleventh century. Hákon inherits a vast fortune from his father, a powerful landowner, and squanders almost everything within two years. He promises his wife he will repair their fortune, and leaves home, having asked her to wait for him. Hákon travels to Denmark, where he sets about learning craft skills. His talents are prodigious: within three years, he has learnt the arts of ironmongery, silversmithing, goldsmithing, enamel work and stonecarving. He then secures work at the court of King Sveinn Úlfsson, where he stays for three years. Instead of money, he asks the king for a piece of advice as payment for each year's work. King Sveinn's advice is as follows: first, he should never trust a short man with a red beard; second, when in church, he should not leave before the mass is finished; third, when very angry, he should say three paternosters before he allows his anger to take over.

Under King Sveinn's auspices Hákon travels to the English court, where his superior craftsmanship shows up the work of the chief royal builder. The chief builder accuses Hákon of having been helped by trolls, and lures him into a wood early one morning. Some peasants have been hired to kill the first person they see in the wood. Hákon remembers King Sveinn's first piece of advice: he notices that the builder is short and red-headed, and is on his guard. As he rides into the woods, he hears a church bell ringing and enters the church. An elderly priest is inside, speaking the mass very slowly. Remembering King Sveinn's second command, Hákon patiently listens to the whole mass. In the meantime the chief builder has gone into the wood, expecting to find Hákon dead. He is the first person the peasants see, and is killed. Hákon returns to the court and finishes the building work, for which he is handsomely paid. He then returns home. When he arrives he finds his wife lying next to a young man. Hákon is furious, but remembers King Sveinn's third instruction. He recites three paternosters and then draws his sword, intending to kill the young man. At this point his wife wakes up and stops him: he was about to kill his own son.

The text is preserved in a longer and a shorter redaction. The longer version survives in incomplete fragments in three medieval manuscripts. None of these manuscripts preserves a complete text, and it has been necessary to stitch the pieces together, and supplement them with a later paper copy, which is also incomplete and error-strewn. Mariane Overgaard locates the longer version on stylistic grounds to fourteenth-century Iceland. The shorter version (of which there are two distinct textual traditions) is preserved only in paper manuscripts, and Mariane postulates a date not significantly before 1600 on linguistic grounds.

Mariane Overgaard's edition of *Hákonar saga Hárekssonar* represents the completion of work originally undertaken at the Arnarnæan Institute in the 1960s and 1970s by the Finnish scholar Mirjam Lanjala. After her death in 1994, her notes were passed to the Institute. They form the basis of the current book,

which as Overgaard makes clear, is very much an 'Arnarnagnæan Production'. The opening chapter—a study of the folkloristic elements in the saga—is entirely the work of Mirjam Lanjala; the editorial and critical work on the longer version of the saga has been completed by Mariane Overgaard and Jonna Louis-Jensen on the basis of notes by Lanjala; the edition of the shorter version of the saga is entirely the work of Mariane Overgaard, who also contributed a discussion of previous translations and editions of the saga.

The edition (pp. 1–69) is as careful and thorough as always in this series. Diplomatic texts of each of the two versions of the shorter redaction are presented, in parallel with a composite text of the longer redaction. These texts are contextualised with a very thorough discussion of the manuscript sources. The textual tradition is quite intricate, and Mariane Overgaard and Jonna Louis-Jensen have done a remarkable job of clarifying the complex relationships between the various versions which survive in well over fifty manuscripts. One minor regret is that the discussion tends not to focus on the reception of *Hákonar saga Hárekssonar* in relation to the other texts which are preserved alongside it in the various manuscripts.

Also presented is a transcription of a Latin translation of the longer redaction of the saga, which is preserved in MS de la Gardie XV in Uppsala University Library. Since the text of the longer redaction has been very poorly preserved, this translation is of great value as a witness to an earlier, complete, exemplar, as well as being an interesting early example of saga translation in its own right. The manuscript originally belonged to the Danish historian Stephanus Johannis Stephanius (1599–1650), and may be in his own hand. In a fascinating and wide-ranging discussion in her introduction (pp. 47*–54*), Mariane Overgaard examines the 'meget prætentios' style of the translation, which is highly learned and ornate, making extensive use of latinate rhetorical devices such as elegant variation, rhyme and anadiplosis. She asserts that the work is almost certainly that of one of the learned Icelanders studying in Copenhagen and in contact with Stephanus, who is likely to have initiated the translation since he did not read Icelandic. Mariane makes the tentative suggestion that the translator might have been Brynjólfur Sveinsson, who taught at the Cathedral School in Roskilde before becoming Bishop of Skálholt in 1639, and (as Mariane demonstrates) was well known to Stephanus. A stylistic comparison with known Latin writings of the bishop is necessary to authenticate this tantalising possibility.

Mirjam Lanjala's introduction, in Swedish, to the folkloristic aspects of the text and possible analogues to it in Icelandic and European literature is reproduced in full on pp. 1*–24*. This is a straightforward cataloguing of motifs, with cross-references to Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* (Bloomington, 1955–58) and Boberg's *Motif-Index of Early Icelandic Literature* (Copenhagen, 1966). Among the Icelandic analogues, Lanjala notes the fact that *Hervararsaga ok Heiðreks konungs* is often preserved alongside *Hákonar saga Hárekssonar* in the paper manuscripts, and presents a short account of the similarities and differences between the motifs employed by the two works. There is also an extensive discussion of the close parallels between the advice about the untrustworthiness of redheads offered by King Sveinn in *Hákonar saga Hárekssonar* and that offered

to the hero of the Latin poem *Ruodlieb* which was composed in Germany after 1050. Lanjala does not assert a direct relationship between the texts—indeed, her discussion of the prevalence of such ‘redhead-phobic’ material in medieval literature makes clear that a relationship is unlikely—but the discussion is interesting and, for the present (redheaded) reviewer at least, salutary. In general, though, it is fair to say that Lanjala’s introduction could seem rather old-fashioned to contemporary scholars, since it was written without the benefit of much recent theory and scholarship on the Icelandic folktale tradition.

Hákonar saga Hárekssonar is a vibrant and pleasing *þáttur*, which deserves to be more widely known. Its transmission casts interesting light on a number of important aspects of Danish–Icelandic literary culture, not least the contribution of this text to the history of saga translation. Mariane Overgaard and her collaborators have done us all a service in bringing the text to our attention in this volume, which represents a worthy addition to the *Editiones Arnarnagæanæ*.

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ALONG THE ORAL–WRITTEN CONTINUUM. TYPES OF TEXTS, RELATIONS, AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS. Edited by SLAVICA RANKOVIĆ with LEIDULF MELVE and ELSE MUNDAL. *Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy* 20. *Brepols*. Turnhout, 2010. vi + 488 pp. ISBN 978-2-503-53407-7.

This volume, the proceedings of the 2007 Bergen Centre for Medieval Studies conference of the same name, will be of direct interest to readers of *Saga-Book*: of its twenty high-quality articles, most are about medieval Scandinavia, and the six that are not bear closely on our understanding of the medieval Scandinavian world. Slavica Ranković’s editorial guiding hand, and her own contribution ‘The Oral-Written Continuum as a Space’, helpfully position this volume as working ‘to transcend the dichotomous understanding of the “oral” and the “written”’ (p. vii) by exploring the “‘rugged landscape” of the oral-literate continuum’ (pp. 17–18). Different contributors develop this mode of thinking to different degrees, but the volume’s overall achievement as a statement in this vein is considerable. The volume is divided into three sections: ‘Conceptualising the Continuum’; ‘Oral Texts and Textual Performances: Verbal Art along the Continuum’; and ‘Of Kings and Peasants: The Orality–Literacy Continuum and the Advent of Administrative Writing’. As these headings suggest, the collection is comprehensive enough to be representative of the state of the art in medieval Scandinavian orality/literacy studies, and parts of it afford valuable introductions to key issues and fields. By the same token, the volume’s omissions strike me as being fairly representative of areas of comparative neglect in medieval Scandinavian studies, emphasising spaces for new work.

I find it ironical that a collection so productively interested in upheavals in communicative media has been published in the conservative format of the heavy

hardback book, without so much as a searchable preview on books.google.com: one sympathises with Pope Urban II's lament that (notwithstanding the technological strides of the twelfth-century renaissance) 'written wills were not used in Denmark' (p. 430). The late John Miles Foley's opening salvo on 'Verbal Marketplaces and the Oral-Literate Continuum' uses the metaphor of verbal marketplaces to situate an 'oral Agora' alongside textual and electronic agoras to emphasise the complex and overlapping nature of these different technologies of communicative exchange, ending by emphasising the exciting possibilities of free-access electronic publishing. Likewise, Ranković's contribution brings *Íslendingasögur* and Serbian oral epics into carnivalesque collision not only with James Joyce's *Ulysses* but also with Wikipedia (where, indeed, more than a few references to this volume can now be found). But the URLs of projects, sources and resources flicker only hesitantly among the volume's footnotes; individual articles can, for the price of a year's student subscription to *Saga-Book*, be downloaded from Brepols's website, but as I leaf my way through, compiling this review, my fingers twitch reflexively for a comprehensive ctrl+f 'search' function.

The collection also emphasises that, while the old 'great divide' between the oral and the literary may be behind us, other divides are still alive and kicking. 'Orality', it would perhaps be fair to say, is the language of those contributors with 'literature' written on their department doors; 'literacy' the language of those with 'history' written on theirs. Thus Foley's agoras are, at least as he exemplifies them, predominantly agoras for poetry; meanwhile, Leidulf Melve's contribution to the conceptual pieces which open the volume, 'Mapping Public Debates along the Oral-Literate Continuum (1000–1300)'—an insightful exploration of the meaning and effects of textualisation across the Investiture Contest, the Becket Controversy, and the English Baronial Rebellion of 1258–65—is firmly concerned with law and governance. In the 'history/literacy' camp, the third section of the volume makes for a cohesive and helpful introduction to the growing swell of work on (to use Jan Ragnar Hagland's phrase) 'the growth of a literate mentality' in medieval Scandinavian politics, governance and, to a lesser extent, commerce. Particularly for readers not conversant with the Scandinavian languages, this section will be a useful supplement and corrective to Arnved Nedkvitne's *The Social Consequences of Literacy in Medieval Scandinavia* (Turnhout, 2004), with the clear and thorough contributions 'Administrative Literacy in Norway' (Sverre Bagge); 'On Evaluating "the Growth of a Literate Mentality" in Late Medieval Norway' (Jan Ragnar Hagland); 'The Role of the Swedish Lawman in the Spread of Lay Literacy' (Inger Larsson); and 'Using the Written Word in a Late Medieval Rural Society: The Case of Denmark' (Bjørn Poulsen).

Section 3 is completed by three contributions on literacy outside Scandinavia. Marco Mostert's 'The Early History of Written Culture in the Northern Netherlands' provides a comprehensive survey of a region whose integration into both the Viking-Age and the Hanseatic worlds makes it an important reference point for Scandinavianists, while Anna Adamska's "'Audire, intelligere, memorie commendare": Attitudes of the Rulers of Medieval Central Europe towards Written Texts' brings a valuable account of royal piety to bear on understand-

ing the reading practices of the Polish prince Przemysł I and Venceslas II of Bohemia and Poland. Finally, Theodore M. Andersson abets other recent work on multilingualism in the early medieval world with 'A Carolingian Pun and Charlemagne's Languages', in which he explores how Charlemagne might have experienced the emergence of the new standard 'correctness' of spoken Latin during his reign.

In the footnotes to Section 3, Michael Clanchy and his *From Memory to Written Record* (London, 3rd ed., 2012) have an almost Patristic prominence, reflecting Scandinavian historians' self-conscious efforts to catch up with the history he first provided for England in 1979. But medieval Scandinavia offers more exciting opportunities for reconceptualising distinctions between poetry and public life than Clanchy's dominance implies. This point does come through in some of the early medieval contributions in Section 2, particularly Kristel Zilmer's analysis of both the poetic and the pragmatic dimensions of 'Viking-Age Rune Stones in Scandinavia'. Zilmer's article sits well alongside Judith Jesch's and Joseph Harris's explorations of the influence of literacy on the mindsets of early skaldic poets, respectively 'The Once and Future King: History and Memory in Sigvatr's Poetry on Óláfr Haraldsson' and 'Old Norse Memorial Discourse between Orality and Literacy'. Harris's word *discourse* is well chosen: I wonder whether that term—capacious, yet also the facilitator of some of the twentieth century's most discerning philosophical and linguistic thought—might provide an 'agora' in which the diverse modes of utterance, performance and writing available to medieval Scandinavians might better be analysed together. Section 2 proceeds with insightful, often authoritative explorations of the literary side of the oral–literate continuum: Else Mundal's case for written texts as prompts rather than scripts for oral narration in 'How Did the Arrival of Writing Influence Old Norse Oral Culture?'; Judy Quinn's 'Liquid Knowledge: Traditional Conceptualisations of Learning in Eddic Poetry'; and Vésteinn Ólason's 'The Poetic Edda: Literature or Folklore?'. Bernt Øyvind Thorvaldsen's 'The Poetic Curse and Its Relatives' helpfully puts the idea of the 'oral–literate continuum' to the test by contrasting speech acts with their written representations. Jürg Glauser focuses on romance prologues to present 'Staging the Text: On the Development of a Consciousness of Writing in the Norwegian and Icelandic Literature of the Middle Ages' while Lucie Doležalová takes us to Continental Latin texts for her 'The Charm and Difficulty of a Fragment: Tracing Orality in *Cena Cypriani* and *Summarium Biblie*'. Åslaug Ommundsen introduces the Latin Norwegian 'St. Hallvard's Legend and Its Redactions': I had never heard of this work, but Ommundsen makes a good case for its importance as one of our earliest Norwegian texts.

Given both the conference's Norwegian location and the Anglo-American world's particular investment in Icelandic literature, it is natural that the volume features a preponderance of work on Western Scandinavia. Still, it remains striking that while Section 3 manages good coverage of administrative literacy in Norway, Denmark and Sweden, there remains a large body of later medieval literature from the medieval East Norse world which has so far been little studied, and is certainly under-exploited in the study of Continental Scandinavian literacy. The

surprisingly widespread copying of the Danish *Chronicle of Eiderstedt* gets an intriguing mention (p. 445), but later medieval East Norse also offers us romances, religious texts, political poems and more: by its silences, Ranković's collection emphasises the distance we still have to go to achieve a rounded view of medieval Scandinavia's oral–literate continuum.

This is a fine, well curated volume, which establishes a helpful milestone in the study of medieval Scandinavia's oral, written, and oral-written discourses.

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MODES OF AUTHORSHIP IN THE MIDDLE AGES. Edited by SLAVICA RANKOVIĆ. *Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies*. Toronto, 2012. 427 pp. ISBN 978-0-88844-822-4.

This large and handsome volume, stemming from a conference held at the University of Bergen in 2008, promises new theoretical perspectives on the origins of medieval literatures. In particular, it aims to map the relationship between communal and individual creativity or in Eliot's phrase, quoted several times by the editor, 'tradition and the individual talent'. The introduction refers to contemporary online projects characterised by shared authorship (we might think of Wikipedia, virtual worlds such as Second Life, Minecraft, MMORPGs, and so on). Contemporary 'networked creativity' both provides a reservoir of theoretical concepts—notably the meme, a fixture of internet culture—and, the editor hopes, will in turn be illuminated by comparison with the very different medieval material. This is an excitingly ambitious project. Does it come good on its promise?

Part One, rather oddly entitled 'Models of Authorship, Authoring of Models', sketches the 'wider theoretical context' of the volume. This context is largely that of the natural sciences, for after Atle Kittang's brief opening piece 'Authors, Authorship and Work', a Foucauldian tracing of models of authorship from classical Greece to deconstruction, the following two essays concern themselves with the intersections between biology and literary studies. Michael Drout considers 'The Medieval Author in Memetic Terms'. The term 'meme', coined by Richard Dawkins in the 1970s and now most closely associated with Daniel Dennett, denotes a unit of cultural reproduction analogous to the gene. 'Memetics' then posits the transfer from person to person of these units, which recombine within individual brains to produce variations, some more successful, and so more widely reproduced, than others. Via the meme concept, Drout seeks to combine Oral Theory, the post-structuralist interrogation of the metaphysics of presence and 'our common-sense, folk-psychological idea that authors exist in physical form' into a theory 'useful to scholars of the Middle Ages'. Given how little we tend to know about medieval authors, their physical existence seems distinctly *unuseful* as a datum. The utility of the author concept is rather the way it guarantees that the signs which make up the text are meaningful—a function for which no real-life author

need be identified. The revisionists at work on the author concept in neighbouring disciplines (cf., e.g., Zrinka Stahuljak et al. *Thinking through Chrétien de Troyes* (Cambridge, 2011)), would find themselves with little to deconstruct in medieval Iceland. And, as Drout admits, the models of authorship proposed by Oral Theory and post-structuralism are in fact rather compatible, yielding an author who is 'a node in a web of intertexts or discourses', whether these be oral or written, more or less traditional. Memetics in Drout's account ends up being descriptive (and at times reductively so) rather than explanatory—a problem addressed in his current research, referenced in a footnote, into where 'the actual memes reside'. Slavica and Milos Ranković present 'The Talent of the Distributed Author' as a parable about identical twins separated at birth and brought up in an oral and literate environment respectively. Like Drout, the Rankovići take off from the natural sciences (neuroscience and epigenetics), arguing that 'tradition as a whole . . . is distributed across time, space and individual minds, and yet has a mind of its own'. Initial resemblance to the Grimms' maxim *das Volk dichtet* is dispelled by the Rankovići's finely differentiated account of authorial agency, conceived of as a mode of resistance to traditional expectations, drawing on 'the complexity of the entire network'. Oral and literate authors, they suggest, are distinguished by different orientations towards novelty and the canon. The idea that the oral poet shuns novelty while the literate one desires it and experiences the canon as oppressive is not entirely new; the Rankovići, however, pay urgently-needed attention to the oral side in their fascinating account of novelty in Serbian epic poetry, and gesture in closing towards the untenability of the dichotomy.

Because of space limitations, the rest of this review will focus on the contributions most relevant to the interests of the readers of *Saga-Book*; Part Two, 'Medieval Authorship: Theories and Practices', containing seven interesting pieces on non-Norse topics ranging from the first person pronoun in the sermons of Meister Eckhart to the figure of the author in *Orlando furioso*, must unfortunately be passed over here.

Part Three consists of four essays on 'Modes of Authorship in Old Norse Literature' which cover at times similar material from illuminatingly different perspectives. Else Mundal's 'Modes of Authorship and Types of Text in Old Norse Culture' is a deft analysis of the construction of authorship in Old Norse textual culture, surveying transmission (anonymous *versus* named), titles and the words used to describe authorship in the Eddic, skaldic and saga corpora. Mundal pushes back against the received wisdom that the skaldic form's complexity guaranteed stable transmission of correctly attributed poems, suggesting that causation went the other way: stability 'came about precisely *because* [the skald] was looked upon as an author who had ownership of the art he had created'. She finds no single compelling reason why this was the case for skaldic poetry but not for Eddic, but one reason could be the relationship of the poem's speaker to the subject matter. While skalds recount their own opinions, impressions and memories, the speakers of Eddic poetry narrate 'twice-told tales', myths and legends already known to their audiences as part of a shared cultural memory. When these narratives appear in skaldic poetry, on the other hand, they are framed

via devices such as ekphrasis and *hjástælt* which subsume them to the skald's larger design, rather than being narrated in their own right. Gísli Sigurðsson's 'Poet, Singer of Tales, Storyteller, and Author' reminds us of the oral tradition behind and around the written texts passed down to us, which renders the modern term 'author' inappropriate for any genre of Old Norse literature except skaldic poetry (and even there he has his doubts). I was charmed by Gísli's image of the collective composition of *Njáls saga*, where an editor massages the contributions of a team of freelancers wielding wax tablets into their final form. Sverrir Tómasson's 'Author, Compiler and Scribe in Old Norse Literature' casts an expert eye on a number of Old Norse prologues, and discerns many parallels between Norse and Latin tradition as regards the role of the author. Bernt Øyvind Thorvaldsen's 'The Eddic Author' concludes that the formulae in *Prymskviða* cast doubt on its now-conventional late dating and draws attention to the similarities between the prose of *För Skírnis* and the Skírnir myth in the *Prose Edda*. The terms 'tradition', 'distribution' and 'creativity', in various combinations, do much work here and it is at times hard to see where the specificity of a term like 'traditional' lies, when it simultaneously denotes the formulae identified in *Prymskviða*, and both the verse and the prose of *För Skírnis*.

Part Four, 'Scribes, Redactors, Translators and Compilers as Authors', comprises five essays. Aidan Conti's lucid contribution, 'Scribes as Authors, Transmission as Composition', discusses copying in New-Philological terms, as a practice which yokes reading and writing and so has much to tell us about the construction of textual meaning in the course of reception. Its final part describes an empirical study in which eleven participants copied a number of short texts, demonstrating in their characteristic errors the role of 'reasonable interpretive reading' as a (particularly elusive) source of error. Jonas Wellendorf's 'Scriptorial Scruples' investigates *Reykjahólarbók*'s rendering of a scene from the *vita* of Gregory the Great in terms of the need 'to balance the competing requirements of communicating a message as effectively as possible and preserving the form in which it was drawn up as faithfully as possible'. Ingvil Brügger Budal's 'Visible Stratification in a Medieval Text' takes a critical position on the New Philology. She argues that *Strengleikar*'s status as a translation and its preservation in a single manuscript make 'Old Philological' procedures such as comparison with the Old French originals and the production of a synoptic edition appropriate—might 'New Philologists' concur? Her desire to explain *Strengleikar*'s divergent readings as the results of hypothesised misfortunes along a chain of lost manuscripts is where Old and New Philologists part company, however, and the issue of the subjective element in this supposedly scientific method, one of the major critiques levelled at traditional stemmatic philology, is not addressed here. Budal's point that the New Philology, like the old, is interested in textual filiation, but orients itself forwards rather than backwards in time, is exemplified in Emily Lethbridge's 'Authors and Anonymity, Texts and Their Contexts'. Lethbridge examines the sagas transmitted in *Eggersbók* (AM 556a–b 4to) in an attempt to clarify their 'processes of authorship', comparing paratextual features such as rubrics in later copies of the same sagas in

manuscripts from the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries and finding evidence of a 'collaborative, rewriting dynamic'. Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir's 'The Resourceful Scribe' meticulously details the differing interests and emphases of the eight (or perhaps nine) scribes of *Reynistaðarbók*; particularly interesting here are *Reynistaðarbók*'s intertextual references, which betray a negative view of collaborative authorship: 'some people say that error has been discovered in his [Origen's] writings, but some say evil men introduced these into his books'.

Part Five focuses on 'Arts and Material Culture'. It opens with Henrik von Achen's 'Image-Making Between Conventionality and Innovation', focusing on the painted decorations of medieval Norwegian churches. Von Achen discerns in their 'stylization'—a term which would have benefited from closer discussion or definition—both an orthodox theological message (the sign-like character of the created world in relation to the transcendent realm of God) and an expression of artistic individuality. Kristel Zilmer's 'Monumental Messages and the Voice of Individuality and Tradition' closes the volume on a characteristic note. The runestone, introduced as a 'category of authentic evidence that brings us into direct contact . . . with individuals'—and so apparently the polar opposite of the sagas discussed earlier in the volume—is deconstructed in the course of her essay into a collaborative, multiply-authored form (laser scanner analysis reveals that often even more people were involved in the production of runestones than the inscriptions state), which is 'shaped both by tradition and by individual expressions within this tradition'.

Tradition *and* the individual talent, then. Despite the editor's conviction that the dichotomies traditional/communal/oral vs. authored/individual/written are not accurate representations of medieval reality (cf. the earlier *Along the Oral-Written Continuum*, reviewed pp. 77–80 above), binary rhetoric haunts this otherwise strong collection, and at times weakens its conclusions. Is replacing 'either/or' with 'both/and', or with the notion of a continuum, really enough, or might a heuristic which does not present itself in binary form be a way forward? It is also a little disappointing that the intriguing theoretical models proposed in Part 1 hardly feature in the part of the book devoted to readings of texts. Notwithstanding the considerable interest of these readings, their approaches are rather traditional (even the New Philology, inaugurated in 1990, is no longer so very novel), and in the Rankovičs' exposition there is space for only one brief Old Norse example. Distributed authorship is certainly a promising model for the processes of transmission which frame and form the Old Norse corpus. Parallels could be drawn with another trend which has recently got some traction in our field, memory studies. Both offer the promise, and the risk, of an opening of literary studies to the sciences, and both must prove in the encounter with primary texts that, rather than merely providing new metaphors (as seems to be the case with memetics), they open our eyes to textual phenomena which we otherwise would not have seen.

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ALTISLÄNDISCHES LESEBUCH. AUSGEWÄHLTE TEXTE UND MINIMALWÖRTERBUCH DES ALTISLÄNDISCHEN. By ROBERT NEDOMA. *Universitätsverlag Winter*. Heidelberg, 2011. 291 pp. ISBN 978-3-8253-5951-5.

Robert Nedoma designed his *Altisländisches Lesebuch* as accompanying reader to his grammar of Old Norse, *Kleine Grammatik des Altisländischen*, published in 2010 in the same series. The *Lesebuch* consists of two parts, a compilation of texts of different genres of Old Norse literature (pp. 11–116) and a dictionary (*Minimalwörterbuch*) (pp. 117–291). The first part is illustrated with eleven photographs of prominent manuscripts and runic inscriptions.

The text section consists of 22 chapters, including a last chapter (*Übersichten und Listen*) with a short timetable stretching from the Viking Age to the end of the Icelandic Commonwealth, a map of Iceland, a list of abbreviations of a general kind, a list of common abbreviations for archives of Old Norse manuscripts (such as AM, GkS), and finally a list of the illustrations in the book. This final chapter of the section is rather heterogeneous both in terms of the assembly of the individual sections and in the selection of information in each section. The timetable lists fifteen dates, all relevant to the text excerpts in the preceding chapters, among them the settlement of Iceland, the reigns of Óláfr Tryggvason, Óláfr helgi and Haraldr harðráði, but also the death of Yngvarr víðförli and the pilgrimage of Jarl Rognvaldr. The map of Iceland displays a handful of locations, again related to the preceding texts. The compilation of texts follows an order from easy to difficult. The selection of texts included in the reader can—as is always the case—of course be debated. As Nedoma himself states in his introduction, the majority of texts are excerpts from sagas and Eddic poems; towards the end there are also runic inscriptions (from Gripsholm and Karlevi) and *Ragnarsdrápa* as examples of skaldic poetry. Pragmatic literature is completely omitted. Every chapter consists of a brief introduction ('Steckbrief', p. 7), the text excerpt(s) and a commentary. The introductions place the text within the history of Old Norse literature, provide information on the manuscript transmission, the characteristics of the edition used as source and the language of the excerpt (e.g. classical Old Norse, postclassical Old Norse). There are also recommendations for further reading, almost exclusively handbooks such as *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* or Rudolf Simek and Hermann Pálsson's *Lexikon der altnordischen Literatur* (2nd ed., Stuttgart, 2007), which makes the reader wonder how meaningful these references are.

The first chapter consists of four brief non-authentic texts, each about five lines long, being summaries of the Hansel and Gretel story, the settlement of Iceland, a description of a German TV show, and a joke, in reconstructed Old Norse. The second chapter presents slightly simplified passages of *Eiríks saga rauða*, each very short at two to three lines long, with paraphrases in German between the sentences, which makes the reading very confusing and unrewarding. Chapter 3 gives the *paternoster* in Old Norse according to the unnormalised edition of the *Icelandic Homily Book* with an interlinear translation indicating the phrase structure. This linguistic translation is not accompanied by any explanations, which makes it

difficult for untrained readers to understand. Furthermore, the reader wonders what to do with this chapter as the translation is already provided. The same applies to Chapter 4 on *Gautreks saga konungs*, which also provides a translation.

Chapters 5 to 7 give longer excerpts of *Heimskringla*, *Orkneyinga saga* and *Njáls saga*. The stanzas are presented with prose syntax and translations, but without any explanations of the kennings. From Chapter 7 onwards Nedoma has chosen to offer editions with variant apparatus. Again this instrument is not elucidated to the readers. Chapter 8 is on *Gísla saga Súrssonar* and begins with the first sentence of the saga in AM 556a 4to in diplomatic and normalised transcription and with a translation into German, again without introductory commentary. In Chapter 9 on *Snorra Edda* a fourth layer, the manuscript facsimile, is introduced. This juxtaposition of different types of editions is taken up at times throughout the rest of the book. Chapter 18, which is termed 'excursus', is especially devoted to this 'Problem der Textkonstitution, Interpretation und Übersetzung' (p. 96) and displays different editions and (German) translations of the same text excerpts (*Völuspá* and *Völundarkviða*).

The remaining chapters deal with *Erex saga*, *Íslendingabók*, *Íslendinga þáttur sǫgufróða* (being the first chapter with extended abbreviations marked in italics), *Völundarkviða* (with a full translation), *Atlakviða* (without translation), *Hamðismál*, *Hjálmarsmál*, *Völuspá*, and finally the already mentioned runic inscriptions and *Ragnarsdrápa* as the supreme discipline. The two chapters (19 and 20) on the runic inscriptions of Gripsholm and Karlevi follow a path similar to that of the preceding chapters on manuscript texts, displaying the text both in *futhark*, with transliteration and transcription, as well as in German translation.

The dictionary comprises 4000 entries and lists: according to Nedoma, the complete base vocabulary of Old Norse prose literature ('den gesamten Basiswortschatz der altisländischen Prosasprache', pp. 7–8). Nedoma includes all words necessary for the translation of the texts included in the reader, and beyond that, every frequent word in Old Norse, the criterion for inclusion being a frequency of more than eighty in the Old Norse sources according to the database of the *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose* (p. 117). As Nedoma states, the information collected in the dictionary draws primarily on the major dictionaries of Old Norse, but features also results of his own philological research (p. 119). The dictionary is followed by a separate index of names, subdivided into lists of names of individuals (humans, gods etc.), collectives, plants and animals, places and things.

Altisländisches Lesebuch is distinctly directed at German-speaking students of Old Norse. Text section, dictionary and the separate introductory grammar work without the need to consult further reference books, but the text collection is somewhat random, the excerpts often too short to give insight into the contents and stylistic characteristics of the selected texts. The decision to proceed gradually from normalised text without apparatus to critical editions of different kinds is praiseworthy. The book has to be given credit for making students of Old Norse aware of the different possibilities for editing and translating a text, as exemplified in Chapter 18. But it lacks detailed introductions to the individual units in order

to make these different processes understandable to readers who are beginners in the field. It could be a feasible tool in university teaching, but it does not work as self-teaching material. Overall, the presentation of information in this book could have been more instructive, the length and presentation of the different excerpts more balanced, and it could have given more guidance on the use of other reference books in the field.

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KOMMENTAR ZU DEN LIEDERN DER EDDA 7. HELDENLIEDER: ATLAKVIÐA IN GRÆNLENZKA, ATLAMÁL IN GRÆNLENZKO, FRÁ GUÐRÚNO, GUÐRÚNARHVÖT, HAMÐISMÁL. By KLAUS VON SEE, BEATRICE LA FARGE, SIMONE HORST and KATJA SCHULZ. *Winter*. Heidelberg, 2012. 1002 pp. ISBN 978-3-8253-5997-3.

This substantial volume is the seventh in the magisterial commentary on the *Poetic Edda* produced by a team of scholars at the Frankfurt Institut für Skandinavistik. The editors of this volume take care to acknowledge massive assistance from an array of scholars and students, and the financial and institutional support of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft and the University of Frankfurt in this extraordinary undertaking (p. 7). Thus far, four volumes have appeared on the heroic poems (Volumes 4–7) and two on the mythological poems (Volumes 2–3), and Volume 1 is currently being prepared, along with a companion volume containing a general introduction, bibliography, abbreviations list, and indexes of names, motifs and excurses. Some of the materials for the companion volume are available for download at the project website,¹ but they are continually being updated. The updating process could presumably continue after the publication of the companion volume, which, if this were to happen, would answer some questions about the commentary's longevity. For instance, the published commentaries mostly quote skaldic verse from Finnur Jónsson's text, only quoting the developing *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages* project where an edition was available at the time of production for each volume of commentary. The quotations of Eddic poetry are based on the Neckel–Kuhn edition of 1983, but the orthography is based on Neckel's 1936 edition. This decision points up the desperate need for a definitive edition of Eddic verse, but also draws attention to the danger that various elements of the commentary may soon be outdated or superseded. The use of normalised spelling would also have made the commentary more accessible.

Volume 7 broadly follows the structural pattern and principles of the earlier volumes, and this facilitates comparison between poems and mitigates the lack of concentrated attention to overarching generic and interpretative issues. After a list of abbreviations and general bibliography, followed in this volume only

¹ <http://www.skandinavistik.uni-frankfurt.de/edda/download/index.html>

by a separate bibliography for the specific texts included in Volume 7, each poem is presented separately with sections on the following issues: textual transmission, critical history, origins and afterlife, underlying concept, structure, poetic form, vocabulary and style, relationship to other texts, and finally dating. This last section is particularly problematic since it fails to give a proper sense of the critical controversy over the relative datings of Eddic texts, generally following the von See line on which poems are 'young' and which 'old'. Perhaps this subject will be treated at greater length in the companion volume. The text itself is presented stanza by stanza, arranged as prose and with a useful and fairly literal German translation immediately following. The editors then methodically and exhaustively present word-by-word and line-by-line commentary on the text, interrupted regularly by 'excurses' on particularly significant concepts or textual issues. The excurses in this volume cover the nature of the hearts of brave or cowardly men, the god Ullr, the 'Greenlandic' designations of *Atlakviða* and *Atlamál*, anthropomorphic beings in eagle form, the *dísir*, death by horse, elves, the severing of limbs, and immunity to iron weapons. The variation of text size and styles throughout is an attempt to guide the reader visually through the thicket of information provided in the commentary. That information is so valuable and plentiful that it seems churlish to complain about it, but it does sometimes make the commentary less accessible than one might hope. Essentially, to make the most of the volume the scholar or student must immerse themselves in the worldview and style of the Frankfurt School; non-specialists may well feel overwhelmed (or excluded) by the long strings of abbreviations and idiosyncratic, though consistent, use of italics, bold, inverted commas and different font sizes. Having said that, it is difficult to see how this could easily be remedied without massive increases in size and production costs.

All quibbles aside, each volume of the *Edda-Kommentar* provides an invaluable reference tool for any Norse scholar and the crucial point of departure for any postgraduate student contemplating research on Eddic verse, though the prohibitive price will probably restrict purchase of the series to the libraries of universities where Norse is regularly taught.

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EDDISCHE GÖTTER UND HELDEN. MILIEUS UND MEDIEN IHRER REZEPTION. Edited by KATJA SCHULZ. *Edda-Rezeption 2. Winter*. Heidelberg, 2011. 412pp. 16 colour plates. ISBN 978-3-8253-5935-5.

This volume is the successor to *Edda-Rezeption. Band 1: 'Sang an Aegir': Nordische Mythen um 1900*. Ed. Katja Schulz and Florian Heesch (Heidelberg, 2009), and like that volume it collects a variety of articles on Norse reception. As Schulz's introduction makes clear, over the last two centuries

Norse myth has become increasingly 'globalized', pervading nearly all the media and crossing various national and international boundaries (p. 7). Schulz briefly explains the nature of the two Eddas and outlines the contents of the essay collection and its origin in the 2009 conference of the same title, which also produced '*Sang an Aegir*'. Whilst the first volume concentrated on the nineteenth-century reception of Eddic myth, this second collection has a wider temporal and geographical scope; it still maintains a heavy emphasis on nineteenth-century topics but ranges right up to the early twenty-first century with the inclusion of essays on the media of the graphic novel, Young Adult literature, Black Metal and the (Brazilian) internet (p. 8). In this respect the volume negotiates complex and controversial territory, since the myths have been attractive to patriarchal and ideologically dubious political interests as well as providing material for more positively creative reworkings in visual culture, music, drama and literature.

Schulz emphasises one problem with the reception of Norse myth, which is that no single 'text' (or unified narrative) can be singled out, and no specific iconographical conventions of representation developed (p. 9). She sees Norse mythology as a sort of 'reservoir' from which artists and others select according to their own predilections, detaching the myths from their original contexts and combining them with other 'foreign' myths and materials (p. 10), and to an extent this is true, although the process is often not as mindless and haphazard as that might seem to imply. Schulz ends her introduction with a hint that more is to come, suggesting there is much more work to be done on the social context and on reception in film, computer games, Living History and other aspects of contemporary culture, such as gender. She remarks that the collection benefitted from much collaborative discussion and, this being so, it is odd that there is not more evidence of it in the essays themselves, which largely stand in isolation from one another. Schmitt's and Ferrari's essays on graphical novels and the work of Neil Gaiman are juxtaposed (with only the beautifully produced colour plates between them), but seem largely independent. The structure of the collection is also unclear, and Schulz leaves the principles of selection and order to the reader's imagination, but usefully provides English abstracts of the articles as an appendix for the benefit of those readers unfamiliar with German or those who have no time for anything other than the 'take-home message'. Separate bibliographies are given at the end of each article (a few gaps are observable in some), but the image references are collected in an appendix and the index is general. There are no noticeable problems with presentation or expression (except for a few minor slips in idiom, understandable when English is not the first language of either author or editor). The price (42,00 €) seems very reasonable, given the number of colour plates, and one hopes that further volumes on this topic will soon be forthcoming.

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SKALDEN. ISLÄNDISCHE DICHTER DES MITTELALTERS. By KLAUS VON SEE. *Winter*. Heidelberg, 2011. 76pp. ISBN 978-3-8253-5964-5.

With this reprint of von See's *Skaldendichtung: Eine Einführung*, originally published in 1980 in the now-defunct Artemis Einführungen series, a readable and thought-provoking introduction to skaldic poetry is once again available on the new book market. Although another reprint appears in the author's *Europa und der Norden im Mittelalter* (Heidelberg, 1999), it is there part of a large hardback and accompanied by a 12-page 'Nachtrag' recapitulating arguments from the periodical literature, both factors which reduce its attractiveness for students. This new reprint edition has some minor revisions to the text and omits the now-outdated bibliographical survey of the 1980 edition. Instead all bibliographical references are given in the running text, unfortunately in an abbreviated format which may be confusing for the beginner.

A foreword explains what this book is not: neither a literary history, nor a compendium of skald biographies, verse-forms or stanzas. Instead, *Skalden* is an essay in which von See introduces the reader to what he sees as the particular characteristics of skaldic verse, on the basis of about 25 example stanzas—a much smaller number than in Turville-Petre's or Frank's skaldic handbooks (E. O. G. Turville-Petre, *Scaldic Poetry* (Oxford, 1976); Roberta Frank, *Old Norse Court Poetry* (Ithaca, 1978)). Rather than attempting exhaustive coverage, then, it argues for a certain perspective on skaldic poetry: as the subtitle suggests, that of skalds as 'Icelandic poets of the Middle Ages'. The importance of viewing medieval Scandinavia in the wider context of the European Middle Ages is often emphasised in von See's work, and his approach to scholarly debates via the close reading of examples will also be familiar to readers of his other introductory handbooks, such as *Germanische Heldensage. Stoffe, Probleme, Methoden* (Frankfurt am Main, 1971). Both its clearly articulated argumentative positions and its light touch with forbiddingly technical scholarly debates make the book well-suited as a first introduction for students or the general reader—as long as they can read German—but it can be read with profit by anyone interested in Old Norse literary studies.

The book is divided into twelve short chapters, most of which include an analysis of one or more stanzas. Introductory remarks on the famous episode of Jarl Rǫgnvaldr's stay in 1151 with Ermengard, viscountess of Narbonne and patron of troubadours, conclude with a comparison of the skalds' obscurity with the troubadours' fame as Europe's first artistically self-confident vernacular poets: 'what is this poetry', von See asks, 'which is so little known today that almost all the honours it deserves instead accrue to troubadour poetry?'. The troubadours appear as a touchstone for obscure, artful vernacular lyric throughout the book, and in the penultimate chapter we return to Languedoc for a discussion of the forms and contexts of transmission of skaldic verse in the light of possible influence from troubadour traditions, the object of long-standing debates in the field. Von See, here as elsewhere, is a Heuslerian, unwilling to allow a communal oral layer to intrude between the individual creative acts of the skald and the saga-writer. Nonetheless, his closing insight, that in the transmission of skaldic verse 'it is hardly ever (or

never) a case of the oral transmission of authentic knowledge at some point reaching the safe harbour of stabilisation in writing, but rather a conscious “literarisation” of what is stored in the poems’ (a passage introduced into this edition of the book from his 1978–79 article ‘Mündliche Prosa und Skaldendichtung’, *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 11, 82–91), is surely on the right track, even if its tendency to assert rather than demonstrate may exasperate even those who agree with him.

Another recurring theme of von See’s presentation is the artificiality, anti-naturalism and non-pictorial qualities of the skaldic aesthetic. Quoting the negative verdicts, charged with Romantic prejudices in favour of expressiveness and naturalness, of a series of eminent twentieth-century German scholars (the list could easily be supplemented with Scandinavian and English names), he refers to the Austrian art historian Alois Riegl’s notion of *Kunstwollen*, a historically contingent creative impulse, such as finds expression both in convoluted, ‘unnatural’ skaldic syntax, and the Urnes-style animal interlace depicted on p. 45, in the book’s sole, regrettably pixellated, image. The idea of a link between skaldic style and Viking visual arts (first made, of course, by Hallvard Lie in the 1950s) has recently attracted interest again among runologists and art historians—an instance of the author’s keen eye for a fruitful topic. His suggestion that the present historical moment is unusually propitious for the appreciation of skaldic verse is also no less true thirty years on in our postmodern condition of citation, ironic repurposing and fragmentation.

Two chapters on the kenning, the first programmatically entitled ‘Conceptual association rather than pictorialism’, drive the point home with close readings of stanzas from Eyvindur skáldaspillir and Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld. These neatly demonstrate the priority in the skaldic poetic of the tension-filled juxtaposition, variation and contrast of different conceptual realms, or of fragments of mythic and legendary narrative, over the generation of imagery. The deliberately loose kenning definition adopted here is salutary in view of the tendency to demarcation disputes in skaldic studies. A half-stanza from Hallfreðr’s *Erfidrápa Óláfs Tryggvasonar*, discussed in depth as exemplary of the ‘enormous difficulties and uncertainties’ of skaldic research, illustrates just such a dispute, namely the well-known disagreement between Finnur Jónsson and E. A. Kock over the relative importance of ‘correct’ kennings and ‘normal’ word order—and much else besides. Mainly turning on the interpretation of a single syllable (*há-* in *háklif*), this chapter will provoke shudders of recognition in anyone who has ever tried to edit a skaldic stanza.

Further chapters discuss such fundamental matters as the difference between Eddic and skaldic poetry (von See acknowledges the impossibility of a hard-and-fast distinction but calls attention to the skaldic poetic’s ‘non-epic’ qualities, such as its embrace of the hypothetical mode, and the free-floating relation of the kenning to the content of the stanza), the etymology of the word *skald* (though recent work by Mats Malm and Judith Jesch on the social function of the skald calls into question some of what appears here, especially the links with *schelten* in the sense ‘scold’ (Mats Malm, ‘Skalds, runes, and voice’, *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia*, 6 (2010), 135–46; Judith Jesch, ‘Skaldic Verse, A

Case of Literacy avant la lettre?' *In Literacy in Medieval and Early Modern Scandinavian Culture*. Ed. P. Hermann (Odense, 2005) 187–210), the myth of the skaldic mead, the skald's role as court poet, and the impact of Christianisation. The selection of stanzas is biased towards the court poets of the tenth and eleventh centuries—such as Eyvindr, Hallfreðr, Sigvatr—with Christian poetry and, especially, the poetry transmitted in the Sagas of Icelanders rather underrepresented. The stanzas are printed in Old Norse, translated into German (accurately and literally) and in some cases provided with a diagram showing their clause structure, but readers wishing to work up a reading of a stanza are better served by Turville-Petre's and Frank's handbooks, with their annotated and glossed texts. The special virtue of von See's book is its clear presentation of positions in the scholarly debates over skaldic poetry in a form conducive to reading the book through. In this respect there is nothing really similar in English, although the sections on skaldic poetry in Jürg Glauser's recent *Skandinavische Literaturgeschichte* (Stuttgart/Weimar, 2006) are another German-language instance of this excellent genre.

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VIKINGERNES SYN PÅ MILITÆR OG SAMFUND. BELYST GENNEM SKJALDENES FYRSTEDIGTING. By RIKKE MALMROS. *Aarhus Universitetsforlag*. Aarhus, 2010. 383 pp. 3 illustrations, 5 tables. ISBN 978-87-7934-4976.

This book comes out like a fleet of mixed war-ships, all built for the same end but some older than others. After a foreword, effectively the first of two, Malmros presents the first chapter, an introduction which she wrote for the book. This gives an account of historical research, done mostly by Danish scholars, into the topic of the *leding*, or 'levy', from its earliest beginnings in 1756 to the author's arguments with Niels Lund. Until recent times, according to this historiography, it seems that the rational-philosophical, baronial or liberal-democratic sensibilities of the eighteenth to twentieth centuries hindered Danish historians from acknowledging, or even seeing, the actual as well as ideological power that Norse kings had over even the richest men of their realms. The corollary is that contemporary politics usually shape historians' views of their history. Malmros is aware of this, and despite the efficacy of this presentation, admits that it is still difficult to find out what historically a Scandinavian *leiðangr* was, or where versions of it may have been summoned, enacted or recorded. One difficulty arises in deciding how far established in law or faithfully carried out in practice the levies of the early Scandinavian kingdoms were; another in the fact that a levy has a binary role in which call-ups for the defence of the realm offset dedicated expeditions abroad, such as King Sveinn Forkbeard's fourth tour to England in 1013. The evidence suggests that domestic call-ups may have been organised earlier. There is a third difficulty in the terminology: the five

(actually eight) tenth- and eleventh-century skaldic contexts of the word *leiðangr* refer to Norway but not to Denmark or Sweden, lands in which the corresponding term, *lið*, or ‘company’, is somewhat less specific. Where the little word *lið* is concerned, Denmark offers it through a few skalds, Sweden through a larger number of runestones which commemorate Sveinn’s and other campaigns. Basing her argument on translated forms of all this evidence, Malmros concludes that the Scandinavian kings had power to organise levy systems for both defence and attack earlier than other historians have thought, and with the inclusion of peasants: in Norway, from at least the time of King Hákon the Good in the mid-tenth century; in Denmark, from the time of Haraldr Bluetooth a generation later. Lund, who has doubted that any coherent Danish levy system developed until 1160, in the reign of King Valdemar I (1157–82), is constantly cited as an antagonist, although a full battle with his work is avoided.

The title of Malmros’s second chapter, to all intents her second foreword, might be rendered as ‘introductory remarks on the levy and skaldic poems’ (*Indledende bemærkninger til leding og skjaldekvad*). It is brief, but long enough to give a few facts about Viking-Age shipwrecks recovered and corrections to a few errors in the following chapters. Like a pilot, it guides the main fleet out to sea. The next four chapters, which are the most substantial, have all been published before. To put their titles into English, there is first ‘The levy and skaldic poems’ (‘Leding og skjaldekvad’, *Aarbøger for nordisk oldkyndighed og historie*, 1985); then ‘Attitudes to society in heathen praise poetry’ (‘Den hedenske fyrstedigtningens samfundssyn’, *Historisk tidsskrift* 99, 1999); then ‘Royal power and the levy in Norway and Denmark in c.1100, as illustrated in early Christian praise poetry’ (‘Kongemagt og leding i Norge og Danmark omkring 1100 belyst ud fra den tidlige kristne fyrstedigtning’, *Historisk tidsskrift* 105, 2005); and finally, and inconclusively, ‘The source value of praise poetry: a discussion with Niels Lund’ (‘Fyrstedigtningens kildeværdi: en diskussion med Niels Lund’, *Historisk tidsskrift* 106, 2006). Five smaller chapters, following on in occasionally bumpy English, turn out to be condensed summaries of the five previous items, presented in the same order. The book finishes with two bibliographies and two indices. It was Malmros’s PhD thesis submitted to the University of Aarhus in 2010, and in terms of production values, Aarhus University Press has done a fine job.

In terms of evidence, however, the book’s case is hampered by its reliance on other scholars’ translations from the Icelandic and Latin primary sources. Finnur Jónsson’s old barebones summaries, reconditioned with the almost equally old syntactical scepticism of Ernst Albin Kock, appear to be the main source of Malmros’s translations of the relevant skaldic stanzas, although she optimistically directs us to the revision of *Skjaldedigtning B* which is currently arriving through the good offices of the project for ‘Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages’. Although Malmros cites the help of Peter Foote in the earlier stages, then of Diana Whaley (for syntactical clues to dating) and most recently of Katrina Attwood (for testing out translations from her skaldic evidence), she confines the necessary Icelandic words and phrases to italics in parentheses mostly in the main

text. This is a problem if Malmros is trying to establish the technical vocabulary for levies in the tenth and eleventh centuries. In the context of her more controversial case for early state formation, the stark absence of full-stanza originals for the work of Tindr Hallkelsson, Sighvatr Þórðarson, Markús Skeggjason and other skalds weakens the argument, especially in comparison with Whaley's more detailed work for the aforementioned skaldic editing project (*Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages II. Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 2*, ed. Kari Ellen Gade (Turnhout, 2009)). Perhaps, too, she could have taken further advice from skaldic specialists about the older poems. Passing weaknesses here include taking *Haraldskvæði* to be a genuine work of Þorbjörn hornklofi from the late ninth century, while excluding *Ynglingatal* (c.890) and *Háleygjatal* (c.985), partly because of their metre, as forgeries from the twelfth or thirteenth. Claus Krag (*Ynglingatal og Ynglingesaga: en studie i historiske kilder* (Oslo, 1991)) may have argued for the removal of *Ynglingatal* from the canon of Þjóðólfr of Hvinir, but that was to make the case for Norwegian–Danish rivalry over Vestfold in the twelfth century, with the wish taking a certain parental position over the thought. When scholars such as Edith Marold (*Kenningkunst. Ein Beitrag zu einer Poetik der germanischen Völker, neue Folge 80* (Berlin and New York, 1983)) and Bergsveinn Birgisson (*Inn í skaldens sinn. Kognitive, estetiske og historiske skatter i den norrøne skaldediktningen* (unpublished PhD thesis, Bergen, 2008)) use different textual criteria to confirm *Ynglingatal* as authentic, any historian should take note. These literary misjudgements are unfortunate in a work where Malmros's knowledge of ships and seafaring, some of it learned from her father Dr Richard Malmros, is impressive. Of particular abiding value is her demonstration that the skaldic poems refer to manoeuvrable warships probably of a standard 40 oars (the *skeið*), the prose narratives more fancifully to mixed fleets led by larger cog-like ships (the *búza* or *skúta*) which were truer of the thirteenth century. It is worth noting that Malmros's second foreword pays homage to Judith Jesch, with whom she communicated via the homepage of 'Havhingsten', online newsletter for the reconstructed Skuldelev 2 that in 2007–08 sailed from Denmark to Ireland and back again as the 'Sea-Stallion of Glendalough'. Jesch had already disputed Malmros's theory about the early strength of royal authority in her *Ships and Men in the Late Viking Age. The Vocabulary of Runic Inscriptions and Skaldic Verse* (Woodbridge, 2001). Yet this book, which appeared after the publication of Malmros's earlier articles, is referred to only in the bibliography here. In light of this, as of her decision not to re-engage properly with Lund in the same dispute, it seems that the book could have benefited from a revision, and that her fleet set sail too soon. The achievement of this book is to unite and contextualise four older essays, to promote them more widely to a non-Danish-speaking readership, but not to give them the refit they need.

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VIKINGS IN THE WEST. THE LEGEND OF RAGNARR LOÐBRÓK AND HIS SONS. By ELIZABETH ASHMAN ROWE. *Studia Mediaevalia Septentrionalia* 18. Verlag Fassbaender. Vienna, 2012. 316 pp. ISBN 978-3-902575-42-5.

As this book takes fundamental issue with my own work on Ragnarr loðbrók, let me say straight away that I have read it with great interest, enjoyment, and a gratitude that I shall explain in my final paragraph. It is engagingly written and clearly set out, its long first chapter giving an account in chronological order, from the ninth to the thirteenth century, of the sources (mainly historiographical) relating in one way or another to the legendary figures of Ragnarr loðbrók and his sons, and its second chapter placing the historical antecedents of these figures in the context of ninth-century Viking history (Rowe prefers the term 'antecedent' to 'prototype', p. 13, n. 7). In the third chapter Rowe gives her view of how these antecedents developed from historical figures into ones of legend, and in the last three chapters breaks new ground by analysing in detail references to Ragnarr loðbrók and his sons in Icelandic writings of the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. A Conclusion, a seventeen-page bibliography and an Index follow. There are some omissions: the Scandinavian ballad traditions of Ragnarr loðbrók are mentioned, as far as I can find, only once (on p. 155), and other omissions, most strikingly of skaldic poetry relating to Ragnarr loðbrók (*Ragnarsdrápa*, *Háttalykill*, *Krákumál*) are explained in the Preface (pp. 9–10). In general, though, the book's coverage is wide and authoritative.

I can best pay tribute to this book by discussing three of its arguments with which I disagree. These have to do with the nickname *loðbrók*, the historicity of Ragnarr and his sons, and the idea of a lost *Ragnars saga* underlying *Ragnarssona þáttur*.

According to the Icelandic *Ragnars saga*, dating from the second half of the thirteenth century, Ragnarr arranges for the making of some hairy trousers (*loð-brækr*, pl. of *loðbrók*, f. sg.) and a fur cloak (*loðkápa*), has them boiled in pitch, and wears them for protection in vanquishing a monstrous serpent. He is subsequently referred to (once) in the saga as 'Ragnarr loðbrók'. Rowe notes that Reginheri, a historical antecedent of Ragnarr named in the contemporary *Annales Xantenses* as the leader of the 845 Viking attack on Paris, is stated in those annals to have died in that year of an affliction (*clade*) described as dysentery (*dysenteria*) in the anonymous *Translatio Sancti Germani*, written very soon afterwards (Rowe, pp. 21–32). With more help from these and other sources than I have space to indicate here, Rowe argues that the faeces-stained state to which the dysentery is likely to have reduced Reginheri's nether garments gave rise not only to the notion of Ragnarr's clothes being boiled in pitch, but also to the nickname *loðbrók* (pp. 165–66). I can accept the first part of this argument, but not the second. I simply do not see how a nickname meaning 'hairy trousers' or 'shaggy breeches' (cf. p. 7) could have arisen from the notion of faeces-stained trouserwear. The element *loð-* must surely be related to the adjective *loðinn* and refer in some way to hair, wool or grass. My own explanation, summarised by Rowe on pp. 155–57, is that the nickname derives from a misremembering of the name *Loðbróka* which occurs, as Rowe seems to agree, in the genitive form *Loðbróku* in one of the verses

preserved in the fullest version of *Ragnars saga*, in Ny kgl. saml. 1824b 4to. Since *bróka* is recorded as a poetic term for 'woman' (*kona*), I have argued that *Loðbróka* is a variant of the goddess-name *Loðkona* underlying the Swedish place-name *Locknevi* (attested in the form *Lodkonuvi*, i.e. *Loðkonuvé*) and probably meaning 'woman with luxuriant hair' or 'woman in a grass costume': the name not just of a goddess, but also of a woman associated with her cult. In course of time, I suggest, the weak feminine proper noun *Loðbróka* came under the influence of strong feminine common nouns ending in *-brók* (such as *hábrók* 'High-and-mighty', *langbrók* 'Longshanks') that could be applied to either men or women as nicknames, and the strong form *loðbrók* was thought to be an appropriate nickname for a man with hairy legs or leggings. That a woman's name was originally in question is suggested not just by the weak genitive form *-bróku* attested in 1824b (where it occurs in the phrase *synir Loðbróku* 'sons of *Loðbróka*') but also by the fact that, in a mid-twelfth-century runic inscription (now numbered 23) in Maeshowe, Orkney, the phrase *synir hennar* 'her sons' occurs, with clear reference to one *Loðbrók* (referred to there in the strong genitive form *Loðbrókar*) (see M. P. Barnes, *The runic inscriptions of Maeshowe, Orkney* (1994), 178–86). Rowe assumes that the form *hennar* is due to the feminine gender of the noun *Loðbrók*, rather than to the femininity of its referent. Mine is a complicated argument, but one which at all stages takes careful account of the meanings of the words and word-elements involved.

The second point on which I would question Rowe has to do with the historicity, or otherwise, of Ragnarr loðbrók and his sons as portrayed in Scandinavian tradition. Could Reginheri, active in 845, have had sons with names corresponding to those of the sons attributed to him in the tradition? And did 'Ragnarr loðbrók' exist, or does the combination of names (occurring for the first time in Ari's *Íslendingabók*, written between 1120 and 1133) reflect more than one person? To simplify somewhat, the sons attributed to Ragnarr who are in question here are Ívarr, Björn and Sigurðr, referred to in *Ragnars saga*, and in the account by Saxo Grammaticus in his *Gesta Danorum* (Book IX, early thirteenth century) of Regnerus (nicknamed Lothbrog); and Ubbo, referred to only in Saxo's account. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for 878 speaks of one Inwære (cf. Ívarr) as having a brother named Healfdene and another, unnamed brother whom there is reason to identify with Hubba/Ubba (cf. Ubbo), named not in contemporary sources but in the late-tenth-century *Passio Sancti Eadmundi* by Abbo of Fleury and in the mid- to late-eleventh-century *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*. The Healfdene of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, who has no counterpart in Scandinavian traditions of Ragnarr loðbrók, may be identified with one Albann, killed in Ireland according to the *Annals of Ulster* in 877. Rowe seems to agree with me thus far (pp. 145–46), and to accept that Inwære and Healfdene (p. 161), and with some caution (H)ubba also (p. 53), were brothers. Here we part company. The twelfth-century Irish *Cogadh Gáedel re Gallaib* hints that the father of Albann, killed in Ireland in 877, was named *Ragnall*. (Rowe does not mention this, though she notes correctly in another context, p. 59, that this name, albeit similar to the name *Ragnarr*, does not derive from it.) If the *Cogadh* may be trusted, we have evidence that the

brothers Albann/Healfdene and Inwære (cf. Ívarr), as well as Ubba (cf. Ubbo), arguably a third brother, were sons of someone called *Ragnall* (assuming that by 'brothers' is meant sons of at least the same father). Furthermore, Healfdene, a brother of Inwære according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, may be identified with one Halbdeni, mentioned as a brother of the Danish king Sigifridus (cf. Sigurðr) in the *Annales Fuldenses* for 873, and as himself ruling in Denmark in that year, in which Healfdene is not mentioned in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and may be assumed to have been absent from England. This gives us four brothers, Healfdene (=Albann, Halbdeni), Inwære, Ubba and Sigifridus, sons of a father remembered in Ireland as Ragnall. It may now be noted that William of Jumièges, in his *Gesta Normannorum ducum* (1070), mentions one Bier (cf. Björn) as a son of Lotroc(us) (*Lotroci regis filio*); this seems to be a form of the word *loðbrók*, and, if so, its first recorded instance. Leaving aside the later Scandinavian tradition, we would have no reason to assume that this Bier was related to the four brothers just mentioned, were it not that Adam of Bremen, in his *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum* (c.1076), writing with considerable knowledge of Scandinavian affairs (cf. Rowe, p. 69) and, as I believe, independently of William of Jumièges, mentions one Inguar (cf. Inwære, Ívarr) as a son of Lodparch(us) (*Inguar, filius Lodparchi*), a name which also seems to correspond to *loðbrók*, if not quite so closely as the name of Bier's father in William's account. If Adam's Inguar may be identified with the Inwære of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, and if his Lodparchus may be identified with William's Lotrocus, we may assume the existence of five brothers: Healfdene (not mentioned in the Scandinavian tradition), Inwære, Ubbe, Sigifridus, and Bier, these last four corresponding to the Ívarr, Ubbo, Sigurðr, and Björn of *Ragnars saga* and Saxo's account. The names of Healfdene's (Albann's) father Ragnall and of Bier's and Inwære's (Inguar's) father Lotrocus/Lodparchus might well suggest that all five of them were sons of someone named Ragnarr loðbrók, or something like it. (I have in fact argued, in an article which Rowe seems not to have used (in *Reflections on Old Norse myths*, ed. Pernille Hermann et al. (2007), 53–73) that the names point to a married couple, Ragnarr and Loðbróka, who were the parents of these five brothers, but acceptance of this view is not a requirement of my present argument).

My argument as summarised so far is, of course, highly tentative, involving a good many assumptions. I believe, however, as Rowe acknowledges, that one should try to find 'as much of a historical basis as possible' (p. 150), for accounts such as those given in *Ragnars saga* and by Saxo before dismissing them as total fantasy (see Patrick Wormald's remarks in *The Vikings*, ed. R. T. Farrell (1982), 130–31), and the argument just summarised is as conscientious an attempt to do so in this case as I can manage. Turning now to Rowe's arguments, I have already noted that she fails to mention the *Cogadh Gáedel re Gallaib*'s implication that Albann's father was named Ragnall. While accepting the identification of Albann with Healfdene, she is sceptical of the identification of Albann/Healfdene with Halbdeni, mentioned as a brother of the Danish king Sigifridus in the *Annales Fuldenses* for 873, on the grounds that Halbdeni, presented there as ruling in Denmark apparently at the same time as his brother, would have been reluctant

to lose power in Denmark by spending as much time in England as Healfdene did (Rowe, pp. 143–44). If this identification is rejected, the basis for including Sigifridus among the brothers is lost. I suspect that it may be defended, however (and Rowe is not altogether whole-hearted in her rejection of it, pp. 143, 161), in the light of the implications of Rowe's remark on p. 135 that 'the activities of the Vikings in Ireland, in England, and on the Continent were complementary aspects of a single phenomenon'; if so, the appearance of the same Viking leader in all three locations, provided that the dates fit (as they do in this case) should cause no great surprise. More decisively, Rowe rejects the evidence of Adam of Bremen. She notes that Adam's spelling of *Lodparchi* seems to reflect a metathesised form of the element *-brók* (i.e. *-bork*) in the name *Loðbrók*, as does also the spelling *Lothburcus*, found in one redaction of William of Jumièges's *Gesta Normannorum ducum* (pp. 70–71, cf. p. 169). As a source for his information about Inguar, filius Lodparchi, Adam refers to the *Gesta Francorum*, a work generally thought to be lost, but identified by Rowe as William's *Gesta Normannorum ducum*. According to Rowe, Adam derived the name *Lodparchus* from the redaction of William's *Gesta* that spells the name *Lothburcus*, and made it the name of Inguar's father in imitation of William's use of it for Bier's father. In other words, Adam's information about Inguar's parentage is spurious. As will be evident, if this view is accepted, the basis for including Bier among the brothers is lost, since his inclusion among them depends on the assumption that Adam is writing independently of William, and with some genuine knowledge of Inwære/Inguar's parentage. Acceptance of Rowe's view (which makes Sigifridus an unlikely member of the fraternity, as shown above) would also mean that the three brothers Inwære, Healfdene and Ubba could no longer be thought of as having had a parent named or nicknamed *Loðbrók*; Bier's father might indeed have been so named, historically (though Rowe does not think so, pp. 166–67, 172, 174), but there would be no reason to assume that Bier was a brother of these three.

I would counter Rowe's argument with regard to Adam of Bremen as follows: first, it is by no means certain that the *Gesta Francorum* referred to by Adam is William of Jumièges's *Gesta Normannorum ducum*; there is, as far as I can see, no solid evidence that Adam knew this work, which is not listed among his sources by either his editor (W. Trillmich in R. Buchner, ed., *Ausgewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters* 11 (Darmstadt, 1961), 147–50) or his English translator (F. J. Tschan, trans., *Adam of Bremen. History of the Archbishops of Hamburg–Bremen* (New York, 1959), xvi–xx). But more importantly, even if he did know it, he cannot, it seems to me, have known the redaction in which the spelling *Lothburcus* appears. This spelling, as Marx's edition shows, appears in the manuscript designated B1 (Oxford, Magdalen College 73) (*Guillaume de Jumièges: Gesta Normannorum ducum*, ed. J. Marx (Rouen–Paris, 1914), 6). As van Houts shows in her more recent edition, this manuscript is based on redaction α , which was most probably written in 1096–1100 (*The Gesta Normannorum Ducum of William of Jumièges*, ed. and trans. Elisabeth M. C. van Houts, 2 vols (Oxford, 1992–95), I lx–lxv, cxxiii–iv). This was well after Adam's death (between 1081 and 1085, see Rowe, p. 68). The metathesised forms are most likely to have arisen

coincidentally as a result of uncertainty on the part of scribes about words with which they were not readily familiar. While the forms are thus not significant in the way Rowe suggests, it is of considerable interest that she should draw attention to them, since there is a comparable instance of metathesis in the part of MS Ny kgl. saml. 1824b 4to dealing with Ragnarr loðbrók. Ragnarr's nickname *loðbrók* occurs three times in this manuscript: twice in the genitive, 'loðbrokar' (once in the title of *Ragnars saga*, fol. 51r, and once in the saga prose, fol. 56r) and once in the accusative, in stanza 1, line 8, of *Krákumál*, fol. 79r, where it has the form 'loðbork' (See *Völsunga saga ok Ragnars saga loðbrókar*. Ed. M. Olsen (Copenhagen, 1906–08), 111, 122, ll. 15–16) and *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning, A: tekst efter håndskrifterne*. Ed. Finnur Jónsson, 2 vols (1912–15), I, 641).

I admit that my argument for five brothers, summarised above, is something of a card castle, but I do not believe that it has collapsed yet, or that Rowe has shaken it.

Thirdly and finally, I would question Rowe's scotching of the lost version of *Ragnars saga* that has been thought by some, notably Bjarni Guðnason, to lie in the background of *Ragnarssona þáttr*, probably composed by Haukr Erlendsson (d. 1334) and preserved in his hand in the early fourteenth-century *Hauksbók* (Bjarni Guðnason. 'Gerðir og ritþróun Ragnars sögu loðbrókar'. In *Einarsbók. Afmæloiskveðja til Einars Ól. Sveinssonar* (Reykjavík, 1969), 28–37; *Íslenzk fornrit XXXIV* (1982), xlv–viii). In rather the same way as Rowe seeks to tidy up Adam's sources by identifying the supposedly lost *Gesta Francorum* as William's *Gesta Normannorum* (leaving, as I have indicated, a distinctly untidy historical background), so does she seek to identify the 'saga of King Ragnarr' (*sögu Ragnars konungs*) referred to in *Ragnarssona þáttr* and thought to be lost, as the *Ragnars saga* surviving in 1824b (*Hauksbók* (1892–96), 458, ll. 29–30). It is clear that the two main sources of the part of the *þáttr* that is relevant here (the part dealing with Ragnarr and his sons, up to their revenge for his death, see *Íslenzk fornrit XXXIV* (1982), xlv–vii) are *Skjöldunga saga* and a version of *Ragnars saga*. Exactly what in the *þáttr* derives from which of these sources is hard to say, however, since *Skjöldunga saga* (dating from c.1200, see pp. 191–93) is itself no longer extant, though a Latin version of it survives, made by Arngrímur Jónsson (1568–1648), and it is not clear how closely this version reflects its original. Rowe's view is that the *þáttr* is an attempt to 'improve' the *Ragnars saga* extant in 1824b, partly by shortening it and partly by aligning it with *Skjöldunga saga* (p. 229). This presumably means that differences between the *þáttr* and the 1824b text of *Ragnars saga* are to be explained as a result either of influence from *Skjöldunga saga* on the *þáttr* or of the *þáttr*'s shortening of what is conveyed in 1824b. If we may accept Bjarni Guðnason's view in his *Um Skjöldungasögu* (Reykjavík, 1963, 9–141, 308–14) that Arngrímur in his Latin version of *Skjöldunga saga* did not significantly shorten his original, it would appear, from the extract from Arngrímur's text quoted by Rowe (p. 193), that the episode of Ragnarr winning Þóra to wife as a result of slaying a monstrous serpent received very much briefer treatment in *Skjöldunga saga* (hardly more than what has just been indicated) than in either *Ragnarssona þáttr* or the 1824b text of *Ragnars saga*. If the Latin text is truly representative of *Skjöldunga saga* here, this means that, in this episode at least, significant differences between

the *þátrr* and 1824b (such as those in the details of the serpent fight, listed by me in *Gripla* I, 46–47) cannot easily be explained as the result of importation into the *þátrr* from *Skjöldunga saga* ('The extant Icelandic manifestations of Ragnars saga loðbrókar'. *Gripla* I (1975), 43–75). Nor can they all be explained as a result of shortening: the story as told in the *þátrr* is not just shorter than the story in 1824b, it is also different, and even gives details not supplied in 1824b: the serpent given to Þóra by her father in the *þátrr* is a morning-gift (*morgingjof*) and not, as in 1824b, one of his daily presents to her, and in the *þátrr* the serpent rises up and breathes poison onto Ragnarr, but does neither in 1824b. These details, together with the *þátrr*'s reference to the saga of King Ragnarr, noted above, seem to me to point to a version of *Ragnars saga* different from that which survives in 1824b, and to suggest that one should be cautious before rejecting the idea of a lost *Ragnars saga* underlying *Ragnarssona þátrr*.

As for my reasons for reading this book with gratitude, I am grateful to the author for her kind words in the Preface about my work on the Ragnarr legend, and for the care and accuracy with which, in the course of the book, she has represented my arguments, sometimes making them seem more cogent and coherent than when they were published. I am also grateful for the politeness with which she discusses views of mine with which she plainly disagrees: most strongly, as far as I can see, on p. 102, where she describes one of my arguments (not discussed here) as 'complicated and implausible'. I can live with that, happily (though not complacently!), and would emphasise in conclusion my gratitude and admiration for this important book.

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AF FORNUM LÖGUM OG SÖGUM. FJÓRAR RITGERÐIR UM FORNÍSLenska SÖGU. By SVEINBJÖRN RAFNSSON. *Ritsafn sagnfræðistofnunar* 42. Háskólaútgáfan. Reykjavík, 2011. 187 pp. ISBN 978-9979-54-914-7.

As the subtitle of this volume indicates, it brings together four (previously unpublished) essays on medieval Icelandic law and sagas. The book is structured on the basis of two substantial essays, each of which comprises a separate section, *Afforum lögum* and *Afforum sögum* respectively, and each of which is supplemented with a shorter piece on a related theme.

Sveinbjörn Rafnsson's revisionist treatment of medieval Icelandic law is well known to students in the field. The publication of his equally revisionist dissertation on *Landnámabók* sparked discussion immediately after its appearance in 1974 (*Studier i Landnámabók. Kritiska bidrag till den isländska fristatens historia* (Lund); reviewed in *Saga-Book* XIX:2–3 (1975–76), 311–18). Despite Sveinbjörn's strong and continuous presence in the field of legal studies, however, his study on the rise of political historiography in medieval Iceland has, it seems, been granted rather little attention by literary scholars and historians alike

(although it was published as a monograph, entitled *Ólafs sögur Tryggvasonar: Um gerðir þeirra, heimildir og höfunda* (Reykjavík 2005, reviewed in *Saga-Book XXXI* (2007), 115–17). This is unfortunate since, regardless of how receptive one may be to its larger argument or methodological idiosyncrasies, it performs the useful service of sketching out many key issues with regard to the sources in question and their historical context and therefore ought to be of benefit to saga scholars in general and Danish and Norwegian historians in particular. The second main essay of the present volume should, for similar reasons, be of interest to historians of Viking-Age Norway and Denmark, at least to those concerned with source criticism. Its publication in this respected yet rather local series may render it too obscure to be picked up by many of them, however.

The weightiest piece in the volume is certainly its opening essay, a full 72-page analysis of the composition of the Christian Laws in Iceland (*Kristinréttur hinn forni*). Sveinbjörn works on the assumption that the Christian Laws, as originally introduced on the initiative of Bishop Gissur Ísleifsson in 1122–33, were primarily foreign church regulations adapted to an essentially native, and ancient, framework of law. The result was, in the author's phrase, 'eins konar blanda af heimaðlum, hálfheiðnum lagaviðhorfum annars vegar og tilskipunum og reglum (canones) um kirkjuna að sunnan hins vegar, þ.e. kristinréttir á norrænu' (p. 14) [a kind of blend of home-grown, half-heathen legal positions on the one hand, and orders and rules concerning the church from the south on the other, that is, Christian laws in Norse]. Furthermore, he argues that the extant and somewhat dissimilar redactions of the laws—which are preserved in eleven late-thirteenth-century and later (though mostly pre-1400) manuscripts—are stuffed with interpolations or additions of various origins, both foreign and native, some of which may even derive from local Christian Laws more authentic than those originally sanctioned by Gissur in the early twelfth century. The bulk of the study is a detailed philological analysis in which interpolations are systematically identified and their origins and the logic of their inclusion explained as far as possible.

The historical framework that guides much of Sveinbjörn's interpretation of the texts is Bishop Gissur's alignment with the pro-papal archbishopric in Lund *vis-à-vis* the pro-imperial archbishopric in Hamburg–Bremen. This was in the age of the Investiture Controversy, which shaped church politics down to the local level. At the same time, Sveinbjörn further maintains, the Icelandic aristocracy remained conservative and reluctant to incorporate key elements from the increasingly Gregorian demands into the Christian Laws, or stipulations handed to them by the archbishop (in Niðarós from the mid-twelfth century on), many of which pushed for increased administrative independence of the Church and the introduction of legal and judicial bodies to support it. In the later twelfth century many of these demands were simply ignored by the Icelanders and not 'skotið inn í kristinréttinn eða þá aðeins að hálfu leyti og með hangandi hendi' (p. 79) [incorporated in the Christian Laws, or only partially and half-heartedly]. In any case, King Sverrir soon embarked on a course of action in Norway that had well-known consequences, while Gissur Hallsson, a traditionalist aristocrat who supported close relations between secular and ecclesiastic authority, assumed the role of Law Speaker in Iceland.

The meticulousness with which Sveinbjörn pursues his task is admirable, yet his methodological disposition is bound to draw criticism from many. While some may find his treatment to be overly positivistic, others may find it a bit old-fashioned. As in the heyday of Weibullian source criticism, breaking up the text into its original components in search of what lies *behind* it is felt to be an end in itself. From this standpoint, autopsy is the preferred method of inquiry rather than treating the subject alive. The study is bracketed with general but valuable observations on the nature of the text and its immediate historical context, but ultimately the reader is left wanting more.

This highlights the most obvious disadvantage of the volume in the opinion of the present reviewer. Superficial thematic links aside, these are essentially four independent studies without any (obvious) organic connections between them. The three latter essays might have found a rather more natural environment in refereed journals, while the expansion of the first would potentially have produced a tight little volume on legal culture and the history of the church more broadly. Admittedly, though, such editorial criticism runs the risk of unfairness, for it may not conform to the author's own intentions, and the argument he chooses to bring forth must remain our primary concern.

The opening study is followed by observations on *Staðarhólsbók*, the great medieval codex AM 334 fol. which contains one of the two main redactions of *Grágás*, plus *Járnsíða*. Two points stand out regarding Sveinbjörn's discussion of the history of the creation and use of the codex. First, Sveinbjörn offers a diplomatic edition of the so-called *dómakapítuli*, scribbled (at an uncertain date) on what was originally a blank front cover (1r), for he finds previous editions of it wanting. Second, he revisits an old question: whether the paper manuscript AM 125a 4to (c.1600), containing fragments of *Grágás* and *Járnsíða*, is independent of AM 334 fol. (from which all other extant redactions of *Járnsíða*, complete or fragmentary, are ultimately derived). In the nineteenth century, both Vilhjálmur Finsen and Konrad Maurer argued for its independence from other *Járnsíða* manuscripts, maintaining that it derives from a now lost medieval codex, parallel to *Staðarhólsbók* in that it also paired together *Grágás* and *Járnsíða*. The thesis did not find favour, however, with Már Jónsson and his fellow editors of *Járnsíða* in 2005, who maintained that *Járnsíða* ultimately exists only in *Staðarhólsbók* and copies derived from it, directly or indirectly. Sveinbjörn advocates Finsen and Maurer's position, but on the basis of his own terms.

Were one so inclined, the criticism outlined above might be directed also at the two remaining essays, on early Danish history in Icelandic sagas and on *Grænlendinga þáttur* respectively, although these seem in many respects to be the more attractive pair. Sveinbjörn argues that judicial documents or memoranda stand behind *Grænlendinga þáttur* (preserved in Flateyjarbók), which was also distinctly shaped by classic rhetorical principles as described in, e.g., *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. He argues too, although inconclusively, that its original author may be Abbot Ketill Hermundarson of Helgafell (d. 1220), the son of the *þáttur*'s protagonist Hermundur Koðránsson and a cleric under Bishop Páll Jónsson in Skálholt prior to his appointment as abbot of Helgafell.

The second main essay, on the other hand, attempts a more daring task: tracing the literary history of the tale of the early Christianisation of the Danes and the conquest of the Danevirke in early Icelandic historiography, and explaining how it changed over time and why. Inevitably, any hypothesis treating this subject in detail requires major (philological) leaps of faith, especially given the exceedingly complex textual history of such key texts as *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar hin mesta* and *Jómsvíkinga saga*. That said, there is much to gain from such a thorough rehearsal of the relevant corpus as is offered here, and Sveinbjörn's unhesitating, even relentless, argumentative style (see, e.g., his treatment of *Vellekla*) is bound to arouse either sympathy or hostility. His set of arguments here cannot be reduced to simple summary. Suffice it to say that the thesis advanced is that an original hagiographical episode advocating the sainthood of King Ólafur Tryggvason gradually gave way to a highly contextual reading of these events alluding to early-thirteenth-century political reality (pro-Birkibeinar) rather than a historical past. This process entailed, among other things, the saint's marginalisation and eclipse by Jarl Hákon Sigurðarson.

In sum, this somewhat miscellaneous collection offers critical studies in a classic philological mode, with valuable points to be gained from the reading.

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— Other death omens of ill-luck are shared by Scandinavian, Orcadian and Gaelic tradition (cf. Almqvist 1974–76, 24, 29–30, 32–33).

— Anne Holtsmark (1939, 78) and others have already drawn attention to this fact.

— Ninth-century Irish brooches have recently been the subject of two studies by the present author (1972; 1973–74), and the bossed penannular brooches have been fully catalogued by O. S. Johansen (1973).

— This is clear from the following sentence: *iðraðist Bolli þegar verksins ok lýsti vígi á hendi sér* (*Laxdæla saga* 1934, 154).

— It is stated quite plainly in *Flateyjarbok* (1860–68, I 419): *hann tok land j Syrlækiarosi*.

— There is every reason to think that this interpretation is correct (cf. *Heilagra manna sögur*, II 107–08).

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