

VIKING SOCIETY
FOR NORTHERN RESEARCH

TEXT SERIES

General Editors
G. Turville-Petre and P. G. Foote

VOLUME V

NINE NORSE STUDIES

By Gabriel Turville-Petre

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BY

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VIKING SOCIETY
FOR NORTHERN RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

Made in Great Britain and
printed by Western Printing Services Ltd, Bristol

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Association (Chapter VIII, first published
in the *Modern Language Review* and here
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PREFACE

The nine studies selected for publication in this volume were written over a number of years, although nothing that has appeared since 1962 is included. Various minor amendments have been made, some references updated, and bibliographical and other conventions normalized throughout, doubtless not with perfect consistency. Postscripts have been added to five of the papers, showing that in some cases I have revised my opinions slightly.

Two of the articles were first published in Icelandic. 'The Cult of Óðinn' has been translated by me, '*Dróttkvætt* and Irish syllabic measures' by Professor Gearóid Mac Eoin, to whom I am most grateful, as I am also to Professor David Greene for removing errors and suggesting improvements after the paper had been put into English.

My thanks are also due to Mr P. Cahill who checked references in papers V, VI, and VII, and to Mr M. P. Barnes who read a proof of the whole book. Mr David Thomas, Honorary Member of the Society, has given unstinting help in designing the book and seeing it through the press. Professor Peter Foote has acted as General Editor.

The proposal that I might publish such a collection of papers in the Text Series first came from the Council of the Viking Society. I welcome the opportunity and deeply appreciate the honour the Society thus does me.

G. TURVILLE-PETRE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On behalf of the Viking Society the author and General Editor wish to thank the following for their generous permission to reprint the articles in this volume:

Heimspékideild Háskóla Íslands and Professor Steingrímur J. Þorsteinsson for 'The Cult of Óðinn in Iceland', which first appeared in Icelandic in *Studia Islandica* 17 (1958), 5-25.

Messrs George Allen and Unwin Ltd, London, for 'Thurstable', which first appeared in *English and Medieval Studies presented to J. R. R. Tolkien* . . . ed. Norman Davis and C. L. Wrenn (1962), 241-9.

The Folklore Society and Miss Christina Hole, Honorary Editor of *Folklore*, for 'Dreams in Icelandic Tradition', which first appeared in *Folklore* 69 (1958), 93-111.

Messrs Bowes and Bowes Ltd, London, for 'Legends of England in Icelandic Manuscripts', which first appeared in *The Anglo-Saxons. Studies . . . presented to Bruce Dickins*, ed. Peter Clemoes (1959), 104-21.

The Publications Committee of the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto, and Professor J. R. O'Donnell, Editor of *Mediaeval Studies*, for 'The Old Norse Homily on the Assumption and *Mariu Saga*' and 'The Old Norse Homily on the Dedication', which first appeared in *Mediaeval Studies* IX (1947), 131-40, and XI (1949), 206-18, respectively.

To the Modern Humanities Research Association and the Editors of *Modern Language Review* for 'Gísli Súrsson and his Poetry', which first appeared in *Modern Language Review* 39 (1944), 374-91.

To the Royal Irish Academy and Professor David Greene, Editor of *Ériu*, for '*Dróttkvætt* and Irish Syllabic Measures', the English version printed in *Ériu* XXII (1971), 1-22, of a paper first published in Icelandic in *Skirnir* 128 (1954), 31-35.

The essay, 'Liggja fylgjur þínar til Íslands', was first printed in 1940 in *Saga-Book* XII (1937-45), 119-26.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- Aarbøger* *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie*
Alfr. *Alfræði íslenzk* I-III, ed. N. Beckman
 and Kr. Kålund (1908-18)
- Altg. Rel.* Jan de Vries, *Altgermanische Religions-
 geschichte*² I-II (1956-7)
- Arkiv* *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*
- Blöndal Sigfús Blöndal, *Íslenzk-dönsk Orðabók* (1920-24)
- Bps.* *Biskupa Sögur*, gefnar út af hinu íslenzka
 Bókmentafélagi, I-II (1858-78)
- Cleasby-
 Vigfússon *An Icelandic-English Dictionary* based
 on the MS collections of the late
 Richard Cleasby enlarged and com-
 pleted by Gudbrand Vigfusson (1874)
- EETS Early English Text Society
- EHR* *English Historical Review*
- EPNS English Place-Name Society
- Flb.* *Flateyjarbók*, ed. Guðbrandr Vigfusson
 and C. R. Unger, I-III (1860-68)
- Fritzner J. Fritzner, *Ordbog over Det gamle
 norske Sprog* I-III (1883-96)
- ÍF Íslenzk fornrit
- ǵEGP *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*
- Litt. Hist.* Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske
 Litteraturs Historie*² I-III (1920-24)
- NED* J. A. H. Murray and others, *A New
 English Dictionary* (1888-1933)
- NN* E. A. Kock, *Notationes Norrœnæ* (1923-44)
- PL* Migne, *Patrologia Latina*
- PMLA* *Publications of the Modern Language
 Association of America*
- Saga-Book* *Saga-Book of the Viking Society for Northern Research*
Skj. Finnur Jónsson, *Den norsk-íslandske
 Skjaldedigtning*, A I-II, B I-II (1912-1915)

Notes to individual essays explain additional abbreviations used in them. Numbering and orthography of quotations from and references to poems of the *Edda* follow those of Gustav Neckel's edition, *Edda*³ (1936).

I THE CULT OF ÓÐINN IN ICELAND

THOSE who read the mythological and historical works written in Iceland in the middle ages must be aware of some discrepancy. When we read Snorri's *Edda*, it is obvious that Snorri considered Óðinn the most powerful and foremost god in the heathen hierarchy. According to Snorri, Óðinn is supreme among all the gods: 'This Óðinn with his brothers (Vili and Vé) will be ruling heaven and earth.' Another name for Óðinn is *Alfǫðr* (Father of All): 'He will live throughout all ages governing all his dominions and ruling all things great and small.'

It is plain that when Snorri had these last sentences put on parchment, he was working under the influence of Christian conceptions of Almighty God and, for this reason, Óðinn had grown even more powerful in his eyes than he had ever been in the eyes of heathens. When we turn to the *Poetic Edda*, which was the chief source of Snorri's *Gylfaginning*, we see the same picture. Óðinn dominates everything. The sibyl in the *Völuspá* directs her words in the first place to Óðinn; Óðinn forces her to tell her secrets. It was Óðinn, with two lesser gods, who came upon two lifeless tree-trunks and gave them *ǫnd*, making them man and woman and thus ancestors of us all. We have to thank Óðinn for the most precious of gifts, the gift of poetry. Under the name of *Bolverkr* (the Evil-doer), Óðinn robbed the holy mead from the fastness of the giants and brought it home to Ásgarðr.

But it is not enough to call Óðinn the god of poetry; he is god of all secret wisdom. While he hung for nine nights on the wind-torn tree, Yggdrasill, as if it were a gibbet, he spied the runes; he seized them and took them to himself. Óðinn is master of magic and he knows all the magic songs. He awakens a dead sibyl and compels her to tell of the fate in store for Baldr. He forces hanged men to talk to him, and thus he knows the secrets of death. Óðinn has other gifts besides these; he can stop a spear

in flight by the glare of his eye alone and, when he chants under the rims of the shields of his friends, they march to battle assured of victory.

It is plain that Óðinn was god of war and warriors. He was patron and protector of the most renowned heroes, as is told time and again in Heroic Sagas. Óðinn chose the horse Grani for Sigurðr and accompanied Sigurðr on his way to avenge his father. Óðinn counselled Sigurðr when he went to attack the dragon Fáfnir. In the same way, Haraldr War-tooth lived under the protection of Óðinn for a century and a half: 'Such a spell was cast on King Haraldr that no iron could cut him, and afterwards he never bore a shield in battle, but yet no weapon got a hold on him.'¹

When at last these chosen heroes fell dead, it was not because Óðinn had deserted them, but rather because he loved them more than others. He could not be without them in Valhøll, where they became *Einherjar* and passed their days in sports, even until the Ragnarøk. Then the dead heroes will march out of Valhøll in military formation to fight against the wolf at the side of Óðinn. We cannot know when this terrible day will come, but we know this, that the grey wolf, Fenrir, is breaking his bonds, ready to spring and fall upon us:

We cannot know for sure;
the grey wolf is glaring
on the dwellings of gods.²

Nearly all the sources which I have cited are preserved in Icelandic manuscripts alone. Scholars agree that many of them were compiled or composed by Icelandic authors, e.g. Snorri's *Edda* and the *Völuspá*. But it is probable that some of these sources

¹ *Sögubrot af Fornkonungum*, ch. 4 (in C. af Petersens and E. Olson, *Sögur Danakonunga*, 1919-25, 13). Saxo illustrates the relationship between Haraldr and Óðinn in his *Gesta Danorum*, Liber VII.

² Óvíst es at vita;
sér ulfr inn hǫsvi
á sjot goða (from *Eiríksmál*).

derived from Norway. The *Hávamál* is, of course, compiled from fragments of various poems, but most scholars would agree that a great proportion of these poems originated in Norway in the ninth and tenth centuries. We may regard it as certain that similar conceptions of Óðinn were dominant in Norway and in Iceland in the tenth century, at least among certain classes.

Let us now turn to the so-called 'historical' sources, in which everyday life of heathen Icelanders is described. I think chiefly of the Sagas of Icelanders (*Íslendinga Sögur*) and the *Landnámabók*. Historians of our time have cast doubts on the veracity of the Sagas of Icelanders, and not without reason. Icelandic scholars living today have shown that the aim of most authors of sagas was artistic.³ But this does not imply that Sagas of Icelanders are of no use as sources of history. The authors knew more about the culture of their heathen forefathers than it is possible for us to know. They drew on sources unknown to us, forgotten poems, oral tales and older writings, compiled as early as the twelfth century but now lost. It is, therefore, not presumptuous to assert that some sagas give a true picture of the civilization of Iceland in the tenth century.

When we turn to the *Landnámabók*, the foundations are more secure. Jón Jóhannesson⁴ and other Icelandic scholars have shown that the book had very ancient origins, and that much of the material in it was compiled already in the days of Ari the Wise, only three or four generations after the Icelanders had adopted Christianity.

What can we deduce from these historical sources about the religious customs of the heathen Icelanders? The sources have been studied by many specialists, both in Iceland and elsewhere. I would mention the objective work *Heiðinn siður á Íslandi* by Ólafur Briem (1945), for which many will be grateful. I must also mention the chapters in that great work, *Íslensk menning* (1,

³ I have chiefly in mind many works by Sigurður Nordal and Einar Ól. Sveinsson.

⁴ See *Gerðir Landnámabókar* (1941), esp. 203 ff.

1942), in which Sigurður Nordal considers the beliefs of the ancient Icelanders from the point of view of a philosopher.

At first sight, it looks as if the gods hardly filled an important place in the social life of the Icelanders in ancient times; besides them there were many hidden forces, guardian spirits, such as *landvættir* and *ármenn*; there were elves and trolls. Jón Jóhannesson argued in his *Íslendinga Saga*⁵ that belief in these lower beings was older and more primitive than belief in the Æsir or other gods. I would not wish to assert that this opinion is correct, but we can safely say that the belief in the lower beings was considerably more persistent than the belief in gods. Even today, many people both in Iceland and other western lands believe in fairies or 'hidden people', even in trolls and such-like elemental beings. Belief in these lower beings is not inconsistent with orthodox Christianity; it hardly concerns Christianity.

However that may be, it is plain when we read the Sagas of Icelanders and the *Landnámabók* attentively that the gods played an important part in the lives of ancient Icelanders; they had their place in the social order. We know that 'temples' were set up in many parts of the country, and there can be no doubt that one god or more was worshipped in each of them.

The author of a section of the *Landnámabók* (*Hauksbók*, ch. 268) included a chapter from the Law of Úlfjóttr (*Úlfjótssög*), describing various practices observed in the chief temples. It is said there, among other things:

An arm-ring, weighing two 'ounces' or more, must be kept in every chief temple . . . Everyone who had to perform legal business in court must first swear an oath on that ring and name his witnesses . . . 'I call to witness of this,' he must say, 'that I swear an oath on the ring, a legally binding oath. So help me Freyr and Njörðr and the all-powerful (*almáttki*) god that I shall prosecute this case or defend it, bear witness or deliver judgment or sentence as I know to be most just, most true and in closest accord with law.'⁶

⁵ *Íslendinga Saga* I (1956), 145.

⁶ Baugr, tvíeyringr eða meiri, skyldi liggja í hverju höfuðhofi . . . Hverr sá maðr, er þar þurfti lögskil af hendi at leysa at dómi, skyldi áðr eið vinna at þeim baugi ok nefna sér vátta . . . 'Nefni ek í þat vætti,' skyldi hann segja, 'at ek vinn

These precepts show that, under the heathen religion, at least three gods were worshipped in Iceland and also that this worship was established by law. People were obliged to invoke the Vanir, Freyr, and his father Njörðr and, besides these, the nameless 'all-powerful' god (*áss*).⁷ Who can this one be?

Some mythologists have maintained that *hinn almattki áss* was Þórr. I have also read an article by an Icelandic scholar, who argues that he must be Ullr.⁸ But, if this were the case, the oath would be words alone when spoken by Icelanders, for they can hardly have had clear ideas about the age-old god Ullr. I cannot agree with this view, but will not discuss the problem at present.⁹

But yet other scholars, and among them the most eminent, have stated without hesitation that the words *hinn almattki áss* denoted Óðinn.¹⁰ It is unthinkable, according to some, that men would swear the most sacred of oaths, the oath on the holy ring, without calling Óðinn to witness. In the following pages I shall attempt to decide whether this conclusion is right.

eið at baugi, lqgeið. Hjálpi mér svá Freyr ok Njörðr ok hinn almattki áss sem ek mun svá sök þessa sækja eða verja eða vitni bera eða kviðu eða dóma sem ek veit réttast ok sannast ok helzt at lofum.⁷

7 Cf. Jón Jóhannesson, *Íslendinga Saga*, I 146.

8 See Hermann Pálsson's paper in *Skírnir* 130 (1956), 187-92. The main evidence for Hermann Pálsson's view seems to be that, according to *Atlakviða* (32), the king of the Huns swore an oath 'on the ring of Ullr' (*at hringi Ullar*). It is not impossible that in the eyes of some peoples at one time Ullr was the highest of gods, but it appears that his cult was confined to limited areas, chiefly east Norway and middle Sweden, where place-names containing the element *Ull-* and *Ullin-* are preserved. It is clear that the cult of Ullr died out very early; see N. Lid, *Religionshistoria* (Nordisk Kultur xxvi, 1942), 115 ff. The idea that Ullr was the god of the oath on the ring has also occurred to others, e.g. G. Dumézil, *Mythes et Dieux des Germains* (1939), 39-40. Dumézil expresses himself very cautiously and is, in general, undecided about this question.

9 I am also unable to agree with the opinion of Jakob J. Smári, *Skírnir* 110 (1936), 161, who holds that *hinn almattki áss* may be some mysterious, invisible deity like *hinn ríki . . . sá er qllu ræðr*, mentioned in *Vqluspá* (text of *Hauksbók*). The opinion of Jakob J. Smári is based largely on observations of Andrew Lang about religious beliefs of primitive tribes in Australia.

10 The scholar who has written best and most thoroughly from this point of view is J. de Vries, *Contributions to the Study of Othin* (Folklore Fellows Communications xxxiii, 2, No. 94, 1931), esp. 46 ff.; cf. also J. de Vries, *Altg. Rel.*, II § 441 and references there given; further Finnur Jónsson, *Goðafræði Norðmanna og Íslendinga* (1913), 43.

To tell the truth, the sources hardly suggest that Óðinn was worshipped in Iceland. Scholars have supposed that Víga-Glúmr worshipped Óðinn, but that is uncertain and must be left undecided.¹¹ On the other hand, we find ample evidence of the worship of other gods in Icelandic sources, and especially of the worship of Þórr. One of the most famous stories of the cult of Þórr is the one about Þórólfr Mostrarskegg found in *Landnámabók* and *Eyrbyggja Saga*. Þórólfr was a settler and his former home was on the island of Mostr off the south-west coast of Norway. According to *Landnámabók*, Þórólfr was a zealous sacrificer and put his trust in Þórr; he went to Iceland because of the tyranny of King Haraldr.

It is clear from this story that Þórólfr was a chieftain and land-owner of south-western Norway. He had venerated Þórr in his native land and had taken the cult of Þórr to Iceland, together with the main pillars of his temple (*þndvegissúlur*), on one of which an image of Þórr was carved.

The temple which Þórólfr erected at Hofstaðir in western Iceland must have been dedicated to Þórr, but it is not impossible that people worshipped other gods besides Þórr in that temple. The Norwegian chieftain, Þórólfr, and his Icelandic descendants looked on Þórr as their chief friend and patron (*fulltrúi*).

There are many significant points in the story about Þórólfr, but I would emphasize two of them. One is that Þórólfr was a chieftain of western Norway, and the other that he fled from Norway because of the tyranny of King Haraldr.

A number of Icelanders, and Greenlanders as well, worshipped Þórr. It seems that, when the settlement of Iceland began, people were very liberal about religious belief. Some thought that belief in Þórr was not inconsistent with the Christian faith. We may think of the story of Helgi the Lean, who believed in Christ, but would yet invoke Þórr for voyages at sea and matters of great moment. But when heathendom was drawing to its end, it seems that Icelanders regarded Þórr as the guardian of the ancient

11 See Anne Holtsmark, *Maal og Minne* (1933), 111 ff.

religion. It was Þórr who challenged the White Christ to a duel and wrecked the ship of the German missionary, Þangbrandr. Þórr was the protector of our world (*Miðgarðr*) and, as it seems, of the World of Gods (*Ásgarðr*) as well.

Þórr was not the only god who, according to story, was worshipped by Icelanders. When men swore an oath on the holy ring, they were obliged to invoke Freyr. Place-names, such as *Freyssnes*, *Freyshólar*, might suggest that the cult of Freyr was prominent in eastern Iceland, although evidence from sporadic place-names may be suspect. Personal names, such as *Freysteinn*, *Freydís*, must have been associated in some way with Freyr. Another name for Freyr was *Yngvi*, and personal names such as *Ingjaldr* and *Ingunn* also provide evidence of the cult of Freyr in certain families.

The cult of Freyr is described chiefly in three Sagas of Icelanders: in *Gisla Saga*, *Víga-Glúms Saga*, *Hrafnkels Saga*, and, to a lesser extent, in *Brandkrossa Þáttr*. It is obvious that the authors of *Gisla Saga* and *Víga-Glúms Saga* saw Freyr as a god of fertility, as did Norwegians and Swedes. We may think of the story of Þorgrímr Freysgoði, who intended to hold an autumn sacrifice at the 'winter nights', welcoming winter and offering sacrifice to Freyr. After the death of Þorgrímr, there was an event which was thought peculiar: snow never lay on the southwestern slope of Þorgrímr's howe, and it never froze. It was understood in this way, that Þorgrímr was so loved by Freyr because of his sacrifices, that the god would not wish frost to come between them. We may also remember Gísli's verse as he gazed at Þorgrímr's howe in winter, exclaiming in cryptic (*ofljóst*) language that he saw shoots sprouting upon it.¹²

According to *Víga-Glúms Saga*, Freyr is again god of fertility. Near to his temple at Hrípkelsstaðir lay the fruitful cornfield *Vítazgjafi* (the Certain Giver), upon which crops never failed. The worship of Freyr also fills an important place in *Hrafnkels*

¹² Teina sák í túni
tálgríms vinar fálu . . .

Saga. Sigurður Nordal¹³ has shown that this jewel among Icelandic sagas is largely fiction, the creation of its author. But this need not imply that the author created his saga out of nothing. He described the customs of Icelanders in heathen times as he knew them from books and tradition. He emphasized the relationship between the horse and the god Freyr. This close relationship is well known from other Icelandic writings, e.g. the *Saga of Ólafr Tryggvason* in the *Flateyjarbók*.

As god of fertility, Freyr was god of the harvest. Norwegians used to drink a toast to Freyr for fruitful harvest. Icelanders, breeding animals and fishing more than cultivating crops, were, therefore, less dependent on the harvest than their kindred peoples of Norway and Sweden. It is not surprising that medieval writers in Iceland state that Freyr was particularly the god of the Swedes.

Icelanders swearing an oath on the ring also invoked Njǫrðr. The place-name *Njarðvík*, given to two places in Iceland, may also give evidence of the cult of Njǫrðr, although these place-names could have been brought by settlers from Norway. Snorri says that Njǫrðr should be invoked for voyages at sea and catches; he was god of riches. Originally Njǫrðr was a god of fertility, like Freyr, and belonged to the race of the Vanir. It is told in Icelandic sources that he was father of Freyr and Freyja but, originally, he was more likely their mother, for Nerthus, of whom Tacitus wrote in the first century A.D., was not a god but a goddess; she was *Terra Mater*.

I do not doubt that other gods and goddesses were worshipped in the temples and shrines of Iceland, although it is difficult to find evidence of this in the sources. But what of Óðinn, highest of all the gods? Is it conceivable that Icelanders did not worship him?

In Iceland there are neither place-names nor personal names associated with Óðinn, but Óðinn is mentioned in Icelandic

¹³ *Hrafnkatla* (*Studia Islandica* VII, 1940); cf. Jón Jóhannesson, *Austfirðinga Sögur* (ÍF XI, 1950), xxxix ff.

literature more often than any other god. This inconsistency may be explained in various ways.

Óðinn is a many-sided figure but he is, among other things, god of poetry. A poet working early in Christian times, in the eleventh century, called poetry 'the hallowed cup of the raven-god'. When Ólafr Tryggvason forced Hallfreðr, the 'Troublesome Poet', to abandon the pagan religion, he missed Óðinn more than any other god.

Sigurður Nordal¹⁴ has described the spiritual development of Egill Skalla-Grímsson as it comes to light in his poetry. As the son of an Icelandic farmer, Egill was not brought up in the cult of Óðinn, but probably worshipped Þórr, Freyr and Njörðr. But under the influence of the great chieftains of Norway, who stood in close relationship with the kings, Haraldr Finehair and Eiríkr Bloodaxe, Egill came to worship Óðinn; he learnt everything that could be learnt from the cult of Óðinn.

Nowhere is this burning love for Óðinn expressed more clearly than it is in the *Sonatorrek*, in which Egill rebukes his 'patron', who has deserted him and deprived him of his sons. We cannot say that other Icelandic poets worshipped Óðinn as passionately as Egill did, but it is plain that he filled an honourable place in their conceptions of the divine world. It is sufficient to think of the numerous kennings of which names for Óðinn form an element, e.g. *Yggjar bál* (sword), *Viðris veðr* (battle). When poets used such expressions, they must certainly have thought of that mysterious, terrible god.

It might be tempting to conclude that the Icelandic poets had religious conceptions other than those of the general public. Such a conclusion would be incomplete, and even worse.

It is now time to turn away from Iceland and to look for evidence elsewhere, although it is difficult to know how far we should look. In a paper published some years ago, the Dutch

¹⁴ *Íslensk Menning* I (1942), 170 ff.; cf. Sigurður Nordal's paper 'Átrúnaður Egils Skalla-Grímssonar' in *Skírnir* 98 (1924), 145 ff., reprinted in *Afangar* II (1944), 103 ff.

scholar, J. de Vries, argued that it was impossible to understand the religious beliefs and practices of Germanic peoples fully without considering those of other Indo-Europeans.¹⁵ It seems that de Vries is here following the Frenchman, Georges Dumézil, who is unquestionably the most learned man in comparative mythology living today.¹⁶

The doctrines of Dumézil have, for truth, much in common with those of J. Grimm and other great scholars of the nineteenth century. To put it in few words, Dumézil maintains that the religious conceptions of all, or nearly all, Indo-European peoples were alike. In origin theirs was one and the same religion, which developed out of a common culture. Dumézil maintains that the same customs predominated and the same divine beings were worshipped by nearly all Indo-European peoples, by the Indians as early as the fourteenth century B.C., by the Irish in the first centuries after Christ's birth, and by Icelanders in the tenth century A.D.

Dumézil sees evidence of this, not so much in the names of the gods, but rather in words used to denote various kinds of officials and religious activities. It is now many years since the Celtic scholar, J. Vendryes, noticed that words applied to certain religious concepts and officials in heathen times were of the same origin in many Indo-European languages, and particularly in Sanskrit, Persian, Latin and the Celtic languages.¹⁷ As an example I may mention the verb, which appears in Irish as *cretim* (to believe), in Latin as *credo* and in Sanskrit as *crád dadhami*. The Sanskrit word *raj* (king), the Latin *rex* and the Irish *rí* may also be mentioned. The Indo-European word *deiwo-* (god) is preserved in several languages, in Sanskrit as *devah*, in Latin as *deus*,

¹⁵ *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* xxxiii (N.F. II, 1951), 1 ff.

¹⁶ The chief works of Dumézil which touch upon Norse subjects are *Mythes et Dieux des Germains* (1939); *Mitra-Varuna* (1948); *Loki* (1948; translation into German, slightly revised, 1959); *Les Dieux des Indo-Européens* (1952); *La Saga de Hadingus* (1953); *Aspects de la Fonction Guerrière* (1956); *Les Dieux des Germains* (1959); *Heur et Malheur du Guerrier* (1969). I published a short appraisal of Dumézil's opinions in *Saga-Book* xiv (1953-7), 131 ff.

¹⁷ *Mémoires de la Société de Linguistique de Paris* xx (1918), 265-85.

in Irish as *dia* and, apparently, in Germanic languages as the god's name *Tiwaz* or *Týr*.

But what were the distinguishing characteristics of this religion and its adherents? It is held that the gods reflected the social order of their worshippers. Dumézil distinguishes three classes of men, as the author of the *Rígsþula* distinguished between *þrælar*, *karlar*, and *jarlar*. The king and the priest formed the highest class, i.e. in India the *raj* and the *brahman*, in Rome the *rex* and *flamen*. The second class were warriors, the bold men; in the third class were the humble tillers of the soil.

Each of these classes is said to be reflected in the world of gods. In the Indian hymns of the *Rigveda*, the oldest of all the literary sources, the highest gods are chiefly two, Varuna and Mitra. The chief god of the middle class is the great warrior god, Indra, while the third class of men is reflected in the Aśvins, who are twins, bringing fertility and health to men. Gods belonging to the first two classes despise the humble gods of fertility. Similar distinctions of class may be seen in tales of Roman and Celtic gods, e.g. in the Roman gods Jupiter, Mars, Quirinus.

In India, Rome, and the Celtic lands the priests formed a class of their own; they brought offerings to the gods and were guardians of the sacred wisdom. These holy men, brahmans, *flamines*, druids, had much in common; they had similar duties, and various things were forbidden to them, e.g. brahmans and *flamines* must not drink wine; they must not touch dogs or horses; and they were obliged to observe restraint in sexual matters. They were often dressed in white.

Let us now look at the Germanic lands east of the Rhine and consider what kinds of religious practice dominated there. Caesar gave an answer to this question in his *Gallic War*.¹⁸ In his opinion the religious practices of the Germans were altogether unlike those which he had come to know among the Celts in Gaul. The Germans, he said, had no priests and they offered no sacrifices. They worshipped only those gods whom they could

¹⁸ *De Bello Gallico*, vi 21.

see with their own eyes, such as the sun, fire, and the moon.

It is obvious that the Roman general did not fully understand Germanic religious customs. Other writers, living in the first century after Christ's birth, showed that the Germans worshipped many gods; they had priests and they brought sacrifice to the gods.

But what surprised Cæsar was probably that the religious ritual of the Germans was much simpler than that which he had observed among the Celtic tribes west of the Rhine. It does not seem that Germanic priests, in those days, formed a class of their own, nor that, in Germania, there were schools in which the sacred wisdom was taught.

How is this to be explained? Dumézil has offered an explanation. In his opinion, the Germanic social system was revolutionary.¹⁹ Class distinctions had nearly been obliterated, although not altogether. Under more peaceful conditions, these distinctions were gradually restored. In Dumézil's view, the same classes may be observed in Germania as in India, Rome, and the Celtic lands.

Whether they are of common origin or not, it is undeniable that the Germanic gods, Óðinn, Týr, Þórr, and Freyr, or rather the two Haddingjar, resemble the Indian gods, Varuna, Mitra, Indra, and the Ásvins, at least superficially.

We do not now need to think about gods of strength, nor of gods of fertility. We must rather look for Germanic gods who resemble the highest gods of the Indians.

In character the Indian gods are many-sided. They are described in sources of various ages and it is, therefore, difficult to gain a clear conception of them. We, who are not learned in oriental literature, have to rely on the conclusions of specialists.

As I have already said, the highest gods in the mythological writings of India were two, Mitra and Varuna, and they could be invoked as Mitra-Varuna,²⁰ as if they were one and the same. It is said that they denote two aspects of the supreme power. In the

19 *Mythes et Dieux des Germains*, 7 ff.

20 Cf. Dumézil, *Mitra-Varuna*.

world of gods, as in this world, there are two who wield supreme power, the king and the priest.

These two gods, Varuna and Mitra, lived in concord, although they were altogether unlike in temperament. Varuna is the terrible god in the clouds. Through his own power, or with the help of his spies, he sees all and knows all. He is unconquerable, but yet he never joins in battle; he is master of magic and remarkable to look at; he is yellow-eyed, bald, and afflicted with leprosy; he is lame and supports himself with a stick;²¹ needless to say, he is immensely old.

This picture which Dumézil draws of Varuna is really a composite, made from sources of various ages. But there can be no doubt that Varuna resembles Óðinn in many things. Óðinn is blind or one-eyed, but yet he can see throughout all the worlds from his throne, Hliðskjálf. By the gift of his own sight, or with the help of his spies, the two ravens, he knows everything. He is unconquerable, but he will never join battle until the Ragnarök. Óðinn's character is many-sided, but in most things he is evil. He is god of occult wisdom and of death, leader of the *Einherjar*, the fallen heroes. In other words he resembles Varuna in that he is not god of our world, but of the Other World.

But if Óðinn is the Germanic Varuna, who is the Germanic Mitra? Mitra, as it seems, represents the other side of the supreme power. If Varuna is the king, Mitra is the priest. Mitra is the god of this world; he upholds law and justice. From various evidence Dumézil and de Vries agree that Týr was the chief god of justice among Germanic peoples,²² although Ullr was also worshipped as god of justice among some tribes and, perhaps, the mysterious Mithothyn, of whom Saxo wrote.

It is agreed that Týr was the god whom Romans often called Mars, and he was sometimes called *Mars Thincsus*, which appears

²¹ Cf. Dumézil, *Mythes et Dieux des Germains*, 28. A. Hillebrandt describes Varuna more fully in *Vedische Mythologie* III (1902), 3 ff. See also J. Gonda, *Die Religionen Indiens* I (1960), 73 ff.

²² See Dumézil, *Mythes et Dieux des Germains*, 41 and passim; de Vries, *Altg. Rel.*, II, especially §§ 347 ff.

to mean 'Týr of the Þing'. It is known that this god was worshipped widely in Germany in the first centuries after Christ's birth.

Icelandic sources have little to tell of Týr, but he is said to be *einhendr áss* (one-handed god). Just as Óðinn sacrificed his eye, Týr sacrificed his hand to save the gods from the wolf Fenrir. He placed his hand as a pledge in the jaws of the beast and, thereby, deceived him.

Comparable stories are known from various Indo-European peoples. The Roman hero Scaevola sacrificed his hand to deceive the Etruscans and afterwards concluded an agreement with them.²³ But the story most like that of Snorri is to be found in Irish writings. I think of the story of Nuadu with the silver hand. Nuadu's right hand was struck off in battle and, as a result, he made an agreement with his enemies.²⁴

It may be that some of Dumézil's assertions are doubtful, but both he and de Vries agree that Óðinn is the highest of all in the divine world of the Germanic peoples. He is the god to whom people looked up and whom they feared most. He is the *regnator omnium deus*, the terrible god whom the tribe of the Semnones worshipped in the holy grove.²⁵

But the strange thing about this is that Óðinn is the lawless god, while Ullr and Týr are seen as gods of justice like the Indian Mitra and the Celtic Nuadu. This, in my view, is a very daring conclusion, but it is the essential of the case. Whereas gods of justice dominated among most peoples and were seldom driven from power, the power of the lawless, the furious (*óðr*) god, dominated among the Germanic peoples.

In the Irish story, which I mentioned, Nuadu was god of justice. He was once forced from power and, in his place, came the wicked tyrant, Bress, who seized all the cows of Munster. Bress ruled for seven years, until the people rose against him and

23 Cf. Dumézil, *Mitra-Varuna*, 174 ff.

24 See H. d'Arbois de Jubainville, *The Irish Mythological Cycle* (translated and edited by R. I. Best, 1903), 85 ff.

25 Tacitus, *Germania*, xxxix.

restored Nuadu to the kingship. Bress is the Irish Óðinn and, beside him, stands his kinsman, the evil, one-eyed Balor, who, in the end, killed Nuadu with the glare of his eye alone.

But is there further evidence that in Germanic civilization the rejection of moral law was known? I think there is, but this applies only to Germanic tribes on the Continent. We may remember the tribe of the Harii with their masked highwaymen, who painted their bodies to strike terror into their enemies.

In his *Gallic War* Caesar describes the social system of Germanic tribes in a most remarkable way.²⁶ No one, said Caesar, possessed lands (or real property), but the chieftains distributed the lands yearly. At the end of the year the farmers were obliged to leave their lands and, presumably, to surrender their produce.

In a society of this kind there was no place for an aristocracy, and there could be no hereditary land-holders (*óðalsbændr*). A social system of this sort was based on war; it was the military leaders and warriors alone who wielded power. In fact, this was the social system reflected in Valhøll, where Óðinn ruled supreme; he was the leader of the *Einherjar* in the world of gods and of the champions in this world.

It is time to think of stories of one champion, who was a foster-son of Óðinn. I think of Starkaðr Stórvirksson, who was of giant ancestry and, therefore, the enemy of Þórr. Óðinn ordained for him that he should live three spans of life, but Starkaðr was a villain and was to commit a deed of villainy in each span. The first was to hang his lord, King Víkarr. Óðinn gave Starkaðr the gift of poetry: he made poetry as fast as he could talk. But the most remarkable point is that Starkaðr had no human attachments; he had neither son nor daughter and was loathed of all the common people. He had an enormous fortune in movable property, but neither land nor estates.²⁷

The description which Cæsar gave of the Germans on the Rhine is remarkably like that which Snorri wrote twelve centuries later of the rule of Haraldr Finehair:

26 *De Bello Gallico*, vi 22.

27 *Gautreks Saga*, ch. 7.

(He) took to himself all the hereditary estates (*óðul*) in every administrative district (*fylki*) and all the land, both inhabited and uninhabited, and even the sea and the lakes, and all farmers must be his tenants . . .²⁸

In other words, Haraldr broke the traditional law and introduced a lawless autocracy, which conflicted with the law of the aristocracy and the hereditary farmers, who had dominated Norway hitherto.

As the history of England shows plainly, autocracy and the rule of kings are ill consistent with the rule of the nobility and hereditary landowners. But in Norway, in the days of Haraldr Finehair, there were only two choices: rule of the hereditary landowners and rule of the king. Democracy, as we understand the term, was unknown.

We may consider the origins of Haraldr Finehair. On his father's side, he was said to descend from the Ynglingar, the royal house of the Swedes. But his mother was closely related to Danish chieftains. Haraldr grew up in south-eastern Norway, in those regions which had long been under Danish influence and even subjected to Danish authority.

There is a tale about Haraldr Finehair in the *Flateyjarbók* and the *Ágrip*; it is not altogether clear, but it seems that in his youth Haraldr had once been the guest of Óðinn.

Haraldr had close relations with Denmark. He married many wives, but parted from all of them when he married the Danish-born Ragnhildr. This Ragnhildr was mother of Eiríkr Bloodaxe, the favourite son of his father. No king of Norway was better suited to be the chosen hero of Óðinn. He slew his brothers—drove his kinsmen to the wall (*færði frændr sína við útgarða*), as is told—and displayed his contempt for the bonds of kindred and duties of relationship. We may remember how the evil-tempered Óðinn set brother against brother, kinsman against kinsman, as

²⁸ *Egils Saga Skalla-Grimssonar*, ch. 4: Haraldr konungr eignaðisk í hverju fylki óðul öll ok allt land, byggt ok óbyggt, ok jafnvel sjóinn ok vötnin, ok skyldu allir búendr vera hans leiglendingar . . .

is shown clearly in Saxo's *Gesta Danorum* and in the Heroic Sagas. We may think of the words of Óðinn himself:

I set the chieftains at odds,
never did I make peace between them.²⁹

It is no wonder that the poet of *Eiríksmál* should draw so imposing a picture of the reception of Eiríkr in Valhøll after his death in Britain. The character of Óðinn is many-sided but he is, in the first place, god of lawlessness, god of footpads and champions.

On such a basis we can perhaps understand why the medieval historians do not suggest that the settlers of Iceland worshipped Óðinn. In origin their leaders were largely noblemen and hereditary landowners of western Norway; their civilization was based on traditional law and family relationship. It is said that they fled from Norway because of the tyranny of King Haraldr; it could as well be said that they fled before the tyranny of Óðinn.

De Vries maintains in one passage that Óðinn was the 'aristocratic' god. In my view, this is a misunderstanding or misuse of a word. Óðinn is rather the god of lawlessness and, it seems, of the royal court. Such conceptions were southern in origin and hardly struck root in Norway or in Iceland until heathendom was falling into its decline.

This need not imply that the name of Óðinn was not known in Scandinavia before the Viking Age; there are good reasons to believe that it was. While there are no place-names containing the element *Óðin-* in Iceland, there are a number in Norway, more in Sweden and proportionately more in Denmark. Some of these

²⁹ From *Hárbarðsljóð*, 24:

Atta ek iðfrum
en aldri sættak.

Cf. *Helga kviða Hundingsbana* II, 34:

Einn veldr Óðinn
öllu þölví,
þvíat með sífiungom
sagrúnar bar.

(Óðinn alone causes every evil, for he bore runes of strife between kinsmen.)

appear to be of great age, e.g. those compounded with *-akr* (corn-field), *-vin* (meadow). These last two suggest that for some people, at one time, Óðinn was god of fertility, rather than the ruthless god of kings, champions, perjurers, and poets, which he appears to be in the literary sources.³⁰

For such reasons, I think it improbable that men in Iceland, swearing an oath on the holy ring, called on Óðinn. What point could there be in invoking Óðinn on such an occasion? We may remember the words of Óðinn himself:

I believe that Óðinn
has sworn an oath on the ring;
how should we trust his pledges?³¹

In conclusion I would say that I think Dumézil is right in supposing that the divine world reflects our world. It may well be that the religion of Indo-European peoples was originally one and the same religion, but if so, peoples' religious beliefs must have been very variable.

The highest gods did not, among all these peoples, correspond with the Indian Mitra-Varuna, but men chose their chief god according to their social system, their way of life, and their needs. The Swedes depended on the fertility of the soil and, therefore, their chief god was the fertility god, Freyr. Inhabitants of western Norway, and hence the Icelanders as well, chose the trusty Þórr, who must have been *hinn almáttki áss* in their eyes.³²

³⁰ See my *Myth and Religion of the North* (1964), 66 and references there given.

³¹ *Hávamál*, 110:

Baugeið Óðinn
hygg ek at unnit hafi:
hvat skal hans tryggðom trúá?

I think it conceivable that Víga-Glúmr had Óðinn in mind when he swore a false or ambiguous oath, saying: 'I swear a temple oath on the ring and say this to the Áss' (ek vinn hofseið at baugi ok segi ek þat Æsi), *Víga-Glúms Saga*, ch. 25.

³² A. Bugge, *Aarbøger* (1900), 290, and C. Marstrander, *Revue Celtique* xxxvi (1915), 244 ff., point out that, according to Irish annals, there was a circlet or arm-ring (*fail nó fáinne*), which apparently belonged to Þórr, in a temple near Dublin. In the year 994 an Irish king, named Maelseachlainn, seized this holy

But kings and champions, those who fought their way to power, may well have worshipped the lawless, creative god, Óðinn.

I consider it unlikely that the cult of Óðinn, as we know it, was common among West Norse peoples before the ninth century, but it may well be that Óðinn had been the chief god of the continental Germans for many centuries. This view is in some ways old-fashioned, but it is not necessarily wrong for that reason.

POSTSCRIPT

H. L. Tapp (*JEGP*, LV, 1956, 85 ff.) decided, on grounds rather different from those used here, that *hinn almátteki áss* was Þórr. Ólafur M. Ólafsson (*Andvari*, N.F. XII, 1970, 103 ff.) made interesting observations about the heathen oath, and concluded that the *áss* was Þórr for those who saw him as the highest god, but Óðinn for those who regarded Óðinn as the highest, e.g. poets and warriors. This is, perhaps, too subtle and subjective an outlook for men of the Viking Age.

ring. I should also mention the holy grove of Þórr (*coill Tomair*) in this area, which King Brian destroyed in the year 1000.

Marstrander has shown that Þórr was the chief god of the Norsemen in Ireland and that the Irish called the Norsemen 'men of Þórr' (*muintir Tomair*) in contrast to 'men of God or Christ' (*muintir Dé, muintir Críost*), as the Irish called themselves. In another work (*Bidrag til det norske sprogs historie i Irland*, 1915), Marstrander showed that the Norse settlers in Ireland were largely of West Norwegian stock, like the Icelanders. Their dialect was like Icelandic and they probably had religious concepts similar to those of the settlers of Iceland. See further J. Steenstrup, *Normannerne* II (1878), 359-62.

II THURSTABLE

IN his survey of place-names in which memories of heathendom are preserved, Sir Frank Stenton¹ mentioned a large number which contain the name of the god Thunor (Þunor). The most remarkable of his findings was that these names were practically confined to Saxon and Jutish territories. The few names in Anglian territory which might contain this element were of doubtful origin. Many of the names compounded with Thunor are reminiscent of those in Scandinavia compounded with *Þórr*, particularly in the eastern regions, where the fertilizing powers of this god were more strongly emphasized than they were in the west. The name of Thunor is compounded with *feld* in Thunderfield in Surrey and *Thunresfeld* in Wiltshire. These names may be compared with the eastern Scandinavian *Þórsakr* and *Þórsvin*, and they probably designated fields, places of public worship dedicated to the god. In at least six instances the name of Thunor is combined with *leah*, which may here be interpreted as 'sacred grove', and is thus comparable with the Swedish and Danish *Þórslundr* and the Irish *coill Tomair* near to Dublin.² Names of the type *Þunores hlæw* (Thunor's mound) and Thunridge (Hertfordshire) could also be compared with the Norse *Þórshaugr*, *Þórsáss*, *Þórsberg*.

One of the most interesting of the English place-names compounded with Thunor is that of the Essex hundred, or half-hundred, Thurstable.³ This name is not recorded in any early text, but appears first in the form *Thurestapl(e)* (1067) and later as *Thurstapel* (1219) and *Thurstapl* (1227). P. H. Reaney noticed that there was probably a *Hundredhouse* in this district (1398), which would serve as a meeting place. O.S. Anderson remarks on a *prisona regis de Thurstapl* (1258).

¹ *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Ser. IV, xxiii (1951), 1-24.

² See C. Marstrander, *Revue Celtique* xxxvi (1915), 244 ff.

³ The forms are listed by P. H. Reaney, *The Place-Names of Essex* (EPNS xii, 1935), 302; and by O. S. Anderson, *The English Hundred-Names* II (Lunds Universitets Årsskrift, 1939), 47-8.

Stenton, A. H. Smith⁴ and other specialists agree that the name Thurstable was originally *Punres stapol* or 'Thunor's Pillar'. The loss of *n* before *r* has many parallels in Late Old English,⁵ and it is therefore not necessary to assume Scandinavian influence in the form Thurstable. We may suppose that, in pagan times, there was a pillar in Thurstable hundred, dedicated to the god Thunor, and that this was a meeting place.

Sacred pillars and trees are known from many other sources. Tacitus (*Germania*, 34) mentions 'Pillars of Hercules' (*Herculis columnas*), said to be still standing in his day, and probably situated in Heligoland or on the Frisian coast.⁶ Pillars of Hercules are also known outside the Germanic world, in the Straits of Gibraltar, and on the Black Sea. The question remains what Tacitus meant by Hercules when he wrote the passage last quoted from the *Germania*. He uses the name elsewhere, although he may not always designate the same figure. Going into battle, he says (*Germania*, 3), Germans used to sing the praises of Hercules, whom they believed had once been among them, and they called him the first of all strong men (*primumque omnium virorum fortium*). In this passage it looks as if Hercules was the name which Tacitus applied to a German hero, perhaps to Arminius, or even to Sigfrid, whom many have identified with Arminius.⁷ The songs might then be of the same type as the heroic *Bjarkamál*, which St Ólafr ordered his poet to sing before the battle of Stiklastaðir.⁸ The use of the name Hercules for a mortal hero is also recorded in other regions.⁹

It is, however, plain that Tacitus also applied the name

⁴ *English Place-Name Elements* II (EPNS xxvi, 1956), 146, 217.

⁵ See A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar* (1959), 189-90.

⁶ On the Pillars of Hercules see H. M. Chadwick, *The Origin of the English Nation* (1907), 228-9; E. Norden, *Die germanische Urgeschichte in Tacitus Germania* (1920), 470 ff.; *Die Germania des Tacitus*, erläutert von R. Much (2nd ed. rev. by R. Kienast, 1959), 47 ff.

⁷ See especially G. Vigfússon and F. York Powell, *Sigfrid-Arminius* (1886); further O. Höfler, *Siegfried Arminius und die Symbolik* (1961), where details of bibliography are given.

⁸ Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla, Ólafs Saga Helga*, ch. 208.

⁹ See Norden, *op. cit.*, 172 ff.

Hercules to a Germanic god. In his *Annals* (II 12) he mentions a holy grove of Hercules (*silva Herculi sacra*), in which various Germanic tribes used to meet. If only because of comparison with the Norse *Þórslundr*, this may lead us to suspect that by Hercules, Tacitus meant Thunor or Þórr.

H. M. Chadwick,¹⁰ who examined Tacitus's account of the Pillars of Hercules, arrived at the interesting conclusion that, by Hercules, Tacitus in this last passage designated the obscure Germanic god, Irmin. He gave strong arguments to support this view, although the existence of a god Irmin has been questioned.

In fact, *Irmin* is rarely found except as the first element of a compound. In the *Lay of Hildebrand*, Almighty God is called *Irmingot* (l. 30), and mankind is *irmindeot* (l. 13). Old English supplies numerous examples of the compounded element *eormen-*, e.g. *eormencyn* 'mankind', *eormengrund* 'the wide earth', *eormenlaf* 'a mighty heritage', *eormenþeode* 'all peoples'. Old Norse has also some examples of this element. In the *Grimnismál* (str. 20), and again in Sturla Þórðarson's *Hrynhenda* (str. 15), composed in 1262, the world is called *jǫrmungrund*.¹¹ In Bragi's *Ragnarsdrápa* (str. 16) and in the *Völuspá* (str. 50) the World Serpent is called *jǫrmungandr*, which could mean no more than 'the mighty magic wand'. In *Haustlǫng* (str. 18) Þjóðólfr of Hvin seems to refer to Þórr's giant enemy as *jǫrmunþrjótr*, although this reading is questionable.¹² Again *jǫrmuni* (v. l. *aurmuni*) appears as a poetic word for an ox,¹³ and as a name for a horse.¹⁴ Although this has been disputed, the last two words are probably based on the same root. Again, in the *þulur*,¹⁵ the simplex *ǫrmunr* (v. l. *ǫrundr*) is given as a name for Óðinn.

It is now generally agreed that the element *irmin-* has some sacral significance, and that its original meaning must be deeper than 'big' or 'extensive', although it had evidently faded and meant little more than this to the Christian poets of England.

¹⁰ *op. cit.*, 228 ff.

¹¹ *Skj.*, B II 117.

¹² *Skj.*, A I 20; B I 18.

¹³ *Skj.*, B I 669; A I 675.

¹⁴ *Skj.*, B I 676; A I 685.

¹⁵ *Skj.*, B I 673; A I 682.

The names *Ermanaric* and (*H*)*erminiones* must have meant something more than 'the great king', 'the great people'.

Evidence of the sacral significance of *irmin-* is found especially in the Saxon records about the *Irmingsul*. It is plain that the *Irmingsul* was a place or an object held in veneration by the pagan Saxons, but it is described in rather varying terms.¹⁶

According to the Frankish Annals, Charles the Great burned down the chief seat of Saxon heathendom near Heresburg in Westphalia in A.D. 772, and this was called *Irmingsul* or *Erminsul*. It is stated in another text that Charles destroyed the temple (*fanum*) of the Saxons, *quod vocatur Irmingsul*. Elsewhere the *Irmingsul* is described as a famous grove (*lucum famosum*).

From these quotations, it is evident that the *Irmingsul* was thought of as a temple, a holy grove, and an idol, but Rudolph of Fulda goes into closer detail when he describes it. The Saxons used to worship leafy trees and wells, but, Rudolph goes on to say, they particularly worshipped *truncum quoque ligni non parvae magnitudinis in altum erectum*. In the Saxon language this was called *Irmingsul, quod Latine dicitur universalis columna, quasi sustinens omnia*.¹⁷

From this last passage it appears that the *Irmingsul* was a column or sacred pillar, believed to uphold the universe. This is borne out by an obscure passage written by the monk Widukind about 968. About the year 831,¹⁸ the Saxons had won a victory over the Thuringians at Scheidungen, on the Unstrut. In the morning they placed their eagle at the eastern gate, and piled up an altar of victory according to their traditional superstition, imitating by the name of Mars the Pillar of Hercules. In his next sentence, Widukind shows that he was thinking of an

¹⁶ A large number of references to the *Irmingsul* were collected by J. Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology* (tr. J. S. Stallybrass, 1900), 116 ff. See further J. de Vries, 'La valeur religieuse du mot germanique Irmin', *Les Cahiers du Sud* xxxix (1952), 18 ff.

¹⁷ ed. G. H. Pertz (Mon. Germ. Hist., 1887), II 676.

¹⁸ ed. H.-E. Lohmann and P. Hirsch (Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum . . . editi, 1935), I xii.

Irmīnsul, for he mentions the opinion that the Saxons descended from the Greeks, adding that *Hirmin* or *Hermis* is the Greek for Mars.

The word *Irmīnsul* also appears in various forms in the Old High German glosses; it is said to mean *colossus*, *altissima columna*. The plural *irmīnsuli* is also glossed as *pyramides*.¹⁹ If we are not yet able to explain the first element of the compound, the second is plain enough. It is related to the Old English *syl* (pillar, column) which, in the phrase *Ercoles syla* in the Old English *Orosius*²⁰ is applied to the Pillars of Hercules (*Herculis columnae*). It is, therefore, of the same origin as Old Norse *súl*, *súla*, meaning 'pillar'.

The Old Norse compound *ǫndvegissúla* (generally in pl. *ǫndvegissúlur*) has a strong sacral significance. It is often translated as 'pillars of the high seat', although this translation is misleading. The origin of the word *ǫndvegi* is disputed, but its first element probably means 'opposite', and the second may derive from *vegr*, 'way'.²¹

However that may be, the *ǫndvegi* was the central place in the main room or hall, where the master of the house would sit with chosen companions. It is most fully described by the author of the *Fagrskinna*,²² when speaking of royal residences in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. These buildings had a doorway at each end, and the king's seat was on the middle of the long bench or dais, facing the sun. Opposite it was the lower or second *ǫndvegi* (*hit óæðra*, *annat ǫndvegi*), occupied in this case by the king's counsellor, or by the most distinguished guests. The farther their seat from the central place on each side, the less was the honour shown to its occupants. The *ǫndvegi* was not a single seat, for we sometimes read of several sitting in it together.²³ It

19 Grimm, *op. cit.*, I 115-16.

20 *King Alfred's Orosius*, ed. H. Sweet (EETS 79, 1883), 8.

21 For various views see E. Birkeli, *Høgsætet* (1932), 118 ff., and A. M. Sturtevant, *Scandinavian Studies and Notes* XVIII (1944), 65 ff.

22 ed. Finnur Jónsson (1902-3), 306.

23 See further Valtýr Guðmundsson, *Privatboligen på Island* (1889), 184 ff.

is told of Haraldr Finehair that he esteemed his poets most of all his retainers, and they occupied the second *öndvegi*.²⁴

The *öndvegi*, as it seems, was marked off from the rest of the hall by the *öndvegissúlur*, the main supporting pillars, of which there were probably four, two on each side. These were venerated because they supported the house, as the *Irmínsul* supported the universe.

The deep veneration in which the *öndvegissúlur* were held is emphasized in a great number of stories about men who settled in Iceland in the ninth and tenth centuries, showing that these pillars were regarded as the abode of tutelary gods, who would guide the settler to his new home.

Ogmundr Kormáksson,²⁵ sailing from Norway to Iceland, threw his main pillars overboard and when he made land in Miðfjörðr they had already come to shore. Þórðr Skeggi Hrappsson settled at Bær, below Lónsheiðr in Austur-Skaptafellssýsla, where he lived for ten years or more. But after Þórðr heard that his pillars had been found in Leiruvágr, below Mosfellsheiðr, he moved house.²⁶

Stories of this kind are not uncommon, but in Iceland it was particularly the god Þórr who guided the supporting pillars, as is shown in many sources.

In the *Landnámabók*²⁷ it is told of a certain Hallsteinn that, after taking possession of Þorskafjörðr, he offered sacrifice to Þórr, and asked him to send some supporting pillars. Shortly afterwards a huge tree-trunk drifted ashore, and pillars were made of it, not only for Hallsteinn's house, but for nearly all the houses in the neighbourhood.²⁸ According to the version of *Landnámabók* in *Hauksbók* and to the longer version of *Gísla Saga*,²⁹ Hallsteinn had sacrificed one or more of his sons for the pillars.

The association between the main pillars and the god Þórr is brought out more strongly in the story of Þórólfr Mostrarskegg,

²⁴ *Egils Saga Skalla-Grimssonar*, ch. 8.

²⁵ *Kormáks Saga*, ch. 2.

²⁶ *Landnámabók*, ed. Finnur Jónsson (1900), 9 (*Hauksbók*) and 209 (*Sturlubók*).

²⁷ *ibid.*, 165.

²⁸ *ibid.*, 42

²⁹ ed. Finnur Jónsson (1929), 54 n.

the father of Hallsteinn, as it is told in *Eyrbyggja Saga* (ch. 3-4) and again in *Landnámabók*.³⁰

Þórólfr was originally called Hrólfr, but he was so devoted to Þórr, his patron and beloved friend (*ástvinr*), that people called him Þórólfr. When he lived in Norway, on the island of Mostr, he kept a temple dedicated to Þórr, and it was called Þórshof (Þórr's Temple). Þórólfr had to leave Norway because of his enmity with Haraldr Finehair but, before he did so, he offered a sacrifice to Þórr, who directed him to Iceland. He took down the temple and shipped most of the timbers, as well as the soil under the altar on which the idol had stood. As he sailed west off Reykjanes, he threw the main pillars of the temple overboard. On one of these the image of Þórr was carved, and Þórólfr resolved that he would settle at the place where the god brought them to shore. They sped swiftly over the waves, and Þórólfr sailed into Breiðafjörðr. He made land in a creek afterwards called Hofsvágr (Temple Creek). After Þórólfr and his men had explored the surrounding country, they found the pillars on a promontory where Þórr had brought them. In the words of *Eyrbyggja Saga* it looks as if the god is nearly identified with the pillars: *Þórr hafði á land komit með súlurnar*.

There are some other stories which illustrate the close association between Þórr and the supporting pillars. It is told of a settler in northern Iceland that, when he first sighted land, he refused to jettison his pillars, saying that he would rather invoke Þórr directly and ask the god to show him where to land. If the land were already occupied, he would fight for it.³¹

It is not told in Norse sources that any god other than Þórr was patron of the supporting pillars. In fact, they appear to be Þórr's pillars. For the settlers of Iceland, Þórr was the chief god; he was the all-powerful god (*hinn almáttki áss*), who upheld their houses, as he upheld their law and their traditional religion.³²

³⁰ pp. 31 and 152.

³¹ *Landnámabók*, 65 and 187-8.

³² I have discussed this question briefly in 'The Cult of Óðinn in Iceland', see p. 17 above.

On these lines we may understand the significance of Thurstable, or Thunor's Pillar, in Essex. We may suppose that it was the site of a pillar sacred to the god Thunor. This pillar was probably believed to support the sky and thus the world, or at least the world of those who venerated it.

If this hypothesis is correct, we may wonder what were the relations between Thunor's Pillar in Essex, the *Irminsul* of the Saxons and the Pillars of Hercules, to which Tacitus alluded.

From the arguments so far given, it seems that by Hercules Tacitus could just as well have designated Irmin as Þórr (Thunor). In either case, he had good reason. Irmin and Þórr resembled Hercules in that all three were gods of supporting pillars. While the *Irminsul* supported the world of the Saxons, Þórr, with his *öndvegissúlur*, upheld the house of the Icelandic farmer, and with his *stapol* he assured the security of the Essex hundred.

In Greek myth, as is well known, it was the task of Atlas to hold up the celestial globe. But on one occasion, when he went to fetch the apples of the Hesperides, Herakles (Hercules) relieved Atlas of his painful burden.

Þórr, Irmin, Herakles, and Atlas were not the only gods whose task was to uphold the house, the sky, the universe. It was also the task of Indra, filled with soma, as Þórr was filled with mead. In R. T. H. Griffith's noble rendering of the *Rigveda*:

High heaven in unsupported space he stablished:
he filled the two worlds and the air's mid-region.

Earth he upheld, and gave it wide expansion. These
things did Indra in the soma's rapture.³³

The remarkable similarities between Indra and Þórr have been emphasized often enough, and many have believed that they were originally identical.³⁴ Just as Þórr is the son of Óðinn and of

³³ *Rigveda* (Benares, 1896-7), II 15.2

³⁴ For this view see esp. V. Rydberg, *Undersökningar i germansk mytologi* (1886-9), II 100 ff. The same view has been expressed in another form by

Jorð (Earth), Indra is sometimes said to be the son of Heaven and Earth. This would not be the occasion to reopen the discussion of the identity of the two figures, although I hope to do so at another time. For the present, it is enough to say that the two gods are of the same type.

Who, then, is Irmin, if the arguments that he is a god are accepted? It was noticed that in *pulur* the name *Ǣormunr* was probably applied to Óðinn, although there are some doubts about the reading. As Snorri observed,³⁵ Óðinn has more names than any other god. A great many of these are no other than nicknames, based on one or another of the adventures of this sinister figure. He is *Báleygr* (the fiery-eyed), *Bólverkr* (the evil-doer), *Helblindi* (the death-blind). But some of Óðinn's names do not appear to be nicknames, but rather the names of forgotten gods, whose functions Óðinn has absorbed. One example might be *Gautr*, whose name suggests that he was originally a specialized fertility god, distinct from Óðinn.³⁶

Irmin, since his pillar upholds everything, must have been conceived as a god of the same type as Þórr, Herakles, Indra. It is, therefore, of minor importance whether we identify the Germanic Hercules of Tacitus with Þórr or with Irmin.

Many have associated Irmin with the Indian Aryaman.³⁷ Philological difficulties have been noticed in the identification *Irmin-Aryaman*, but such objections can rarely be decisive when applied to the names of gods or heroes.

Aryaman was also identified by J. Vendryes³⁸ and again by G. Dumézil³⁹ with the Irish ancestor-hero, Eremon.⁴⁰ Although

G. Dumézil in many works, e.g. *Les Dieux des Germains* (1959), 106 ff., and *Les Dieux des Indo-européens* (1952), ch. 1.

35 *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*, ed. Finnur Jónsson (1931), 28.

36 If the relationship of the name *Gautr* to the verb *gjóta*, 'to give birth (of certain animals), spawn etc.', is accepted.

37 On this question see esp. J. de Vries in *Cahiers du Sud* xxxix (1952), 26 ff.

38 *Mémoires de la Société de Linguistique de Paris* xx (1918), 269 ff.

39 *Le Troisième Souverain* (1949), 167 ff.

40 The name *Aryaman* is explained by G. Dumézil, *Les Dieux des Indo-européens* (1952), 100 ff., and entirely differently by H. W. Bailey in *Transactions of the Philological Society* (1959), 71 ff.

little is known of either of these, they share certain remarkable features, apart from the general similarity of their names.

But the identification of Irmin with Aryaman is more difficult, because there is little that we can deduce from the sources about Irmin's place in religious life except that he upheld the world of his worshippers. In that case, if we follow Dumézil's tripartite system, he would belong to the second, and not to the first class of deities, as Aryaman is said to do.

III DREAMS IN ICELANDIC TRADITION

ACCORDING to a proverb, which has been popular in Iceland for many centuries, dreams have no significance (*ekki er mark at draumum*). When these words are uttered, they often serve as the introduction to a story illustrating the deep significance of a dream or its prophetic value. Among no people in Europe is the cult of dreams so deeply rooted. In no literature are dream-symbols more sophisticated, nor their interpretation more subtle and intricate.¹

As is well known, Iceland was first peopled, chiefly by Norwegians, in the ninth century, and Icelandic historians of the thirteenth century wrote not only about the dreams of their own countrymen but also about those of their Scandinavian kinsmen and ancestors. One of the oldest of the dreams recorded is the famous one of Ragnhildr, queen of Hálfðan the Black (ninth century).² Ragnhildr dreamed that she took a thorn or brooch from her tunic, and as she held it in her hand it took root in the soil and grew into a stout tree, so tall that she could scarcely see over it. The bowl of the tree was red as blood, the upper stem was a beautiful green, and the branches white as snow. The limbs were so great and so many that they spread over the whole of Norway, and even more distant lands. Ragnhildr was to be the mother of Haraldr Finehair, first ruler of all Norway, and it was many years before the dream was fully explained. The red bowl of the tree signified the battles and bloodshed of Haraldr's early years; the green stem signified the glory of his reign; the white summit signified his old age and grey hair, and the spreading branches symbolized his

1 According to W. Henzen (*Über die Träume in der altnordischen Sagalitteratur*, 1890, 75) some 250 dreams are recorded in Old Icelandic saga-literature alone. G. D. Kelchner (*Dreams in Old Norse Literature*, 1935, 3) speaks of 'five hundred and thirty dream references' in this literature.

2 *Heimskringla*, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson (ÍF xxvi-xxviii, 1941-51), I 90 and 148.

descendants distributed throughout Norway, who had ever since provided the country's rulers.

Dreams of trees, which signify descendants, are common in Icelandic as in other literatures, and the trees take different shapes according to the different qualities of the unborn descendants. In one case a woman dreamed of a tree with roots great and strong, signifying the prowess of her unborn son, but the blossom on the tree was poor, and this signified lack of success and of the good will of his kinsmen. Before the birth of a daughter, the same woman dreamed of another tree with many branches and splendid blossom. The daughter would have many descendants and, according to one version of the story, the blossom signified the new religion, to which the descendants of this pagan woman would belong.³

An Icelandic traveller in Greenland dreamed that he was at home in Iceland, and on his right knee he had five fine leeks branching out into many leeks. One of them towered above his head and it had the beauty of gold. The leeks symbolized the dreamer's descendants, but none of them equalled Bishop Þorlákr the Saint (died 1193), who was represented by the golden leek.⁴

The dream of Sigurðr the Jerusalem-farer, king of Norway (died 1130) is more sombre. Gazing out to sea, he saw a dense fog approaching, and as it drew nearer it turned out to be a huge tree, with its roots in the sea and its branches towering in the air. As the tree struck the shore it broke into fragments, some large and some small, and they entered every creek of Norway. The king interpreted the dream himself. It signified the arrival from Ireland of Haraldr Gilli, claiming to be a son of Magnús Bareleg, and half-brother of King Sigurðr. Haraldr shared the kingdom with Sigurðr, and had many descendants of varying stature.⁵

Descendants may also appear as hair growing on the head of the

3 *Harðar Saga ok Hólmverja* in *Íslendinga Sögur*, ed. Guðni Jónsson (1946-9), XII 211-14, 299-300

4 *Flóamanna Saga*, ed. Finnur Jónsson (1932), 46.

5 *Morkinskinna*, ed. Finnur Jónsson (1932), 395; cf. *Heimskringla*, ed. cit., III 265.

dreamer. King Hálfðan, husband of Ragnhildr, fell asleep in a pigsty, and dreamed that his hair grew profusely, falling in locks of different colours and length. Some of them reached the ground, others the calf of the leg or the knee, but some reached only to the neck, and others seemed to sprout from his head like little horns. One of the locks exceeded all others in length and beauty. Hálfðan's dream was quickly explained. He would have many descendants, who would rule Norway, although not all with equal distinction. The greatest of them all, it was afterwards said, was represented by the longest and most beautiful of Hálfðan's locks. He was St Ólafr, perpetual king of Norway (died 1030).⁶

Belief in dream-symbolism implies a belief in fate, and in Iceland this belief transcended the religious opinions of pagans and Christians. Not only men, but also the gods are subject to the decree of an impersonal, insensitive fate. In a poem of great antiquity, the half-divine Skírnir is made to say: 'My destiny was fashioned down to the last half-day, and all my life was determined.'⁷ Heroes face death in exaltation, knowing that none can live a night after the sentence of the norns (or fates). The future, therefore, is not something unformed, but it is a state which exists already. The seer may be aware of it in a waking state, but many more can see it in dreams, and when they do so it is most often disguised in symbols. Some are better able to interpret these symbols than others. The symbols which appear in dreams may be animate or inanimate, and many examples of both kinds could be quoted from older and later ages.

Clothing is among the most common of inanimate symbols. If the dreamer sees a man dressed in red,⁸ he will fall in battle. In the year 1171, a man dreamed that he was wearing a ruffled tunic, and soon afterwards he was drowned. The ruffled tunic symbolized the great waves which overcame him.⁹

⁶ *ibid.*, 1 90-1.

⁷ *Skírnismál* (*Fgr Skírnis*), str. 13.

⁸ *Brennu-Njáls Saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson (ÍF XIII, 1954), ch. 133.

⁹ *Sturlu Saga* in *Sturlunga Saga*, ed. Jón Jóhannesson and others (1946), ch. 29.

The most elaborate and artistic dreams of clothing are those ascribed to Guðrún, heroine of the *Laxdæla Saga* (ch. 33). First Guðrún dreamed that she was wearing a headdress which did not suit her, so she took it off and threw it into the river; secondly she was wearing a fine silver bracelet, but it dropped from her arm into the water; thirdly she was wearing a golden bracelet, but when she fell it split on a stone and blood gushed from it. Lastly Guðrún dreamed that she was wearing a magnificent golden helmet, laden with jewels and so heavy that she could hardly hold up her head, and it fell from her into the fjord.

Only an expert could see the meaning of these four dreams. The clothing and jewels represented the four husbands of Guðrún. She would not love the first of them and would leave him; her second husband would be a distinguished man, but he would not live long and would die by drowning. Guðrún's third husband would be nobler than the second, for gold is nobler than silver. As the golden bracelet was broken by Guðrún's fall, and blood gushed from it, so should the death of her third husband result from Guðrún's own weaknesses, and her husband would die by the sword. The fourth husband would be a mighty man, bearing a 'helmet of terror' (*ægishjálmr*) over his wife. As the helmet fell into the fjord, so would he be drowned in it.

Many examples of clothes and jewels as symbols in a dream could be cited from older and later times. During the latter years of the nineteenth century a woman dreamed that she was wearing a gold ring which split in two, and soon afterwards two of her children died.¹⁰ Another woman, living about the same period, dreamed before her marriage that an unknown man came to her and gave her nine beautiful buttons, but she lost all except one. She had nine children and lost all but one.¹¹ Dream-symbols of this kind are fully represented in the dream-books circulating in Iceland today.¹² To be dressed in patched clothes denotes

¹⁰ Sigfús Sigfússon, *Íslenzkar Þjóð-Sögur og -Sagnir* (1922-5), II 31-2.

¹¹ *ibid.*, II 23.

¹² Margeir Jónsson, *Ráðningar drauma* (1936); *Ýtarlegar drauma-ráðningar* (author not named, 1955). On these books see pp. 38, 46 below.

improved circumstances, but torn clothes denote loss of a friend. The significance of clothes depends much on their colour.

Considering its importance in the middle ages, it is not surprising that the sword should figure in dreams described in early literature. In the *Guðrúnarkviða* II¹³ Atli dreamed that his wife, Guðrún, pierced him with a sword. This dream will be discussed briefly below (p. 47). A more realistic dream is described in *Heiðarvíga Saga*, one of the oldest of the Family Sagas, probably written about 1200. On the night before a battle in which he lost his life, a certain Þorbjörn Brúnason dreamed that he struck a blow with his sword and it broke in two. Þorbjörn spoke two verses in his dream, and remembered them when he awoke.¹⁴

At all periods the interpretation of some dreams has depended on word-play, and such interpretations are remembered in countries other than Iceland. I once heard of an Englishman, who dreamed repeatedly that he was falling down a bank. He saw the meaning of his dream when he looked into his Bank account.

In Iceland this word-play is carried to greater lengths. In the year 1254, a member of a party riding forth to attack an enemy dreamed that one of their number, Vigfúss son of Gunnsteinn, had left them. The party then turned back, for the name *Vigfúss* means 'Battle-eager', and it is supported by the name of Vigfúss's father *Gunnsteinn*, which means 'Battle-stone'.¹⁵

While the Great Assembly was sitting at Thingvellir in the year 1120, a man who was not present dreamed that one came to him from the meeting. When asked the news, the stranger said that a man had undertaken to work in all the dwellings at Thingvellir. His name was Þórir dritloki (dirt-ender), and it signified the outcome of the Assembly.¹⁶

As these last examples show, much depends upon the name of

13 Str. 38, cf. *Atlakviða*, str. 40-1.

14 In *Borgfirðinga Sögur*, ed. Sigurður Nordal and Guðni Jónsson (ÍF III, 1938), 291.

15 *Sturlunga Saga*, ed. cit., 1 506.

16 *Borgils Saga ok Hafliða*, ed. U. Brown (1952), 25.

the person who figures in a dream, and symbolism of this kind is very common in the dreams recorded in later periods. The word *björg* means 'means of subsistence, stores, provisions, food', and when a woman called *Sæbjörg* (sea-provision) appears in a dream, a good catch of fish may be expected. In contrast, a woman of the name *Ingibjörg* (cf. *engin björg* 'no provisions') betokens famine. Names containing the elements *-berg* (rock), *-steinn* (stone), denoting hard substances, signify hardship (*harðindi*).¹⁷

Word-play is not confined to names. On the night before he set sail for Norway, in the latter years of the twelfth century, a certain priest dreamed that he went into the presence of the archbishop in Niðaróss, and the archbishop welcomed him warmly. He told his dream to the mystic Guðmundr the Good, afterwards bishop, who was with him on the voyage. From the word *erkibyskup* (archbishop), Guðmundr deduced that an 'arch-wonder' (*erkibýsn*) would befall them. On the first night at sea their ship was wrecked.¹⁸

One of the most fruitful of dreamers was Sverrir (died 1202), the short-legged apostate priest, who made himself king of Norway. His biography was written partly by the Icelandic abbot Karl (died c. 1212) and partly by other Icelanders, and the sources of parts of the story were Sverrir's own words. As an ordained priest, Sverrir was better educated than his predecessors, and he was well capable of inventing dreams to further his own ambitions. The influence of Scripture has been detected in them.¹⁹ But Sverrir had his short legs firmly rooted in the northern soil, and the solution of some of his dreams depended on popular word-play. He once dreamed that he was sleeping in an upper room, when a man of terrifying aspect came to his bedside. The stranger told Sverrir to get up and follow him, and he led Sverrir to a huge fire, on which the body of a man was roasting. The dream-man told Sverrir to sit down and eat, and placed the human body before him. Sverrir ate

¹⁷ On the meanings of names in dreams see especially Jón Árnason, *Íslenzkar Þjóðsögur og Æfintýri* (1862-4), I 415; Sigfús Sigfússon, *op. cit.*, II 31; Margeir Jónsson, *op. cit.*, 62-70.

¹⁸ *Bps.*, I 423.

¹⁹ Cf. G. M. Gathorne-Hardy, *A Royal Impostor* (1956), 266.

the flesh from the bones, reluctantly at first, but as he ate his appetite grew, and when he came to the head he wanted to eat that as well, but the dream-man took it from him and told him to stop. Sverrir interpreted the dream himself. The man who was roasting in the fire (*eldr*) was his enemy Jarl Erlingr, and he was growing old (*eldask*). When Sverrir devoured the body it showed that his party would destroy the greater part of their opponents, but since Sverrir did not eat the head, the young King Magnús himself would escape.²⁰

The saga-hero Víga-Glúmr²¹ once dreamed that he walked from his house and met his enemy, Þórarinn. Unarmed, the two champions attacked each other with whetstones (*harðsteinar*), and the whetstones met with a great crash (*brestr hár*), which could be heard throughout the whole neighbourhood (*heraðsbrestr*). The significance of the dream is slightly obscure, but it rests on the word *brestr*, for besides 'crash' this also means 'loss'. The same word-play may be noticed in several dreams recorded in recent times. A woman dreamed that she heard three great crashes out in the east over the sea, accompanied by blazes of light. Shortly afterwards news reached Iceland of the death of King Christian IX (1906) and of two members of his family. Crashes and flashes portend the death of chieftains.²²

In early literature animals are common dream-symbols, and in nearly every case the animal may be regarded as the *fylgja* (sometimes called *hamingja*, *hugr*), the attendant spirit or fetch, more often seen in sleep than in a waking state. The belief in the *fylgja* is remarkably persistent and survives today. The word *fylgja* besides meaning 'fetch' also means the 'afterbirth of a child' and, in popular belief, the fetch and the afterbirth are intimately linked.²³ The conception of the fetch is rather variable. According to some, the fetch will take the form of the beast which first walks over or

²⁰ *Sverris Saga*, ed. G. Indrebø (1920), ch. 42.

²¹ *Víga-Glúms Saga*, ed. G. Turville-Petre (2nd ed., 1960), 35-6; cf. notes 75-6.

²² Sigfús Sigfússon (*op. cit.*, II 45-6) gives some further examples.

²³ Cf. pp. 52 ff. below and references there given.

devours the afterbirth.²⁴ Consequently, we hear of fetches who have the form of mice, sheep, dogs, foxes, cats, birds of prey or carrion feeders. We hear also of men and women who have fetches which accord with their character, and these are the more common in older literature. Cheats and wizards may be attended by foxes, beautiful women by swans.

The fetches seen in dreams take the form both of animals seen in Iceland and of those known only by hearsay. The most common in the older literature is perhaps the wolf, which has never been seen in Iceland. Before he was attacked in his house, Atli of Otraldalr dreamed that he saw eighteen wolves led by a vixen, a more vicious creature than he had ever seen.²⁵ The leader of the assailants was the most wicked wizard in the whole of that region.

Wolves appear in many dreams, and they are nearly always the fetches of enemies.²⁶ Bears are not necessarily evil, but seldom can any good be expected from a polar bear.²⁷

Horses figure rather rarely in the dreams related in older literature, and their significance depends much on their colour. A certain Þorkell silfri dreamed that he was riding a red or chestnut, galloping so swiftly that he seemed hardly to touch the ground.²⁸ Þorkell interpreted his own dream; the red colour was a token of distinction and good prospects.²⁹ But Þorkell's wife was wiser than he, and she quoted the proverb, 'a horse is a man's fetch' (*marr er manns fylgja*). A red or bloody fetch was an omen of violent death, as is told in many sources. The flying horse is also remembered as an evil omen.³⁰

24 See Sigfús Sigfússon. *op. cit.*, III 241; Jónas Jónasson, *Íslenskir Þjóðhættir* (1934), 261 ff.; Jón Árnason, *op. cit.*, I 355, 357 ff.

25 *Hávarðar Saga Ísfirðings* in *Vestfirðinga Sögur*, ed. Björn K. Þórólfsson and Guðni Jónsson (ÍF VI, 1943), 349.

26 See *Brennu-Njáls Saga*, ch. 62. There are many other examples.

27 The fetch of Atli appears in a dream as a polar-bear in the *Atlamá* (see p. 48 below). Other examples of bears as fetches may be found in *Brennu-Njáls Saga*, ch. 23, *Harðar Saga ok Hólmverja*, ed. cit., 271 (ch. 31). There are others besides these.

28. *Vatnsdæla Saga*, ch. 42.

29 *Rautt mun fyrir brenna* (*Vatnsdæla Saga*, loc. cit.).

30 See W. H. Vogt's edition of *Vatnsdæla Saga* (1921), III and references there given, and further Einar Ó. Sveinsson's ed. (ÍF VIII, 1939), III, note 1.

Gísli Súrsson was frequently visited in sleep by two dream-women (*draumkonur*), the one good and the other evil; the good dream-woman was mounted on a white horse, and the same was told of the good attendant spirits who attempted to rescue Þiðrandi from the pagan attendants of his own family.³¹

Horses seem to figure rather more frequently in modern dream symbolism and still their significance is chiefly in their colour. To be riding a bay signifies illness or death, while a dappled grey or a roan signifies drunkenness and debauchery. A grey signifies severe weather and snow.³²

In the past, cattle have often appeared in dreams as the fetches of men. According to *Vápnfirðinga Saga*,³³ an old nurse was found weeping over her dreams. They were of bulls and oxen goring each other to death, and the dreams foretold a feud between two families which continued through generations. The fetch of Guðmundr the Mighty (died *c.* 1025) also appeared in this form. On the day of Guðmundr's death, his brother dreamed that he saw a fine ox walking up the district. The ox came to Guðmundr's farm, went to every building until he reached the high seat, where he dropped dead.³⁴

Fetches in the form of birds are less common than might be expected. In *Gunnlaugs Saga*³⁵ a beautiful girl appeared in a dream before her birth in the form of a pen swan, and her future lovers took the form of two eagles, which fought to the death. The third fetch was a falcon, who flew off with the pen, and represented the girl's husband. A few examples of bird-fetches could also be quoted from the Heroic Sagas, and there are some in later Icelandic literature. Jón Arason, last of the Catholic bishops, was beheaded by Danish agents in 1550. Before his birth, Jón's mother had dreamed that she gave birth to an eagle, which alighted on the gable of a church, and the head flew from his body.³⁶ In a story published in

31 Cf. pp. 118 ff. below; D. Strömbäck, *Tidrande och Diserna* (1949).

32 Cf. Margeir Jónsson, *op. cit.*, s.v. *hestur*.

33 In *Austfirðinga Sögur*, ed. Jón Jóhannesson (ÍF XI, 1950), 48-9 (ch. 13).

34 *Ljósvefninga Saga*, ed. Björn Sigfússon (ÍF X, 1940), ch. 11, cf. ch. 16.

35 ed. P. G. Foote (1957), ch. 2.

36 *Bps.*, II 443-4.

the last century, two children appear to their father in a dream in the form of white birds³⁷ and, according to a more recent story, a woman dreamed that she saw eleven doves on the cradle of her infant daughter. One of them was dead and the mother handled it, but she could not grasp the other ten. When the girl grew up she bore eleven children, but her mother saw only the first of them, which was stillborn.³⁸

As examples already quoted have shown, dreamers may be brought into touch with inhabitants of other worlds, of whom few are conscious while awake. Many have had dream-men and dream-women (*draummenn, draumkonur*), and these are men and women who appear regularly to dreamers and converse with them. I have already mentioned the good and evil dream-women who used to appear to Gísli Súrsson, and I have discussed these in another paper.³⁹ It has been said in later times that an easy way to obtain a dream-man or woman is to ask one on the point of death to fulfil this function. After death, the body of the dream-man rots like any other, but the eyes remain uncorrupt and glitter as if he were alive.⁴⁰ The dream-man or woman often gives good advice, telling the dreamer where lost objects are to be found, or where to look for straying sheep. In the end the dream-man may begin to lie, and this is a sign that the dreamer's days are numbered.

These last examples show that dreamers may be brought into touch with the dead and with beings of the Other World.

Occasionally dead people, no doubt conceived as former members of the same family, may be seen calling one to join them. According to *Víga-Glúms Saga* (ch. 19), a woman fell into a swoon as her husband left the house. When asked what she had seen, she said that she had seen dead men going to meet her husband, and he must be doomed.⁴¹ Sometimes, when a man dies, his attendant spirit may be seen approaching another member of

37 Jón Árnason, *op. cit.*, II 190.

38 Brynjólfur Jónsson, *Dulrænar Smásögur* (1907), 6-7.

39 See pp. 118 ff. below.

40 See Jónas Jónasson, *Íslenskir Þjóðhættir* (1934), 417-8.

41 A similar motive occurs in *Atlamál*, str. 28.

his family. When his grandfather died in Norway, Víga-Glúmr dreamed in Iceland that he saw an enormous woman, her shoulders brushing the mountains on each side, walking to his home at Þverá (*Víga-Glúms Saga*, ch. 9).⁴²

Sometimes attendant spirits and comparable beings who figure in dreams are thought to be closely associated with pagan traditions, and stories in which this is implied are especially prevalent in the legendary and clerical literature of the middle ages. A pathetic example is given in the *Tale of Thorvald the Far-traveller*, where the first Christian mission to Iceland (c. 981) is described.⁴³ When the German bishop, Frederick, came to Giljá, in Vatnsdalr, the rich farmer, Koðrán, was deeply impressed by his regalia, his incense and candles. For many years Koðrán had put his trust in a 'prophet' (*spámaðr*), who lived in a rock. Koðrán agreed that if the bishop could drive the 'prophet' out of his rock, he would adopt his religion. The bishop sprinkled Holy Water over the rock and, on the next night, the 'prophet' appeared to Koðrán in a dream. He complained that boiling water had been poured over his house; his children had been scalded and their screams were hard to bear. The bishop continued his ministrations and the 'prophet' appeared to Koðrán a second night and a third until, according to one version of the story, the rock split in two. Koðrán was now convinced of the superiority of the bishop and of the religion which he taught.

An even sadder tale is told of the troll, or cairn-dweller, who appeared to Þorsteinn Ox-leg⁴⁴ in a dream. He knew that Þorsteinn would soon go abroad and would adopt the new religion. He only regretted that he and his like could not do so themselves, cairn-dwellers as they were. But if Þorsteinn should have a son, he should call him by the cairn-dweller's name, Brynjarr. The name would then enjoy the benefits of baptism, even though the cairn-dweller were debarred from them.

42 Cf. *Hallfreðar Saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson (ÍF VIII, 1939), ch. 11.

43 *Þáttur af Þorvaldi Víðförla*, ch. 2, in *Bps.*, I 38-40; cf. *Kristni Saga*, published in the same volume, 5-6.

44 In *Íslendinga Sögur*, ed. Guðni Jónsson (1946-9), x 352-6.

At all ages stories have been recorded in which dreamers meet and converse with creatures of the Other World. In later times the elves (*álfar*) or hidden people (*huldufólk*) have appeared most frequently. Conceptions of the hidden people vary, but many of them differ little from the rest of us. They keep their sheep and cattle, and have their clergymen and doctors, but few can see them except in dreams. They may call on us for help, and we may give them milk and, in our dreams, attend their women in childbirth. Sometimes, in their turn, the hidden people and their doctors help us, and I remember several stories about this from recent years.⁴⁵

I have mentioned many precognitive dreams, and some in which dreamers are brought into touch with the dead and those of the Other World. Many dreams have also been recorded, in all ages, in which the dead or the other-world people bring the dreamer some gift. Occasionally this is a material gift, but more often a spiritual one.

Bishop Jón Ógmundarson (died 1121) dreamed in Denmark that he was in a cathedral church, where he saw and heard David playing the harp. On the next day Jón called for a harp and played David's melody before the king. Jón had never studied music before.⁴⁶

Music has played little part in the civilization of the Icelanders, but no people have prized poetry more highly. Poetry is the sacred mead and has mysterious origins. Óðinn had stolen it from the giants, and the giants had seized it from the dwarfs, who had brewed it from strange ingredients. It is not surprising that poetry is the gift which the dead and those of the Other World most often bestow on the dreamer. Numerous examples of this are recorded in older as well as in later literature, but I shall mention few of them. Those who have died violently appear to their relatives and describe their fate in verse. According to the *Gunnlaugs Saga* (ch. 13), Gunnlaugr and Hrafn appeared to their fathers after dying in their duel in Norway. Both of them were covered in

⁴⁵ In his novel *Ljós Heimsins* (1937) Halldór Kiljan Laxness gives a satirical story of this kind.

⁴⁶ *Bps.*, I 220-1, cf. 155-6.

blood and told how they died in verses, which their fathers remembered when they woke up. Many stories closely resembling this one have been recorded in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Sailors who have been drowned, shepherds who have died of exposure, appear to their intimates and describe in verses how they died or where their bodies lie. The verses are remembered and they scan, although it is often emphasized that neither the dreamer nor the dead man had any poetic skill.⁴⁷

Sometimes, those who utter verses in a dream are not lately dead, but they are heroes and heroines of a distant past. In the year 1255, a girl dreamed that an enormous woman came to her mounted on a grey. When asked where she came from, the stranger said that she came from the world of the dead (*násheimr*) in the north. She came a second night and a third and spoke in verses foretelling much which came to pass. In the end she disclosed that she was Guðrún Gjúkadóttir, heroine of the eddaic lays of the Niflung cycle.⁴⁸ On another occasion, about the year 1206, the poet Egill Skalla-Grímsson (died *c.* 990) appeared in anger to a dreamer, uttering a verse.⁴⁹

The story of the astronomer, Stjörnu-Oddi (*c.* 1075-1150), is stranger and more elaborate.⁵⁰ Oddi had no poetic gifts, but he was a wise man, and he never lied. He once had a dream in two parts, and it consisted of a fantastic tale about kings and jarls in Sweden (Gautland). Oddi himself took part in the adventures and he became another person, the king's favourite poet. When he awoke, he remembered some nineteen verses which he had made in honour of the mythical king.

Dreams have been recorded, both in the middle ages and in recent times, in which the gift of composing poetry is conferred by the dead or the people of the Other World. The best known is that of Hallbjörn hali. Hallbjörn was a shepherd, grazing his sheep near the grave-mound of a great poet, Þorleifr jarlsskáld,

47 See Jón Árnason, *op. cit.*, I 228 ff.; Sigfús Sigfússon, *op. cit.*, II 10 ff.

48 *Sturlunga Saga*, ed. cit., I 520-1.

49 *ibid.*, I 241.

50 *Stjörnu-Odda Draumr* in *Íslendinga Sögur*, ed. Guðni Jónsson (1946-9), IX 379 ff.

who had been killed by the magic of Hákon the Great (died 995).⁵¹ The shepherd longed to make a poem in praise of the cairn-dweller but, since he was not a gifted man, he could not even complete the first line:

Here lies a poet (*hér liggir skáld*).

One night Hallbjörn fell asleep on the burial mound. He dreamed that the mound opened and a large man came out of it. He pulled the shepherd's tongue and himself completed the verse, telling Hallbjörn that if he could remember it when he woke up he would become a famous poet. He must pay especial attention to metrical form, choice of words and kennings. Hallbjörn, it is said, lived to be a famous poet, although none of his verses survive except the one quoted, if we may count that as his. We cannot be sure when he lived, for several men called Hallbjörn hali are remembered. This was perhaps the one who made poetry for Knútr Eriksson, king of Denmark (died 1195) and for King Sverrir of Norway (died 1202).

A story which closely resembles this one has been told in recent times. The well-known poet Sigurður Breiðfjörð (1798-1846)⁵² in his early years greatly admired the work of a predecessor, Árni Böðvarsson (1713-76). Once, Sigurður was visited in sleep by Árni, who spoke to him in a verse, telling him that if he could remember the verse when he woke up he would be no less a poet than himself. I quote the verse for its formal interest:

Herjans lærðu sálda sáld,
sáld það standi í skorðum,
svo þú verðir skálda skáld,
skáld sem ég var forðum.

It is sad to think how little the taste of Other World poets has in common with our own. Their interest seems to be chiefly in form and technical excellence.

⁵¹ *Þorleifs Þáttr Jarlsskálds* in *Eyfirðinga Sögur*, ed. Jónas Kristjánsson (ÍF IX, 1956), 215-29.

⁵² See *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar* III (1880-87), 374-5; cf. Jónas Kristjánsson, *op. cit.*, c.

An intellectual gift even more sophisticated than that of composing poetry was once conferred on a dreamer. It was the gift of textual criticism. Hermann Jónasson (1858-1923) was a learned man, who had lifelong experience of dreams.⁵³ He dreamed that one of the heroes of *Njáls Saga* appeared to him and explained in closest detail the compilation of this saga. It consisted originally of three sagas clumsily put together. This conclusion accorded fairly well with the learned doctrines of the time, but would find little support today.

I have tried to give examples of most of the more interesting kinds of dreams recorded in Iceland at all periods of its history. Some of those last cited have much in common with the beliefs of modern spiritualists, and this could be said of many others lately recorded, which I shall pass by.

Readers might well ask how far the dreams recorded in Iceland are historical, how far they represent native tradition, and how far they have been introduced into sagas, stories and poems as literary motives, based upon foreign models.

Considering the wealth and diversity of the material, no general answers to these questions could be expected. The dreams first cited in this paper, those of trees, which symbolized descendants, have analogues in many foreign sources. Several are recorded in early French literature,⁵⁴ and the closest to the dream of Ragnhildr is probably that related in the *Roman de Rou* (c. 1160), in which the pregnant mother of William the Conqueror dreamed of a tree growing from her body, which covered the whole of Normandy. A dream recorded by Herodotus (I, 108) differs little. King Astyages dreamed that he saw a vine growing from his daughter's body, and spreading over the whole of Asia. Nabuchodonosor also dreamed of a tree, which symbolized the fate of his kingdom (*Daniel* 4).

A closer biblical analogue may be found in a dream ascribed to

⁵³ See his *Draumar* (1912).

⁵⁴ See R. Mentz, *Die Träume in den altfranzösischen Karls- und Artus-Epen* (1888), especially 40, 66, 78 ff.

St Ólafr. Ólafr once came to a remote valley in a province of eastern Norway. His host, Rauðr (or Rauðúlfr), had exceptional powers of divination and especially of elucidating dreams.⁵⁵ After the king had slept, he commanded Rauðr to tell him his dream, just as Nabuchodonosor had commanded his Chaldean wizards to tell him his own dream before interpreting it (*Daniel* 2, 31 ff.). Ólafr's dream was modelled closely upon that of Nabuchodonosor. He saw a mighty cross bearing a crucified figure. The head of the figure was of gold, but the lower parts of the body were made of baser metals in descending order, down to the legs, which were of wood. The head represented St Ólafr's kingship, but the baser metals represented the kings who were to rule after him down to the middle of the twelfth century.⁵⁶

The prophet Daniel maintained his reputation throughout the middle ages as the master of dream-reading. One of the most influential books ever published in Europe was a bare catalogue of dream-symbols arranged alphabetically, and ascribed to the famous prophet. I may call the book and its author alike Pseudo-Daniel. Pseudo-Daniel was written in late Greek,⁵⁷ translated into Latin at a very early date, and subsequently into Old English and more than once into Middle English.⁵⁸ The influence of this

55 See J. E. Turville-Petre, *The Story of Rauð and his Sons* (1947).

56 S. Larsen, *Aarbøger* (1917), 56, remarks on the similarity between Pharaoh's dream (*Genesis* 41) and that described in *Yómsvíkinga Saga* (ed. C. af Petersens, 1882, 4 ff.) of the three trios of oxen, white, red and black, which came from the sea and symbolized the nine coming years. The parallel is striking, but the Norse dream is more elaborate and contains various additional elements. The significance of the oxen depends largely on their colour.

57 A complete Latin text, with interlinear gloss in Old English, from the eleventh-century manuscript Cotton Tiberius A III, fols. 27^b-32^b, was published by M. Förster in *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen* cxxv (1910), 39 ff. In this article and in other papers published in the same journal (especially cx, 357 ff.; cxx, 302 ff.; cxxvii, 31 ff.) Förster surveyed the Latin and English manuscript material. A Latin manuscript of the early tenth century, preserved in Vienna, is mentioned. The Old English gloss was also published by O. Cockayne, *Leechdoms, Wortcunning and Starcraft* (1866), III 198 ff. A fragmentary Greek text was published by E. de Stoop in *Revue de philologie et de littérature ancienne* xxxiii (1909), 93 ff. See also Postscript below and Pauly's *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft, Neue Bearbeitung*, VI (1937), cols. 2240-1.

58 See M. Förster, *Archiv* cxxvii, 31 ff.

book persists to this day and, although few have heard of it, it works like a mole under ground. I have seen modern English dream-books (unsigned), which must be derived from it.⁵⁹ In this paper I have mentioned two Icelandic dream-books circulating today,⁶⁰ and I have seen others besides these. These modern Icelandic dream-books derive largely from Pseudo-Daniel, although they are larded with dream-puns (especially those of names), native experience and prejudice,⁶¹ which could never have occurred to Pseudo-Daniel. Although I do not know when dream-books of this kind were first introduced into Iceland, folklorists living in that country would probably have little difficulty in finding out.

Jónas Jónasson (1856-1918)⁶² remarked on the existence of dream-books in Iceland, and said that they were all of foreign origin. He did not think that much attention was paid to them, but thought rather that dream-interpretations were based on native tradition, and that some of them were confined to one district, or even to one dreamer. It is, however, possible that the dream-books have greater influence now than they did in Síra Jónas's time.

While it is plain that the current dream-books, although based on Pseudo-Daniel, are influenced by native tradition, it is more difficult to know how far the native tradition was itself influenced by Pseudo-Daniel. When I wrote this paper, I was not aware of any version of Pseudo-Daniel written in Icelandic during the middle ages, but a medieval Icelandic version of it has since come to light (see the Postscript below).

S. Larsen⁶³ did not consider the later Icelandic interpretations

⁵⁹ Förster (*Archiv* CXXV, 40, note 9) refers to a 'Dream Book by Madame Xanto', evidently derived from Pseudo-Daniel.

⁶⁰ See note 12 above.

⁶¹ According to the dream-books it is a bad omen to see a policeman, and no better to kiss or be kissed by him. Sigfús Sigfússon (*op. cit.*, II 36-7) relates how a girl dreamed that a policeman called and kissed all the children except herself, from whom he turned in disgust. All the children whom the policeman had kissed died soon afterwards in an epidemic of 'flu (told 1902).

⁶² *op. cit.*, 415.

⁶³ *Aarbøger* (1917), 37-85.

of dreams or the current dream-books but, in a most valuable paper, he suggested that nearly all of the dream-symbols found in the early literature derived from Pseudo-Daniel. He did not believe that the authors of the Icelandic works which he quoted had direct access to Pseudo-Daniel but rather that they had received his symbols through oral media. It is probable that this book exercised an indirect influence on early Icelandic poets and prose-writers, but I think that Larsen has pressed his conclusions too far. One of the richest sources of dream-symbolism in early poetry is the *Guðrúnarkviða* II, which was mentioned above. According to str. 38 of that poem, Atli dreamed that his wife, Guðrún, pierced him with a poisoned sword. No one who believed in the precognitive significance of dreams could see any but an evil symbol in this, but the poet is precise in his interpretation, telling us that iron is a symbol of fire. Consequently it seems unnecessary to trace this part of the poem to the vague words of Pseudo-Daniel: *Ferro percussum se uidere, desolationem significat*. We read in another poem, which can hardly have been unknown to the author of the *Guðrúnarkviða* that Guðrún did in fact pierce Atli with a sword, and set the castle on fire as well. According to another passage in the same *Guðrúnarkviða* (str. 42), Atli dreamed that two whelps slipped the leash, howling and joyless; he thought their bodies turned to carrion and he was forced to eat them. According to Pseudo-Daniel, savage or barking dogs show that enemies will attack,⁶⁴ but they did not show Atli this. The two whelps signified his sons; they were to be murdered and he was to be forced to eat their flesh.

Larsen quotes a number of dreams from the *Atlamál*, a poem which was probably composed in the eleventh century, most likely in Greenland. Some of the symbols quoted show striking affinity with those of Pseudo-Daniel. Among them is a symbol which Glaumvqr dreamed before her husband Gunnarr fell into the hands of Atli (str. 26). Glaumvqr saw a river rushing through the

64 *Canes latrantes uiderit, uel eis infestare (= infestari), inimici tui te superare querunt* (*Archiv* CXXV, 51).

house breaking the legs of Gunnarr and his brothers. This may be compared with Pseudo-Daniel: *Flumen in domum suam intrare, periculum uite patietur*. But yet the same symbol is found in the *Heiðarviga Saga* (ch. 26), one of the oldest and most earthy of the family sagas. In the latter case the symbol occurs in a vision and not a dream, and its meaning in the story is plain enough. The enemies represented by the river would approach from the moor in the north. It is difficult to believe that the circumstantial story told in the saga owes much to the words of Pseudo-Daniel.

Wild animals, which pursue and attack, usually predict the attacks of enemies in Icelandic literature as well as in that of France and in Pseudo-Daniel. Larsen quotes a telling example from *Atlamál* (str. 17), where Kostbera dreams that a polar-bear (*hvitabjörn*) enters the house, smashing the timbers and falling upon the household. Her husband says that this is a dream of weather, portending a storm from the east, but it is clear that he was wrong, and the correct interpretation would accord better with the words of Pseudo-Daniel: *ursum ad se infestare uiderit, inimici seditionem significat*. But the poet shows more clearly what he means by the dream-figures of animals when he describes Kostbera's next dream (str. 19). She saw an eagle flying the length of the house, spattering all with blood. The eagle was the fetch (*hamr*) of Atli. This example and many like it provide connecting links between the foreign and the native occultism. As observed above, Icelanders and other Scandinavians believed that men were attended by fetches, which took the form of animals, generally according with their own characters. Inevitably, the form of a man's fetch would be determined by those who saw it. It was their opinion of his character which shaped it.⁶⁵ This belief in fetches may not be identical, but it has much in common with the belief in shape-changing, which was also frequent in the north.⁶⁶ In other words, Pseudo-Daniel may have exercised an

65 Cf. J. de Vries, *Altg. Rel.*, 1 224 ff.

66 Cf. E. Benezé, *Das Traummotiv in der mittelhochdeutschen Dichtung bis 1250* (1897), 41 ff.

influence on early Iceland as on other lands, but his symbols were made to accord with older and deeper occultism.

I have mentioned dreams which are more than, or other than, precognitive. I called attention especially to those in which a dreamer receives the gift of a poem, or even the gift of composing poetry himself. These have numerous foreign analogues. The one most often quoted is that of the cowherd, Cædmon, told by Bede (*Hist. Eccl.*, IV 24). Cædmon left his chanting companions, rather than be called on to sing, and went to the cowshed. As he lay down to rest, a man appeared to him and told him to sing. Cædmon said that he could not, but the dream-man told him to sing of the beginning of creation, and so Cædmon praised God the Creator in his famous hymn. Cædmon remembered the verse when he woke up and, it is said, was the founder of English religious verse.⁶⁷

The stories of Hallbjörn hali and of Sigurður Breiðfjörð, quoted above (pp. 42-3), have something in common with that of Cædmon. Cædmon and Hallbjörn were both cowherds or shepherds; they both remembered dream-poems when they woke up and both became famous poets, although none of their verses are remembered except the ones spoken in dreams. It has been suggested that the story of Hallbjörn was modelled on that of Cædmon, and that of Sigurður upon that of Hallbjörn, but the motive is so widespread that this may be doubted.⁶⁸ In fact, the story of Hallbjörn bears a much closer resemblance to another English story. The story is one of those which explain why Bede was called

67. See A. H. Smith, *Three Northumbrian Poems* (1933), 10 ff.

68 A number of parallels are cited by L. Pound in *Studies in English Philology in Honor of F. Klaeber* (1929), 232 ff. Peter Foote (in a letter 17 December, 1957) points out the similarity between the story of Jón Ógmundarson and the harp (p. 41 above) and certain stories of St Dunstan; cf. G. Shepherd, *Review of English Studies*, New Series v (1954), 113 ff. A. G. van Hamel, *Saga-Book* XI (1928-36), 148-9, quotes an interesting parallel from modern Iceland. Simon Dalaskáld (1844-1916), a vagrant poet, dreamed of Klaufi, a saga-poet of doubtful authenticity. Klaufi spewed into Simon (*spýr ofan í hann*) and henceforward Simon could not refrain from speaking in poetry himself. Óðinn, when he stole the sacred mead of poetry from the giants, took the form of an eagle, and regurgitated most of the mead into a vessel which the gods made ready for him. The remnant was scattered and any fool can have it.

Venerabilis and not *Beatus*.⁶⁹ After Bede's death, a certain cleric wished to compose a line of verse to be engraved on his tomb. He began: *hac sunt in fossa*, wishing to continue: *Bede sancti ossa*, but he realized that this would not scan. After he had slept, the cleric returned to the tomb and saw engraved upon it: *Hac sunt in fossa Bede venerabilis ossa*.

A version of this story in Icelandic is preserved in a manuscript of the fourteenth century.⁷⁰ Like Hallbjörn, the aspiring poet had begun his verse and, when he could get no further, it was completed by someone of the Other World while he slept.

The tale of Hallbjörn might have been influenced by both of the English tales but, if so, this influence fell upon fertile soil. The Icelanders must have learnt verses in their dreams before the story of Hallbjörn was told. They have learnt many since and have many still to learn.

The question how far the recorded dreams are historical has already been answered in part. It is plain that ancient authors used dreams as an artistic embellishment. When they did so, they were often influenced by foreign models, whether directly or through oral media, and especially by the models provided by the Bible and the French epics. But the Icelandic authors used these motives because dreams already played an important part in the lives of Icelanders, as they do to this day. It is hard to doubt that many of the dreams recorded in early times, e.g. those found in the *Íslendinga Saga* of Sturla, were based upon genuine experience.⁷¹ Nor can I doubt the truth of all the examples cited by Sigfús Sigfússon (1855-1935), Guðmundur Friðjónsson (1869-1944),⁷² and other recent collectors. I do not believe that all the dreamers were liars, but I cannot say what was the significance of their dreams. It is possible that people's dreams are influenced by

69 A text is given in *Nova Legenda Anglie*, ed. C. Horstman (1901), I 111.

70 The Icelandic text was published in *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar* III (1880-1887), 375 footnote, and by G. Vigfússon, *Hákonar Saga* (Rolls Series, 1887), 433-4; translation in English by G. W. Dasent, *The Saga of Hacon* (Rolls Series, 1894), 448-9. See pp. 61-3 below.

71 Cf. Guðmundur Finnbogason, *Íslendingar* (1933), 111 ff.

72 *Sktrnir* 83 (1909), 168 ff.

the systems and symbols which they have heard or read. When folklore marches with psychology and philosophy it is time to stop.

POSTSCRIPT

This paper was the first of a series of three papers on Icelandic dream traditions, the second being in the *Festschrift Walter Baetke* (1966), 342-54, and the third in *Nordica et Anglica, Studies in Honor of Stefán Einarsson*, ed. A. H. Orrick (1968), 19-36. When the present article was published in *Folklore*, I explained (p. 46) that I was not aware of any version of the *Somniale Danielis* written in Icelandic during the middle ages, although I suspected that it was known. Later, with the generous help of Hans Bekker-Nielsen, I came upon a fragment of a text of the *Somniale* written in Icelandic, c. 1500. I published this in facsimile, transcript and translation in *Nordica et Anglica*, cited above.

I am grateful to Mrs Rachel Giblin, of the University of Liverpool, for pointing out that the Greek text of the *Somniale* preserved in the Vatican manuscript (Cod. Vatic. Palat., 4to, 319) was published in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* xxvi (1926), 290-314. This is, of course, not immediately relevant to Icelandic dream traditions or to the fragmentary *Somniale* published in *Nordica et Anglica*, for which Latin sources must be sought.

The article from *Folklore* is selected for republication because, despite obvious defects, it has more general interest than the other two, and, I hope, gives an impression of the wealth of Icelandic dream-symbolism.

IV LIGGJA FYLGJUR ÞÍNAR TIL ÍSLANDS

THIS sentence is found in *Orkneyinga Saga*.¹ It is related that Earl Rognvaldr summoned his sons Þórir and Hrollaugr, and asked if either of them was prepared to go and rule the Orkney Islands. Þórir said his father must decide, but the Earl told him that it would be more profitable for him to stay at home. Then Hrollaugr asked if he should go to Orkney and the Earl answered: *Eigi mun þér jarldóms auðit, ok liggja fylgjur þínar til Íslands*. Dr A. B. Taylor, the most recent translator of the saga, renders the phrase: 'This Earldom will not fall to thy lot, for thy guardian spirits point towards Iceland.'² In his rendering Taylor echoes Cleasby-Vigfússon's gloss (s.v. *fylgja*): 'Thy guardian angels, good angels, point to Iceland.'³ Taylor's rendering and Cleasby-Vigfússon's gloss give the peculiar, if not unparalleled, meaning 'to point to' to the words *liggja til*. More easily reconcilable with the Icelandic would be: 'Your guardian spirits belong to Iceland'; but that too would be curious, and rather vague in implication.

The word *fylgja* has several meanings in Icelandic, and the most common of them, both in the old and modern literature, is 'attendant spirit, guardian spirit'. According to ancient belief the attendant spirit was a kind of companion, comparable with the guardian angel of Christianity; it was thought to accompany a man throughout his whole life, giving him strength and protecting him from evil.⁴ It is usually pictured in the form of a

¹ ed. Sigurður Nordal (1913-16), ch. 6; cf. the ed. of Finnboði Guðmundsson (ÍF xxxiv, 1965), 10.

² *The Orkneyinga Saga* (1938), 140.

³ Cf. G. W. Dasent's rendering in *The Orkneyingers' Saga* (Rolls Series, 1894), 7: 'the spirits that follow thee lie towards Iceland.'

⁴ On Norse beliefs relating to attendant spirits, see J. de Vries, *Altg. Rel.*, I 224 ff., and works mentioned there; M. Rieger, 'Über den nordischen Fylgjen-glauben' in *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* XLII (1898), 277 ff. On modern Icelandic beliefs see Jón Árnason, *Íslenskar Þjóðsögur og Æfintýri* (1862-4), I 354 ff. A few of the better known stories about attendant spirits will be mentioned in the present paper; for further examples see Fritzner, s.v. *fylgja, hamingja*.

woman or of an animal, but it is normally invisible except to those gifted with second sight. Sometimes, however, it may be seen by people not endowed with such abnormal powers, especially in dreams or at the time of death.⁵ Þorsteinn, in *Gunnlaugs Saga*,⁶ dreams that he sees a swan and two eagles, and they are said to be the *fylgjur* of his unborn daughter and her suitors. Before he fought at Knafahólar, Gunnarr of Hlíðarendi dreamed that he was attacked by a pack of wolves, and these may be regarded as the *fylgjur* of his enemies.⁷ A little while before the death of his brother Guðmundr ríki, Einarr of Þverá dreamed of a magnificent ox, which walked up to the high seat at Guðmundr's home, Mǫðruvellir, and then dropped dead. This too is said to be an attendant spirit.⁸ In some instances the sources mention 'family spirits' and this is said to be the meaning of the expression *ættarfylgjur*.⁹ Modern critics commonly, though possibly incorrectly, call them *kynfylgjur*.¹⁰ Family spirits were thought to descend from one generation to another and to guide the destinies of a whole family. Thus, before the poet Hallfreðr died at sea, he and his companions saw a woman clothed in a mailcoat walking on the water; when she came to Hallfreðr's younger son, who bore his father's name, she vanished, for henceforth she was to be his guardian.¹¹ Similarly, when Víga-Glúmr's maternal grandfather, Vigfúss, died in Norway, Glúmr dreamed that he saw a woman of gigantic stature walk up the valley of Eyjafjörðr. When she reached Glúmr's home, Þverá, the dream ended.¹²

In the meaning 'attendant spirit' the word *fylgja* is interchangeable with *hamingja*, which also has this meaning, though

5 *Brennu-Njáls Saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson (ÍF XII, 1954), 107 (ch. 41).

6 *Gunnlaugs Saga Ormstungu*, ed. P. G. Foote (1957), ch. 2.

7 *Brennu-Njáls Saga*, ch. 42.

8 *Ljósvetninga Saga*, ed. Björn Sigfússon (ÍF X, 1940), 60 (ch. 11).

9 *Þórðar Saga Hreðu*, ed. Guðni Jónsson (*Íslendinga Sögur* VI, 1946), 430. The interpretation of *ættarfylgja* in this passage in the concrete sense of 'family spirits' is not altogether certain, but see de Vries. *Altg. Rel.*, I 227.

10 See below pp. 57-8.

11 *Hallfreðar Saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson (ÍF VIII, 1939), ch. 11.

12 *Víga-Glúms Saga*, ed. G. Turville-Petre (1960), ch. 9.

it has several others as well. In addition to 'attendant spirit' Cleasby-Vigfússon and Fritzner (s.v. *fylgja*) give the meanings 'a baby's caul' and 'afterbirth' for the word *fylgja*. In Modern Icelandic *fylgja* (*barnsfylgja*) is the most usual word for the 'afterbirth' of a child, and it is found with that meaning in Abbot Arngrímur's life of Bishop Guðmundr, written about the middle of the fourteenth century.¹³ The Rev. Jónas Jónasson, writing of later Icelandic customs and beliefs, describes certain superstitions attached to the afterbirth (*fylgja*).¹⁴ It is popularly believed to contain some part of the infant's soul, and this is thought to be incomplete until the afterbirth has been released. It must, therefore, be tended carefully, not thrown out onto the open field, or placed anywhere where animals might devour it. It should rather be buried beneath the threshold or under rocks, or else burned. If it is burned, the baby will be 'attended' by a light or star.¹⁵ This belief shows how closely the Icelanders associate the afterbirth with their beliefs about guardian spirits, and that the connection between them is popular, and not due merely to learned conjecture. This close association of the afterbirth with the guardian spirits is not, of course, confined to Iceland, but it is world-wide. It is, in fact, true to say that, according to the beliefs of certain tribes more primitive than the Icelanders, the afterbirth is not merely associated with the guardian spirit, but it actually is the guardian spirit. It is said that among the Kooboos, a primitive tribe of Sumatra, the navel string and afterbirth are regarded as the child's good spirits or guardian spirits, who come into the world with him and protect him from evil. Among other tribes the afterbirth is thought of as a kind of twin brother, who accompanies a man throughout his life and defends him against danger.¹⁶

¹³ *Bps.*, II 168.

¹⁴ Jónas Jónasson frá Hrafnagili, *Íslenzkir Þjóðhættir* (1934), 261.

¹⁵ Jón Árnason (*Íslenzkar Þjóðsögur*, I 355), on the other hand, says that if the afterbirth is burned the child will be deprived of his guardian spirit, just as he would if it had been eaten by an animal. Probably both of these beliefs have been popular.

¹⁶ Cf. E. O. James in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (1908-26), art.

The word *fylgja* in the meaning 'attendant spirit' is commonly said to be related to the verb *fylgja* 'to follow, accompany'.¹⁷ But according to H. Falk and A. Torp,¹⁸ it is really related to ON *fulga* and Norw. dialect *folga* which mean 'thin covering; membrane' (cf. *fela* 'to hide')¹⁹ and according to the same authorities, the word *fylgja* originally meant 'afterbirth' and only later came to mean 'attendant spirit'. If this is so, the semantic development of *fylgja* must have been closely parallel to that of *hamingja*. *Hamingja*, as has been said, also means 'attendant spirit',²⁰ but more commonly it is used in the abstract sense of 'fortune, destiny'. In some instances of its use *hamingja* seems almost to mean 'strength; mana'. In the common expression, *leggja hamingju sína til við e-n (með e-m)*,²¹ *hamingja* is glossed by Fritzner (s.v.) as 'guardian spirit', in which case the expression should be rendered: 'to transfer one's guardian spirit to someone'. But it is more likely that in such phrases *hamingja* is used in an abstract sense, and that the expression means 'to give one's strength (or luck) to someone'. Similarly, the expression *etja hamingju við Ólaf konung*²² probably means 'to try one's strength against King Ólafr' rather than 'to set one's guardian spirit against him' or 'to incite one's guardian spirit to combat him'.²³

'Tutelary gods and spirits'; also A. C. Krujt in the same publication, art. 'Indonesians'. Numerous examples of beliefs of this kind are cited by J. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, Part I, *The Magic Art* I (1911), 199 ff.

17 Thus making it identical in origin with the noun *fylgja* (= *fylgð*), meaning 'following, support'.

18 *Etymologisk Ordbog over det norske og det danske Sprog* (1903), s.v. *fylgje*. See also *Ordbok över svenska språket*, utg. av Svenska Akademien, s.v. *fylgja*; E. Hellquist, *Svensk etymologisk ordbok*² I (1957), s.v. *fylgja*.

19 With *fylgja* may be compared *hyldir*, *hyldar* (f. pl., also written *hildir*, *hildar*; see Blöndal, s.v. *hyld*), which is used in modern Icelandic for the afterbirth of an animal, and is probably related to the verb *hylja* 'to cover, hide'. Alexander Jóhannesson (*Isländisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 1956, 176) would relate *hildir* to the adj. *heill*.

20 As in *Víga-Glúms Saga*, ch. 9. See note 15/29 in my edition of that saga.

21 E.g. *Laxdæla Saga* (ÍF v, 1934), ch. 21: *Haraldr konungr ok Gunnhildr leiddu Ólaf til skips ok sögðusk mundu leggja til með honum hamingju sína . . .* For further examples see Fritzner, s.v. *hamingja*.

22 *Ffb.*, II 65; cf. the expression *etja kappi við e-n* (e.g. *Laxdæla Saga*, ch. 19).

23 Cf. the expression *etja hestum* 'to goad horses to fight'.

The word *hamingja* is related to *hamr*, which means 'skin, covering' and 'shape', and is the same word as MLG *ham*, English *heam*, *hame* (see NED, s.v. *hame* 1) and Norw. dialect *ham*, all of which are glossed as 'skin; afterbirth'.²⁴ It is probable, therefore, that the word *hamingja* was originally associated with the skin and the membranes attendant on birth. In popular belief these were thought to determine the destiny of the child, and hence the word *hamingja* developed the meaning of 'guardian spirit, attendant spirit', to which were naturally added the abstract meanings 'destiny; fortune; mana'. It was the abstract meanings of *hamingja* which predominated, and the word is commonly used in the sense of 'fortune' in Iceland at the present day. It is moreover probable that in a number of instances in which the word is glossed in the dictionaries as 'guardian spirit' (*skyttaand*), it really has the abstract meaning of 'destiny, fortune'.

In the case of *fylgja* the abstract meanings of 'fortune; destiny; mana' are not given at all in the dictionaries consulted, and it appears from them that although it meant both 'afterbirth' and 'attendant spirit', it was never used in an abstract sense.²⁵ But considering how closely parallel the histories of the words *fylgja* and *hamingja* appear to be, it is reasonable to suppose that *fylgja* also had an abstract sense.²⁵ In fact, if it is taken in this way, the sentence *liggja fylgjur þinar til Íslands* becomes readily intelligible, and gives the rendering: 'your destiny belongs to Iceland' or 'your destiny lies in Iceland'. The syntactical compound *liggja til* has then its usual meaning 'belongs to, pertains to'.²⁶

In conclusion it is worth considering whether this abstract sense of *fylgja* is present in any other instances of its use. Its usual meaning in the sources is undoubtedly that of 'attendant,

24 See Falk and Torp, *op. cit.*, s.v. *ham*. The word *hamingja* is said to be formed from **hamgengja*, in which case it may be compared with *hamhleypa* 'one who changes his shape' (cf. J. de Vries, *Altg. Rel.*, II 350 and references).

25 Jón Árnason (*op. cit.*, I 354) remarks that in ON, in contrast to modern Icelandic, the conception of *fylgja* seems to resemble that of *hamingja*, *gipta*, *gæfa*, *auðna* and *heill*.

26 For examples of this use of *liggja til* see Fritzner, II 518A; Cleasby-Vigfússon, 389.

protective spirit'. Nevertheless, there are a few passages in which it is unnecessary to interpret the word in a personified sense. In *Ljósvetninga Saga*²⁷ the following passage occurs:

Finni mælti þá: 'Þat mynda ek ætla, at þar myndir þú eigi hafa getat staðizk fylgjur þeira Þorvarðs ok frænda hans, er fjándskap leggja á þik.' Eyjólfur mælti: 'Ætlar þú, at þeira fylgjur sé meiri fyrir sér en mínar ok minna frænda?'

In this instance the meaning of *fylgjur* (pl.) is vague and indefinite, but it seems no less probable, considering the context, that it implies 'force' or some kind of magical strength (*mana*) rather than personified attendant spirits. *Vatnsdæla Saga*²⁸ reads: *en þó hafa þeir bræðr rammar fylgjur; leitum vér þá til leyna várra, ef at oss ekr.* Here too the meaning of *fylgjur* seems to be abstract rather than concrete.²⁹

More light may perhaps be thrown on this problem by consideration of the compound *kynfylgja*, of which the last element is probably, though not certainly, identical with the word discussed. *Kynfylgja* is generally used in an abstract sense; it is glossed by Cleasby-Vigfússon as 'a family characteristic, peculiarity', and similarly by Fritzner and Blöndal. Examples of its use leave no doubt that this abstract meaning of *kynfylgja* predominates,³⁰ but in one passage it is said to mean 'familiar spirit' (cf. Cleasby-Vigfússon, s.v.). *Völsunga Saga*³¹ reads: *Veit ek af framvísni minni ok af kynfylgju várra, at af þessu ráði stendr oss mikill ófagnaðr.* These words are translated by William Morris and Eiríkr Magnússon: 'I wot, by my fore-knowledge,

27 Edition cited, 100-1 (ch. 20).

28 ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson (ÍF VIII, 1939), 83 (ch. 30).

29 Cf. W. H. Vogt's keen remarks on *hamingja*, *gipta* and *fylgja* in the introduction to his edition of *Vatnsdæla Saga* (1921), §§ 38-9.

30 Hefir þat jafnan *kynfylgja* verit Haukdælum ok Oddaverjum, at þeir hafa inar beztu veizlur haldit (*Sturlunga Saga*, ed. G. Vigfússon, 1878, II 158); Maðr hét Eysteinn, hann varð fyrir meini miklu, ok var því aumligar, at þat var honum *kynfylgja* (*Bps.*, I 196); a modern Icelandic example: ungt líf, sem sennilega hefir að *kynfylgju* andlegan brest (of inherited drunkenness, *Morgunblaðið*, 2 July 1939, 9).

31 ed. Magnus Olsen (1906-8), ch. 4.

and from the fetch of our kin, that from this counsel will great evil fall on us if this wedding be not speedily undone.'³² This rendering is supported by J. de Vries.³³ E. Wilken,³⁴ however, has questioned the interpretation of *kynfylgja* in this passage as 'familiar spirit', apparently feeling that such an interpretation is unsuitable to the context. He suggests that in this passage the word means 'erbliche Begabung' or 'inherited gifts' as it does elsewhere. Considering that 'inherited characteristics, features' is the usual meaning of *kynfylgja*, there is certainly no reason to depart from it in this passage of *Völsunga Saga*, where it suits the context so well. It need not, however, be disputed that the word *kynfylgja* may have had the meaning 'familiar spirit', although the dictionaries cite no instances where it is used in that sense.

It appears, then, that while *fylgja* was most often used in the concrete sense of 'attendant spirit', the compound *kynfylgja* had generally the abstract meanings, 'inherited gifts, faults, characteristics'. *Hamingja* was also generally abstract in meaning, though in a few instances it is used as a concrete noun to mean 'attendant spirit'. Just as the abstract *hamingja* was sometimes used in a concrete sense, so the concrete *fylgja* might sometimes be used as an abstract, and had the meanings 'mana; destiny'.

³² *Völsunga Saga* (London, The Walter Scott Publishing Co., no date), 9.

³³ *Altg. Rel.*, I 227.

³⁴ *Die Prosaische Edda* (1912-13), II 113; cf. the translation by M. Schlauch, *The Saga of the Völsungs* (1930), 51 (ch. 4).

V LEGENDS OF ENGLAND IN ICELANDIC MANUSCRIPTS

IN a paper which he published in the *Saga-Book of the Viking Society*¹ some years ago Bruce Dickins minutely scrutinized the cult and legends of St Ólafr in the British Isles, and he showed how people of these islands could adopt saints and legends of Scandinavia as their own. In the present paper, which will be less ambitious, I shall attempt to follow the development of certain legends and stories about England and English saints in Iceland.

THE VENERABLE BEDE

Few Englishmen are named more often by early Icelandic writers than the Venerable Bede. Like other people, Icelanders thought of Bede chiefly as a scientist, and especially as a chronologist. Two early versions of *Landnámabók*,² those of Sturla (died 1284) and of Haukr (died 1334), begin with a quotation from the *Aldarfarsbók* or *de Temporum Ratione*,³ in which *Beda prestur heilagur* had written about the island of Tili (Thile, Thule), quoting the authority of Pliny. Bede had said that the island of Tili lay six days (*dægr*) to the north of Britain, and that there was no day in winter, and no night in summer when the days were at their longest. Wise men believed that Tili was Iceland.

It is probable that this passage was introduced into *Landnámabók* by Sturla,⁴ but it may well have been known in Iceland before his time. It is, in fact, evident that chronological works by Bede, or derivatives of them, had been studied in Iceland since the first years of the twelfth century, and probably before.

1 XII (1937-45), 53-80.

2 *Landnámabók*, ed. Finnur Jónsson (1900), 129 and 3. The passage is repeated in the version of *Óláfs Saga Tryggvasonar* in *Flb.*, 1 247.

3 ed. C. W. Jones, *Beda Opera de Temporibus* (*Medieval Academy of America Publication* XLI, 1943), 239; cf. *de Temporibus*, *ibid.*, 297-8.

4 Cf. Jón Jóhannesson, *Gerðir Landnámabókar* (1941), 71.

Icelandic Easter Tables appear to derive largely from Bede, although they were adapted to the peculiar double calendar of Iceland.⁵ The system of dating years after the birth of Christ, stemming ultimately from Dionysius (*c.* A.D. 525),⁶ probably reached Iceland through the medium of Bede. This *æra vulgaris*, the *alþýðu tal* or *almanna tal*, was the basis of Ari's chronology. The Six Ages and the age of the world at the time of Christ's birth are also given on the authority of Bede.⁷

The conclusions of Bede and Dionysius were accepted in practically the whole of the Western Church, but it is strange that not all Icelanders were satisfied that they were correct. According to one of the oldest Icelandic computists, Christ was born on 25 December in the year 8 of our era,⁸ and this was the prevailing view among Icelandic historians of the first decades of the thirteenth century. The authors of the older *Þorláks Saga*, *Hungrovaða*, *Páls Saga*, *Prests Saga Guðmundar* and *Sverris Saga* consistently date the years with a number seven lower than we should give them. It has been shown that the instigator of this eccentric system of dating was the French or Lotharingian computist Gerland (*c.* 1080),⁹ whose *Computus* was probably brought to Iceland before the middle of the twelfth century.

Although Icelandic historians departed from the chronology of Bede, some of them did so unwittingly. In the *Prests Saga Guðmundar* the date of Guðmundr's birth is given as 1154 *at tali Beda prests*,¹⁰ although this date is really based upon Gerland's reckoning.

As already remarked, Ari followed Bede's chronology. It

5 Cf. N. Beckman in *Alfr.*, II esp. x ff. and 70-1.

6 In the later *Þorláks Saga*, *Bps.*, I 299, a direct reference is made to the calculations of Dionysius.

7 See *Alfr.*, III 52 ff.; cf. Jakob Benediktsson, *Veraldar Saga* (1944), introduction, xiv ff. See also *Fib.*, III 476.

8 *Alfr.*, II 44.

9 I had suggested this in (unpublished) papers delivered to 'Powicke's Group' in Oxford (3 March 1945) and to the London Medieval Society (1 Feb. 1946). It has since been proved by Jón Jóhannesson in a most thorough paper published in *Skírnir* CXXVI (1952), 76 ff.

10 *Bps.*, I 414-5.

cannot be told in what form it reached him, nor whether Ari had read any of the historical works of Bede. It might be said that the *Íslendingabók* is, in the first place, a history of the Church of Iceland, and might thus have been inspired by Bede's greater work, the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. When Ari told how, at the age of seven, he was brought to the wise layman Hallr í Haukadal to be educated in his house,¹¹ he may have thought of Bede's sentences: . . . *cum essem annorum septem, cura propinquorum datus sum educandus reverentissimo abbati Benedicto.*¹²

In fact, the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Bede's chief work in our eyes, was known little, if at all, in Iceland, and his reputation rested upon other writings. A number of Icelandic and Norwegian homilies are based upon Latin texts by, or ascribed to, Bede, and Bede's name recurs in the Icelandic annals. Nearly all the Icelandic annalists record the date of Bede's death between 731 and 735. Under the year 870, the year in which Ingólfr first went to Iceland, the compiler of the *Oddaverja annáll* records Bede's words about Tili, saying that he died 121 years before that date. The early annals that were continued by Gottskálk Jónsson (c.1524-90) recorded that Bede wrote his *kalendarium* and *martirilegium* (sic) in the year 722.¹³

In the passage which I quoted from the *Landnámabók* Bede had the title *heilagr*. Icelanders regarded him as a saint, or nearly as a saint, but, like others, they wondered why it was that the title *sanctus* or *beatus* was denied him.

The conventional answers were supplied in a manuscript of the fourteenth century.¹⁴ This manuscript is a scrapbook and contains, among other things, some legends of the Virgin, a list of her names, and a summary of the life of the Venerable Bede. A few lines of this life were printed by Jón Sigurðsson,¹⁵ and the whole text was given by Guðbrandur Vigfússon as an appendix to the

¹¹ *Íslendingabók*, ch. 9.

¹² *Hist. Eccl.*, v 24.

¹³ *Íslandske Annaler*, ed. G. Storm (1888), 458 and 310.

¹⁴ AM 764 4to, fol. 36^r. See Kr. Kålund, *Katalog over den Arnamagnæanske Håndskriftsamling* (1889-94), II 184-5.

¹⁵ *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar* III (1880-87), 375, n.

Hákonar Saga.¹⁶ Vigfússon's text contained rather many mis-readings, and it may, therefore, be useful to reprint the whole of this short life in normalized form. It is written in two hands, here called A and B.¹⁷

A. *Capitulum Ævintýr*

Vyrðuligr guðs vin Beda prest, ágætr útskýrari guðliga ritninga, blómgaðisk á Englandi þann tíma¹⁸ er liðit var frá holdgan guðs sonar DCLXXX ok VII ár. Hann var gamall maðr ok sjónlauss.

Um þenna góða mann rennr upp spurning hví hann hefir í sinn heiðr venerabilis en eigi beati.¹⁹ En því skal þar til svara at svá bar til at einn klerkr vildi semja einn versa yfir hans legstað ok svá byrjaðisk:

hac sunt in fossa.

Þá gat hann meðr öngum mætti²⁰ fengit þar við svá at honum líkaði ok litlum tíma síðarr varð honum gengit til legstaðar þessa góða manns. Leit hann þá at versinn var algörr, ok þetta upphafit:²¹

Hac sunt in fossa Bede venerabilis ossa.

Hann hefir samsett þá bók er kallask *Martirilogium*. Þat finnsk ok lesit at þessi sæll Beda hafi þess beðit guð, at hann skyldi brott ganga af þessi veröld á uppstigningar hátíð guðs sonar, ok þat sama oðlaðisk hann.

B. *Af Beda Presti*

Enn segja þat sumar bækr at Beda prest hafi farit leiðar sinnar um einn dal; þar var mjök grjóttót. Þá tók til orða leiðtogi hans, því at hann var þá sjónlauss: 'Heyr, faðir, hér er kominn mikill mannfjöldi, því berr þik til²² at prédika guðs orð.' Hann var til fúss; prédikar síðan harðla stórmerkiliga. Ok er hann gerir enda á sinni predicatione heyrisk skýrt at steinarnir sagt hafi þvílík orð:

Amen venerabilis pater.

It has sometimes been said that the first of these legends, that of the clerk who could not complete his line of verse without

¹⁶ *Icelandic Sagas* (Rolls Series, 1887), II 433-4.

¹⁷ I am grateful to Peter Foote for arranging for photostats to be made of this and other manuscripts cited in this paper, as well as for checking several readings.

¹⁸ *á Englandi* repeated here, but erased.

¹⁹ *beati* abbreviated; thus Jón Sigurðsson (JS) and Guðbrandur Vigfússon (GV), who improves the text by inserting *nafn* before *venerabilis*.

²⁰ *hætti* GV, giving a more usual expression.

²¹ *upphafit* abbreviated; thus JS; *upphaf* GV. ²² *til* above line; GV omits.

supernatural assistance, provided the model for the story of Hallbjörn hali, which is told in *Þorleifs Þáttr Jarlsskálds*.²³ It is there described how Þorleifr Jarlsskáld was killed at Þingvellir through the magic of Hákon the Great (c. 994). A poor shepherd, called Hallbjörn, used to graze sheep near the poet's grave-mound, and often slept there at night. He wished that he could make a poem in praise of the cairn-dweller, but he had so little skill that he could not even complete the first line, which began:

Hér liggr skáld.

One night, as Hallbjörn slept, the grave-mound seemed to open, and a huge man came out of it. He pulled Hallbjörn's tongue and completed the strophe, telling him that if he could remember it when he woke up, he would be a famous poet.

Hallbjörn has not been identified in history with certainty, for several men of his name and nickname are remembered. But it is commonly supposed that the Hallbjörn named in the *Þáttr* should be identified with the one named in the *Skáldatal*, who is said to have made poetry for Knútr Eriksson, king of the Swedes (died 1195), and for King Sverrir of Norway (died 1202). Similar stories have been told of how later Icelandic poets acquired their gifts, e.g. Sigurður Breiðfjörð (died 1846) and Símon Dalaskáld (died 1916).²⁴ If the story of Hallbjörn was modelled on that of Bede, those of Sigurður and Símon might be modelled on that of Hallbjörn. But the motive is a standard one, cropping up in many countries and in many centuries.²⁵

²³ ed. Jónas Kristjánsson, *Eyfirðinga Sögur* (ÍF IX, 1956), 213-29. See Jónas Kristjánsson's introduction, p. c, and references there given.

²⁴ See Jónas Kristjánsson, *op. cit.*, *loc. cit.*; also Finnur Jónsson, *Íslenzkar Fornsgur* III (1883), xlvi; Jón Sigurðsson, *op. cit.*, *loc. cit.*; A. G. van Hamel, *Saga-Book* XI (1928-36), 148-9.

²⁵ This motive is discussed further on pp. 42-3, 49-50 above.

BEDE, KING ARTHUR, AND THE CANONS OF LAON

Under the title *Mariu Saga* C. R. Unger published in 1871 the saga of the Virgin Mary, together with a large collection of legends of the Virgin, which are appended to her saga in one manuscript or another. The age and authorship of the *Mariu Saga* itself are briefly discussed on pp. 105-7 below. On the other hand the legends appended to the saga in its various manuscripts are of diverse age and origin. Their textual history and mutual relations are not made clear by Unger, invaluable though his work is. The stories cover a wide area; the scenes of a few are laid in Iceland, but others as far afield as Alexandria and Jerusalem. Some of them are found in manuscripts assigned to the early years of the thirteenth century, and these include the legend of Romaldus and that of Theophilus, to which Sir George Webbe Dasent called attention as early as 1845.²⁶

Some of the legends in this great collection were first written in Norse by order of Hákon, king of Norway. This was presumably Hákon Magnússon (1299-1319), for whom the lost *Heilagra Manna Blómstr* and the biblical *Stjórn* were also compiled. This, at least, would be the most natural interpretation of a note included in a manuscript of the early fifteenth century: 'Hér byrjar upp kapituleran fyrr skrifaðra jarteigna blessaðrar guðs móður Marie, er virðuligr herra Hákon, Nóregs konungr, lét snara ór norrœnu. . .'²⁷ We must evidently emend the text of this note and read with Dasent²⁸ *í norrœnu* or with Unger *ór latínu í norrœnu*. The ascription most probably applies to those legends of which a list follows in the manuscript. The latest date I have noticed in the whole collection is 1330, but I am not now concerned with the legend in which this date is given.

Many of the legends printed by Unger are found in several manuscripts, and in such cases their textual relations are often

²⁶ *Theophilus in Icelandic, Low German and other Tongues* (1845).

²⁷ *Mariu Saga*, 1016.

²⁸ *op. cit.*, xxxiii.

intricate. It would be valuable if some of them could be published separately with full critical apparatus. One of those which is particularly interesting for the present study is that published by Unger as no. LXI (pp. 639-54). This, it turns out, is no other than an Icelandic version of the story of the canons of Laon and their tour through northern France and southern England in the year 1113. Long ago, this story attracted the interest of students of English history, while Arthurian scholars, always impassioned, have debated its age and authenticity.²⁹ The outline of the story must be given briefly. In doing this, I shall follow the text of Migne,³⁰ but shall retell chiefly those incidents which have some bearing on the Icelandic version.

Laon was renowned as a centre of Christianity and learning, flourishing under the famous teacher Master Anselm (died 1117), whose lectures drew students from distant lands. Calamity followed glory, when a certain Gerardus de Cyrisiaco was brutally murdered in the cathedral. His blood could not be washed from the floor for, as Anselm knew well, the church could be cleansed by fire alone. He had not long to wait, for in Easter week 1112 a tumult broke out in the city, in which Bishop Gualdericus was killed and the cathedral and many other buildings were burnt to cinders.

Gualdericus was followed as bishop by the distinguished Bartholomew and it was resolved to elect a party of clerks and laymen to carry the famous shrine of Mary, together with other relics which belonged to the cathedral, through the neighbouring districts, asking for alms to restore the cathedral. The party toured northern France, where many miracles were performed through the agency of Mary. With lavish rewards they returned to Laon and began to rebuild. By the spring of 1113 a great part of the cathedral had been rebuilt, but funds ran low. Therefore, a second tour was planned, this time in England. Shortly before Palm Sunday the party left Laon, passing through the north of France to Vissant, where they took ship. Their companions were some Flemish wool-buyers, provided with large sums of money. In the Channel the

²⁹ Among the more interesting works on this history I may mention those of T. A. Archer, *EHR* II (1887), 103 ff.; E. Faral, *La Légende Arthurienne* (1929), I 225 ff.; J. Tatlock, *Speculum* VIII (1933), 454 ff., and *PMLA* XLVIII (1933), 317 ff. See also J. Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain* (1950), 204.

³⁰ *PL* CLVI, col. 961 ff.; here called M.

ship was attacked by pirates, who so terrified the Flemings that they surrendered their purses to the shrine of Mary. When the shrine was carried to the prow a furious wind struck the pirate ship, breaking the mast and knocking one of their number dead into the sea. On their delivery the Flemings demanded their money back, but divine vengeance overtook them. They travelled through a great part of England and bought many bales of wool, which they stored at Dover. On the night before it was to be shipped the whole stock was burnt out.

The men of Laon proceeded to Canterbury, where, it is said, they were handsomely received by Archbishop William. Later they reached Winchester, where miracles were wrought and well rewarded. But at Christchurch, in Hampshire, the party met with a less friendly reception. Christchurch was then a famous market town and was filled with merchants. The dean of the church was cross-grained and resented the intrusion of the Laon men. His church was not fully built and he relied on the customary offerings of the merchants. He allowed the shrine of Mary to be placed over a small side-altar, but was exasperated when he found the merchants bringing their offerings there, instead of to the main altar. He expelled the men of Laon with shrine and relics into the pouring rain. They had hardly left Christchurch, when a five-headed dragon rose from the sea. He spared those who had befriended the men of Laon, but, spewing fire and brimstone, he wrought havoc on the property of others.

The party went on to Salisbury and Exeter. At Wilton, in Somerset, they were shown the grave of the Venerable Bede, beside whom rested a famous poetess, Murier. They went on to *Danavexeria*, said to be Arthur's country, where they were shown King Arthur's seat and oven. They were entertained there by Agardus (Algardus), later bishop of Coutances in Normandy. When they pressed further west to Bodmin the men of Laon met with some adventures. A man with a withered arm kept vigil before the shrine. But afterwards this man started arguing with one of the Laon party about King Arthur. The Cornishman said that King Arthur was still alive, but the Frenchman did not believe him, and so a brawl broke out, and the Cornishman's arm remained withered.

After some further adventures in western England, the party returned to Laon, where the church was reconsecrated in 1114.

The author of this story names himself *Hermann monachus*, and he is generally identified with Hermann of Tournai (died c.1147).³¹ Book II, in which the tour through England is de-

31 On Hermann see M. Manitius, *Geschichte der lateinischen Literatur des*

scribed, is given in the words of the canons themselves, although this feature is not reproduced in the Icelandic version. The value of the description of England in the second decade of the twelfth century is certainly great, but serious inconsistencies have shaken the confidence of some historians. The canons cannot, as they are made to say, have found William in the see of Canterbury in the year 1113, because he was not made archbishop until 1123. They could not have visited the grave of the Venerable Bede at Wilton, because it was never there, and they could not have known in 1113 that Agardus (Algardus) was to be bishop of Coutances in 1135. Consequently book II cannot have received its present form until after 1135, and it cannot exactly reproduce the words of the canons, as Hermann claims. Perhaps there never was a dragon at Christchurch, and, if not, perhaps there was no brawl at Bodmin about King Arthur. It is the latter point which has chiefly exercised Arthurian scholars. Faral³² does not regard this text as reliable evidence that the cult of King Arthur was widespread as early as 1113. But yet, while it is easy to see reasons for inventing the dragon of Christchurch, it is more difficult to see why Hermann should invent the story of King Arthur.

The manuscripts of the Icelandic version

The story of the Laon canons is found in two Icelandic manuscripts which contain the *Mariu Saga* and many legends of the Virgin. The older of these manuscripts, following Unger, may be called E. It dates from the first half of the fifteenth century and is preserved as Perg. 4to no. 1 in the Royal Library of Stockholm. The later manuscript, D, is no. 634-5 4to in the Arnarnagæan collection of Copenhagen.³³ It probably dates from the

Mittelalters III (1931), 531 ff. The identification has been questioned; see Tatlock, *Speculum* VIII, 454. In the Icelandic version the author of the history is called *Helimandr*.

32 *op. cit.*, *loc. cit.*

33 My reading of these manuscripts is based on photostats, but for convenience I give references to page and line in Unger's edition.

beginning of the eighteenth century, and was written by Síra Eyjólfur Björnsson (1666–1746), a well-known scribe, who was exceptionally careful and accurate. Síra Eyjólfur faithfully reproduced archaic orthography and word-forms, and, although his exemplar has perished, it is clear that it was older than E and closer to the original Icelandic text, and was probably written in the fourteenth century. But parts of this exemplar had been lost before Síra Eyjólfur copied it, and the legend of Laon begins, following Unger's text, on p. 641, l. 17, in bk. 1, ch. 8, of Hermann's story. Unger made E the basis of his text, but cited the chief variants of D, and occasionally included them in his main text. A future editor would probably make D the basis of his text of the legend, while citing the variants of E.

Cursory comparison of the Icelandic with the Latin original shows that the Icelandic version has been shortened throughout. Several of the miracles have been left out altogether, and a number of historical details have fallen by the wayside. Closer comparison of the two Icelandic texts shows more remarkable differences. In general the eighteenth-century D reproduces the Latin original far more faithfully than does the fifteenth-century E, from which many sentences have been dropped. A few examples will illustrate this:

- (1) D (642/3) svá at hann fell til jarðar fyrir öllu folkí
M (1, 9) coram omni populo in terram cecidit
E omits
- (2) D (643/10) at öllum kirkjum í borginni
M (1, 13) et in omnibus aliis ecclesiis etiam minimis per totam urbem
E omits
- (3) D (646/5) þeir fóru víða um England
M (11, 5) tota pene Anglia circuita
E omits
- (4) D (646/12) kvómu Laudunensi með helga dómana í Cantuariam
M (11, 6) feretro atque reliquiis Cantuariam venimus
E Kvómu þeir til Cantuariam

- (5) D (646/28) er prestrinn kom til hennar
 M (II, 6) veniente presbytero
 E omits
- (6) D (648/24) er hann hafði þangat haft til lands til sǫlu
 M (II, 10) quas venales habebat
 E er hann hafði þangat haft
- (7) D (649/11) með þeim eldi er flaug af hans nǫsum
 M (II, 11) flamma, quam ex naribus suis emittebat
 E omits
- (8) D (649/20) Hann blés út af sínum nǫsum eldi með ógurligum
 reyk, þvílíkum sem af brennisteini
 M (II, 11) per nares flammae sulphureas emittentem
 E hann blés út af sínum nǫsum eldi mjök ógurligum
- (9) D (650/7) þessi, sem brott hafði rekit helga dómana ór
 kirkjunni
 M (II, 11) qui feretrum Dominæ nostræ de Ecclesia ejecerat
 E omits.

These examples, to which many more could be added, show that the original Icelandic text of the legend has been severely curtailed in E. There are other instances in which D correctly, or nearly correctly, represents the Latin text, while E has departed from it:

- (1) D (642/26) Frú sancta María, Frú sancta María
 M (I, 13) Domina Sancta Maria, Domina Sancta Maria
 E Frú sancta Maria hjálpaði mér
- (2) D (646/27) með heitleik sinnar trúar
 M (II, 6) ex ipso calore fidei
 E með hreinleika sinnar trúar.

Sometimes E gives a personal name or a place-name in corrupt form, reading, for instance, *Alinie* for *Cilinie* of D (644/23, *Cilnie* M), *Holdistanus* for *Koldistanus* of D (645/9, *Coldistannus* M). In some cases both Icelandic texts are corrupt, while E is further from the Latin than D: *Aatrabakum* E, *Attabatum* D (644/12, *Atrebatum* M).

Examples such as these might suggest that D faithfully represents the original Icelandic text, while the text of E is abridged and corrupt. Within certain limits this conclusion will prove

correct, although there are some passages which show that the text of E cannot be derived from the exemplar of D, for E is, in fact, often closer to the original than D:

- (1) E sú stærsta klukka
 M campania etiam major
 D (642/5) sú klukka
- (2) E hina ágætuztu helga dóma
 M pretiosas reliquias
 D (644/19) hina helguztu læknisdóma.

In rather many instances proper names are better preserved in E than in D, and in such cases it is difficult to believe that corruption is the fault of so careful a scribe as Síra Eyjólfur:

- E Eleynandi, M Helinandi, D (644/18) Elydani
 E Doura, M Dobras (i.e. Dover), D (646/8) Douta
 E Vintonia, M Wintoniæ, D (648/6) Vincorna
 E Uiltonia, M Wiltonia (i.e. Wilton), D (650/20) Valltonia.

Occasionally a name which survives in corrupt form in E has been dropped altogether from D. D (652/7) reads *kvómu þeir í herað* and E *kvómu þeir til heraðs þess er heitir Everia*; while M reads *venimus in provinciam quæ vocatur Danavexeria*.

The variants quoted, if considered together, show that E and the exemplar of D derive from a common Icelandic source, which, on the whole, is better represented by D than by E.

As already remarked, the text of E has been abridged. Comparison with the Latin text of Migne shows that the text of D has also been abridged, although less drastically than that of E. It remains to consider whether the first Icelandic text of Hermann's story was as short as that in D.

The text of E contains some readings which are closer to the original than those of D. It is also possible that E reproduces some sentences of the original which are not in D. The Icelandic texts represent books I and II of Hermann's history, but not book III, which is about a very different subject. There are, however, some reasons to believe that the first Icelandic redactor knew book III, or at least the beginning of it. Unlike D,

E ends in a flourish, telling of the large sums of money collected by the canons on their travels, and how the church was rebuilt, finer and more beautiful than before, and was subsequently consecrated by Bishop Bartholomew. This was told in Hermann's bk. III, ch. 1, where Hermann wrote: 'Quis namque digne poterit referre quantus postmodum in episcopatu Laudunensi, et de ipso per totum pene terrarum orbem fulgor religionis et novi luminis refulserit?' These words seem to be echoed in the text of E (654/5): 'Skein ok síðan svá mikil elska várrar frú sancte Marie yfir þessum stað, at því var líkt, sem öll nálæg heruð tæki blezan af þessi borg í trúar styrk ok ástar hita.' It thus appears that sentences of the original Icelandic version have been preserved in the abridged E, but lost from D. If so, both texts may contribute something to the study of the original Icelandic version.

If the Latin manuscripts of Hermann's history were compared, and if an attempt should be made to construct a critical text of it, it is possible that the Icelandic manuscripts would be of some help. In Hermann's bk. 1, ch. 3, we read of the burning of the cathedral, and the murder of Bishop Gualdericus, which is followed by the election of Bishop Bartholomew. But E (640/8), which is the only Icelandic text available at this point, names an intervening bishop, *Hugo decanus Aurelianensis kirkju*, who died after holding office for only seven months. Hugo is not mentioned in the corresponding passage of Migne's text, but he is mentioned in the first chapter of book III, although without the title *decanus Aurelianensis*. It is rather improbable that Hermann would have neglected to mention him in his proper place.

BERGR SOKKASON AND THE DRAGON OF CHRISTCHURCH

The age of the Icelandic version of Hermann's story may now be considered. It must be older than E (early fifteenth century), and older than the exemplar of D (probably of the fourteenth century). It may be possible to establish its age more precisely. This history, or at least part of it, was known to the famous Icelandic

scholar Bergr Sökkason. Illustrating the speedy vengeance of God in his learned *Nikolaus Saga*,³⁴ Bergr retells the story of the dragon of Christchurch. Bergr's flowery, rhetorical style is unlike that of Hermann or his Icelandic redactors, and he has embellished the dry original so much that it is difficult to know whether his sentences are based on Icelandic or Latin. Bergr seems to reproduce, in his own words, some phrases of the Latin original which are not to be found in other Icelandic texts, although E and D generally represent Hermann far more faithfully than Bergr does. The following examples may suggest this:

- (1) Bergr (57/29) en í stað sem kaupmenn verða vísir, at hér er komit guðs móður skrin, hvert þeir hofðu áðr heyrt frægjask fyrir ótönluligar jarteignir, snúa þeir þangat allir *hverr með sitt offr*, svá at engi þeira sæi decanum eða hans *mikla altari*
 M (II, 10) Sed cum videret quosdam negotiatorum, qui miracula Wintoniæ gesta audierant, feretrum Dominæ nostræ *cum oblationibus expetere, et majus altare dimittere . . .*
 ED (648/4) En sem hann sá nær alla kaupmenn, þá sem heyrðu þær jarteignir, er gerzk hofðu í Vintonia, offra til skránsins . . .
 ED, as usual, correspond closely with M, yet B represents M more exactly in the italicized words.
- (2) B (58/1) hvert hús í staðnum er nálíga *fullt af kaupmönnum*
 M (II, 10) et tota villa *negotiatoribus repleta*
 ED (648/9) var hvert hús fullt
 In the italicized words B again corresponds more closely with M than do ED.
- (3) B (58/3) sér guðs móðir til þeira
 M (II, 10) nos respexit Dominæ misericordia
 ED omit
- (4) B (58/25) bjóðandi með þeira *són*
 M (II, 10) earumque *sonitu* convocat
 ED (648/25) kallandi saman með þeira hljóðan
 In the loan-word *són* B corresponds with M (*sonitu*) more closely than do ED in *hljóðan*.

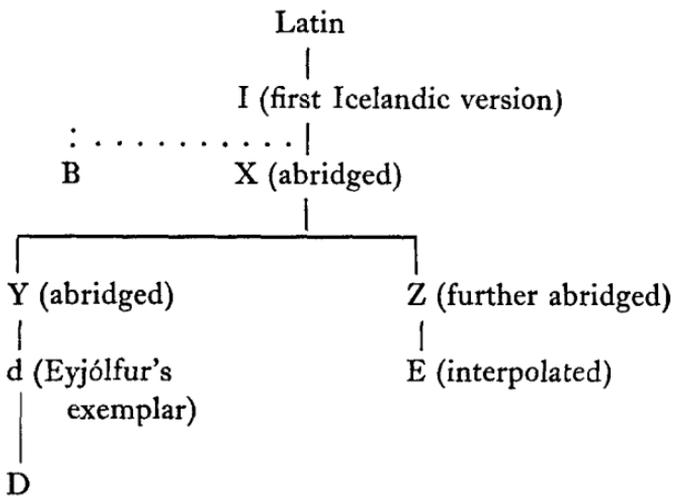
³⁴ ed. C. R. Unger, *Heilagra Manna Sögur* (1877), II 49 ff. In this case I have been obliged to rely on Unger's text.

These and other examples go to show that in some of his words and phrases *Bergr* corresponds more closely with the Latin than do ED. It might therefore be concluded that *Bergr* had used a Latin text, and that his Icelandic is not related to ED. There are some reasons to doubt this conclusion.

The phrasing of *Bergr* is sometimes very close to that of ED. In example (2) quoted above, the words of *Bergr* *hvert hús . . . fullt* are also found in ED, although this alone would have little significance. There are other instances of agreement between B and ED, which are trivial in themselves, but may add up. I will quote a few of them:

- (1) B (57/18) *kirkja . . . hvergi nær fullgør*
ED (648/1) *kirkja . . . enn eigi allgør*
M (II, 10) *necdum ex integro fore constructam*
- (2) B (57/27) *því at regn var stórliga mikit*
ED (649/2) *en með því at stórt regn var (úti D)*
M (II, 10) *donec nimietas pluvix cessaret*
- (3) B (57/23) *hann hræddisk sik munu láta kaupmanna offrit*
ED (648/1) *óttandisk at þeir misti offr kaupmanna*
M (II, 10) *ne solitam amitteret negotiatorum oblationem*
- (4) B (48/31) *dreki hræðiligr*
ED (649/9) *ógurligr dreki*
M (II, 11) *draconem*
- (5) B (58/39) . . . *hans erendi er ekki annat en gera decano sem mestan skaða*
ED (649/30) *hann hefði til þess eins þar komit (þar til þess komit at eins E) at brenna góðs fyrr sagðs decani*
M (II, 11) *ac si propter hoc solum venisset*
- (6) B (59/3) *brennandi þat upp á einu augabragði með öllu því góðsi er á var*
ED (649/31) *ok brennir á lítilli stundu (sem ótrúanligt mátti þykkja added in D) skipit með öllu því sem á var*
M (II, 11) *navem volatu petens, cuncta quæ in ea erant succendit.*

In the passages last quoted the text of Bergr is too close to those of ED for it to be probable that they derive independently from the Latin of Hermann. If they do not, two possibilities appear open. Bergr might have had both the Latin and the Icelandic texts of the history before him. This is improbable. Bergr was citing only one incident of the history and only as an illustration of one precept. He took liberties with his original, and would certainly not be interested in the exactness of a translation or in textual variants. It is more probable that Bergr was following an Icelandic text of the history. But, if so, his text was slightly fuller, closer to the original and therefore older than ED. In this case, the relations of the extant texts of the history in Icelandic might be approximately as follows:



It is hoped that the sequel will clarify certain details implied in this *stemma*.³⁵

³⁵ A strip of a folio is preserved in AM 240 fol. 11, 3, which is assigned to the beginning of the fourteenth century (see Kålund, *Katalog*, 1 207). Unger describes this fragment as *slidt og vanskeligt at læse*, but Mr Ólafur Halldórsson, to whom I am greatly indebted, has kindly read it for me under an ultra-violet lamp. He points out that the side which Kålund describes as *verso* is, in fact, *recto*, and it is here called (*a*), while Kålund's *recto* is called (*b*). The fragment contains a fuller text than E, and, where it overlaps, than D. It is, however, further removed from the Latin original in many things. It is, in parts, more verbose than

The age of the Nikolaus Saga

It is hard to know when Bergr Sökkason wrote his work, although several details of his career are remembered.³⁶ He entered the monastery of Þingeyrar, probably in 1317, and had previously been taught at Munkaþverá by Lárentíus Kálfsson, afterwards bishop of Hólar (1324-31). Bergr returned to Munkaþverá as prior in 1322-3 and was consecrated abbot in 1325. In 1334 he resigned his office 'because of his humility', but it was restored to him in 1345. The date of his death is given variously as 1345 and 1350; the latter is probably nearer the truth but we have no evidence to confirm it.

In his preface to the *Nikolaus Saga* Bergr describes himself as *klerklaus maðr*, which may imply that he had not attained major orders when he wrote it. It would be reasonable to think that Bergr wrote the *Nikolaus Saga* while still at Þingeyrar. A large library was kept there, and it is plain that when he wrote his *Nikolaus Saga* Bergr consulted several books other than the life by Johannes Barenis, which was his main source. This suggests that the *Nikolaus Saga* was written 1317-22, and that the story of the Laon canons existed in this Icelandic version in the second decade of the fourteenth century. It may also suggest that it was stored at Þingeyrar and, perhaps, first written there.

The fragment AM 240 fol. II, 3, mentioned here in note 35, might tell more about the age of the Icelandic version from which D and E descend, although this fragment is too scrappy to allow conclusions. A few words and phrases used in it (*um ýmislig heruð 240, um ýmis heruð ok lqnd E, per Franciam M;*

Hermann, while incidents are given in different order and greatly altered. I cannot be sure that this fragment has any direct relations with ED, but, if it has, it forms a class of its own from which ED cannot descend. The column on the first side (*a*) is based on bk. I, chs. 3-4, of Hermann's history, with insertions from bk. II, ch. 1. The second column (*b*) retells incidents from bk. II, chs. 8-9, although in a very different form.

³⁶ The chief source about Bergr's life is *Laurentius Saga, Bps.*, I 832, 840 and *passim*. See also Jón Espólin, *Íslands Árbækur I* (1821), 47, 81, etc.; Finnur Jónsson, *Litt. Hist.*, III 90 ff.; P. G. Foote, *The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle in Iceland* (London Medieval Studies, Monograph No. 4, 1959), 24.

Soldunian (?) 240, *Solldunum* E, *Issuldunum* M) might suggest that it was based ultimately on the same Norse text as D and E. If so, the Norse original of D and E existed already in the thirteenth century. In 240 the story has been radically altered, and put into a rhetorical 'Latinated' style, which is more like that of Berg Sokkason than of D and E or of Hermann's original. Certain word-forms prevalent in 240 (i.e. *val*, *allum*, *margu*, *heilagum*, etc.) might suggest that it was written under Norwegian influence.

The Icelandic redactors of Hermann

It is interesting to consider the alterations made in Hermann's story by his Icelandic redactors. On the whole they have represented him faithfully, although they have cut down or modified some of his sentences.

I have already mentioned the story of King Arthur, whose seat and oven were shown to the men of Laon in *Danavexeria*, and the brawl which broke out at Bodmin because of him (M, II, 15-16). In the text of D (652/8 ff.) this story is shortened. Arthur is said to be *frægr af Bretum*, but it is not related that the Cornishman told the Frenchmen that Arthur was still alive, nor that 'Britons' and Frenchmen were always quarrelling about this subject (*sicut Britones solent jurgari cum Francis pro rege Arturo*). D says only that the Cornishman spoke 'rather severely' about King Arthur (*talaði nokkut harðliga . . . sakir Arturi konungs*), and so his withered arm was not healed. E has cut down the story further still, and Arthur is not named in it at all, but the redactor is content to say that the Cornishman 'talked rather severely'.

It seems, therefore, that these redactors had little interest in King Arthur, which is surprising, since many Icelanders must have known of him since the first decades of the thirteenth century. The *Prophecies of Merlin* (*Merlínússpá*) were rendered into Icelandic verse by Gunnlaugr Leifsson (died 1218), and it is probable that Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum (Breita Sögur)*, which is preserved in *Hauksbók*, was translated into

Icelandic soon after that.³⁷ The *Tristrams Saga* was written in Norway in 1226, and it is likely that this and other sagas of Arthur's cycle were known in Iceland during the thirteenth century.

Although E has cut down Hermann's story more severely than D, the redactor of E was not content with excision alone. If he had little interest in Arthur, he showed a greater devotion to the Venerable Bede. After telling how the Laon canons visited Bede's shrine at Wilton, E digresses, and gives an account of Bede's life and work, together with three reasons why he was called *venerabilis* and not *sanctus* (650/32-652/5).³⁸ The text here given is plainly the main source of Section A quoted on p. 62 above. I quote a few sentences of E, which will show how close is the verbal similarity: 'Virðuligr guðs vinr Beda prestr ok munkr, ágætr skýrari heilagra ritninga, blómgaðisk með björtum lifnaði þann tíma in Anglia, sem liðit var frá holdgan várs herra Jesu Krists CLXXX ok átta ár (*sic*). Hann var gamall maðr ok sjónlauss . . .' A has added to the information given in E that Bede was the author of the *Martirilogium*, and that he died on the feast of the Ascension.

Section B quoted on p. 62 above appears to have been added later, and gives a second reason for Bede's title which is, in fact, the first reason given by E. This section does not show any verbal likeness to E, but it is perhaps too short to do so.

These stories about Bede's title are commonplace, and it is, therefore, difficult to detect the source of E. John of Tynemouth (died 1366), as it seems, copied these stories from the *Legenda Aurea* of Jacob of Voragine (died 1298).³⁹ In a few phrases E resembles the text printed by Horstmann more closely than the *Legenda Aurea*. The phrase *ágætr skýrari heilagra ritninga* in E

37 Cf. my *Origins of Icelandic Literature*² (1967), 201-2.

38 The legends are discussed by T. Wright, *Biographia Britannica Literaria, Anglo-Saxon Period* (1842), 269 ff., and by H. Gehle, *Disputatio historico-theologica de Bedæ Venerabilis uita et scriptis* (1838).

39 See *Legenda Aurea*, ed. T. Graesse (1850), 833; *Nova Legenda Anglie*, ed. C. Horstman, I (1901), 107-11; further J. A. Giles, *Venerabilis Bedae Opera* (1843-4), I clxi f. and ci ff.

(and A) bears some resemblance to . . . *profunda sanctorum scripturarium penetranda ingredi conatus est*, which is given in Horstmann's text, but not in the *Legenda Aurea*.

It may be noted finally that the redactor of E has not only mutilated Hermann's story. On the contrary, he has sometimes improved it and given it point. Hermann (M, II, 20) tells of a young man in Totnes, who stole some of the canon's money, and afterwards rode into the forest and hanged himself. This story is repeated in D, but the version given in E is more subtle. As the thief rode through the forest, an oak-tree stretched down one of its limbs, coiled its withies round his neck and raised him aloft. This is rather like the tragic story told of King Vikarr in *Gautreks Saga*.

VI THE OLD NORSE HOMILY ON THE DEDICATION

THE homily *In Dedicacione Tempeli* (*Kirkjudagsmál*) is one of the most interesting of early Norse homilies. It is preserved in three ancient manuscripts:

No. 237, folio, in the Arnamagnæan Collection; here called *L*.¹

No. 15, quarto, in the Royal Library of Stockholm; here called *S*.²

No. 619, quarto, in the Arnamagnæan Collection; here called *N*.³

L and *S* were both written in Iceland, while *N* was written in Norway. The text of *L* is defective and portions of it are missing at the beginning and at the end. The manuscript in which *L* is contained is perhaps the oldest surviving one written in Icelandic. It is believed that it was written about 1150.⁴ Since there are so few Icelandic manuscripts of comparable age, such dating has only limited value.

S is generally known as the Stockholm Homily Book. It was written about the end of the twelfth century or early in the thirteenth.⁵ It is a collection of fifty-six homilies intended for different feasts of the year. *N* is probably of slightly later date than *S*, but it is evident that the Norwegian scribes who wrote it were copying

1 Published in *Leifar fornra kristinna fræða islenzkra*, ed. Þorvaldur Bjarnarson (1878), 162-5.

2 Published in *Homiliu-Bók*, ed. Th. Wisén (1872), 98-103. A facsimile of this text is contained in *Corpus Codicum Islandicorum Medii Aevi* VIII, with an introduction by F. Paasche (1935). Cf. also the Postscript, pp. 100-1 below.

3 This text has been published a number of times: in *Gammel norsk homiliebog*, ed. C. R. Unger (1864); in *Codex A.M. 619 Quarto*, ed. G. T. Flom (University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, 1929); in *Gammel norsk Homiliebok*, ed. G. Indrebø (1931), to which references in this paper apply. A facsimile edition of the Norwegian Homily Book was published with an introduction by Trygve Knudsen, *Gammelnorsk Homiliebok* (Corpus Codicum Norvegorum Medii Aevi I, 1952).

4 See H. Spehr, *Der Ursprung der isländischen Schrift und ihre Weiterbildung bis zur Mitte des 13. Jahrhunderts* (1929), 167.

5 Cf. A. Holtmark, *En islandsk scholasticus fra det 12. århundre* (1936), 49 ff.

older originals throughout.⁶ *N* is a collection of homilies comparable with *S* and eleven identical homilies, or parts of them, are found in both of these books.

The difference between the three texts of the Dedication Homily are slight. Their relationship will be considered at the end of this paper. For the present, the readings of *N* will be made the basis of discussion, unless otherwise stated.

In this homily the different parts of a church building are enumerated and a symbolical meaning is given to each of them. The altar is said to symbolize Christ, the bells the preachers, the chancel the saints in Heaven, and the nave the Christians on earth. But not only do the different parts of the church represent the different members of whom the spiritual Church is composed; every Christian is said to be the living temple and, consequently, the parts of the church building may be said to represent the different virtues present in a good Christian.⁷ The symbols used in the homily are thus divided into two series: the concrete and the abstract.⁸ In the second series, the altar is said to symbolize love, the altar-cloth good deeds, and the floor humility.

Most of the symbols used in this homily can be found in European texts of various ages and it is plain that the Norse homily is derived from foreign models. K. Vrátný⁹ threw valuable light on its sources. He suggested that it was based upon books and treatises of Honorius Augustodunensis, who probably worked in Germany during the first half of the twelfth century. Vrátný considered that the main source of the homily was to be found in Book I of the *Gemmae Animae*,¹⁰ one of the chief works attributed to Honorius.

It is clear that the Norse homily is closely related to passages

6 See Indrebø, *op. cit.*, 38-9.

7 Cf. Rabanus Maurus, *De Universo* XIV, XXI; *PL* 111, 397D: si ergo ille templum Dei per assumptam humanitatem factus est, et nos templum Dei per inhabitantem spiritum ejus in nobis efficitur.

8 A similar distinction may be observed in homilies ascribed to Hugo of St Victor, *PL* 177, 901A f. and 903D f.

9 *Arkiv* XXIX (1913), 174 ff., and XXXII (1916), 31 ff.

10 *PL* 172, 541 ff.

in the *Gemmae*, as well as to passages in other works assigned to Honorius, e.g. in the *Sacramentarium*,¹¹ in the Commentary on the Song of Songs,¹² and in the *Sermones in dedicatione*.¹³

It is not improbable that the Norse homilist knew these works of Honorius. It can be shown that the *Lucidarius* and other works ascribed to this author were known in Iceland and in Norway in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.¹⁴ But if the Norse homilist knew the works of Honorius, he probably knew other expositions of architectural symbolism as well. A great proportion of the symbols used by Honorius had already been used by earlier writers, often in the same words as Honorius used. Honorius frequently copied older writers, just as younger writers copied him.

The practice of using parts of a temple or of a church as symbols of men and their qualities had its roots in antiquity. Examples of it are found in the Old Testament, and even more, in the New Testament. Christ is the corner-stone of the building (*Eph.* ii, 19-20); He is the temple (*John* ii, 19); He is the gate (*John* x, 9) and His followers are living stones (*I Peter* ii, 5).

Isidore and Bede were among the early exponents of architectural symbolism. Amalarius of Metz (died 850) should also be mentioned. The fullest exposition of architectural symbolism written in the earlier middle ages is, perhaps, that contained in Book xiv of the *De Universo* of Rabanus Maurus, bishop of Mainz (died 856).

During the twelfth century, many of the intellectual fashions of past ages were revived. Symbolism flourished in that century as never before and many writers used the parts of church buildings to symbolize religious objects or truths which were felt to be more lasting and more real than the building itself. Among the symbolists of the twelfth century should be mentioned Hugo of St Victor (died 1141), Honorius Augustodunensis, Johannes

¹¹ *PL* 172, 737 ff.

¹² *PL* 172, 347 ff.

¹³ *PL* 172, 1099 ff.

¹⁴ I have discussed the influence of Honorius on early Icelandic literature in *Origins of Icelandic Literature*² (1967), 118-9, 137-8.

Beleth (died 1202), Ivo of Chartres and Sicardus (died 1215). The most detailed account of symbolism of this kind is contained in the *Rationale divinatorum officiorum* of Durandus, bishop of Mende (died 1296).¹⁵

A considerable modern literature has been devoted to the study of symbolism of this kind among medieval theologians and mention should be made of the works of Neale Mason and B. Webb,¹⁶ of H. O. Taylor¹⁷ and especially of that of J. Sauer.¹⁸ Without the assistance of such books as these, this study of the Norse Dedication Homily would not have been undertaken.

In his work on the Dedication Homily, Vrátný compares the following passage:

Honorius, *Gemmae* I, ch. cxxxviii; *N* 96/20: Dyrr kirkjunnar merkja Ostium . . . est Christus, qui . . . trú rétta, þá er oss leiðir inn til fideles aditum ostendendo per fid- almennilegrar kristni. em introduct.¹⁹

The similarity between these two passages is not close, because Christ is not precisely *trú* (faith). *Ostium* is not the only possible equivalent in Latin of the Norse *dyrr* (doorway).

Passages reminiscent of that quoted from the Norse homily can also be found in Book XIV of the *De Universo* of Rabanus Maurus. Rabanus wrote:

Vestibulum autem aliquando significat fidem, per quam intratur in Ecclesiam;²⁰

and again:

Potest quoque per vestibulum fides intelligi. Ipsa quippe est ante gradus et portam: quia prius ad fidem venimus, et postmodum per spiritualium donorum gradus cœlestis vitæ aditum intramus . . .²¹

In other passages, Rabanus expounds the symbolical meaning

¹⁵ *Rationale divinatorum officiorum* (Naples, 1859).

¹⁶ Neale Mason and B. Webb, *The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments* (1843).

¹⁷ H. O. Taylor, *The Medieval Mind* II (1925), Book v.

¹⁸ J. Sauer, *Symbolik des Kirchengebäudes* (1902).

¹⁹ *PL* 172, 587C.

²⁰ *PL* 111, 398D.

²¹ *ibid.*

of *ostium* and it is plain that his words are related to those of Honorius, even though it is not necessary to conclude that the symbolism of Honorius is based directly on that of Rabanus.

The symbolical interpretation of *ostium* depends largely on the etymology accorded to the word. The basis of this etymology was given by Isidore:²²

ostium est per quod ab aliquo arcemur ingressu, ab ostando dictum (sive ostium, quia ostendit aliquid intus). Alii aiunt ostium appellari, quia ostem moratur, ibi enim adversariis nos obicimus . . .

These three etymologies run through the symbolical literature of the middle ages. They are quoted in the works of Rabanus,²³ Honorius,²⁴ Sicardus,²⁵ Durandus.²⁶ It can be seen how the Norse homilist adapted them to his own needs when he wrote:

N 96/21: Hurð fyrir durum merkir skynsama menn, þá er hraustliga standa á móti villumönnum ok byrgja þá fyrir útan kristni guðs í kenningum sínum (S adds: en veita inngöngu trúðendum).

Similar sentiments were expressed by Rabanus when he quoted the etymologies of Isidore²⁷ and again in a later passage:

*Ostium vero in porticu doctores, qui cæteris lucem vitæ, januamque intrandi ad Dominum pandebant, exprimit.*²⁸

The walls of the church were symbolized in various ways, according to whether they were considered to be two or four. In the Norse homily, the walls were thought of as two and were said to represent the Jews and the Gentiles, who were united in one faith:

N 96/28: Tveir kirkjuveggir merkja tvinnan lýð kominn til einnar kristni, annan af gyðingum en annan af heiðnum þjóðum.

Similarly Rabanus wrote:

*Parietes enim templi Dei, fideles sunt ex utroque populo, hoc est, Iudaico et Gentile, ex quibus Christus ædificavit Ecclesiam suam.*²⁹

²² *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum libri xx*, ed. W. M. Lindsay (1911), xv, vii, 4.

²³ *PL* 111, 399B.

²⁴ *PL* 172, 587C.

²⁵ *PL* 213, 21B.

²⁶ *Rationale* 1, 1, 26.

²⁷ *PL* 111, 399B.

²⁸ *PL* 111, 399D.

²⁹ *PL* 111, 401C.

Suchlike symbols were also used by Bruno of Segni³⁰ and by Durandus.³¹

In the Norse homily, the front wall (*brjóstþili*), which joins the two side walls, was asserted to represent Christ, who unites the two peoples in one faith:

N 96/30: Brjóstþili, er samtengir báða veggi í einu húsi, merkir dróttinn vörn, er samtengir tvinnan lýð í einni trú, ok er sjálf brjóst ok hlífskjöldur kristni sinnar.

Rabanus used this same symbol for the corner between the two walls:

Angulus, quod duos parietes in unum conjungit . . . intelligitur Christus, eo quod duos parietes conjungat in unum, credentes, videlicet ex Iudæis et Gentibus.³²

The four corner-posts of the church were stated by the Norse homilist to signify the four Gospels (*N 97/8*). Comparable symbols were used by continental writers for the four walls.³³ Rabanus³⁴ wrote in one passage: *Columnae enim sunt Apostoli et doctores Evangelii*. When he used abstract symbols, the homilist said that they signified the four cardinal virtues (*N 98/15*) and this symbol was also used by continental writers for the four walls.³⁵

The roof of the church was symbolized in various ways. Since it faces downward, it was said to signify the active life. Thus, in a passage attributed to Hugo of St Victor: *Tectum sunt activi . . . res terrenas administrantes*.³⁶ But since the roof also faces upward, it was said to signify the contemplative life, and Rabanus wrote:

Tectum intentionem caelestis operationis signat, id est vitam contemplativam in Evangelio . . .³⁷

These latter sentiments were echoed by the Norse homilist:

30 *PL* 164, 318D.

31 *Rationale* 1, 1, 9.

32 *PL* 111, 401D.

33 Honorius, *Sermo in dedicatione*, *PL* 172, 1103B; *Rationale* 1, 1, 15.

34 *PL* 111, 404A.

35 *Rationale* 1, 1, 17.

36 *PL* 177, 901.

37 *PL* 111, 403A.

N 97/10: Ræfr kirkju merkir þá menn, er hugskotsaugu sín hefja upp frá öllum jarðligum hlutum til himneskrar dýrðar, ok hlífa svá kristninni í bænum við freistni, sem ræfr hlífir kirkju við regni . . .

These last sentences might also be compared with another passage by Rabanus, although the similarity is somewhat remote:

Significant ergo tigna prædicatores sanctos, quorum et verbo et exemplo structura ejusdem Ecclesiæ, ut subsistere possit, continetur: quia suæ robore doctrinæ turbines hereticæ impulsiois, ne eam dejiciant, arcent.³⁸

The passage, last quoted from the Norse homily, is but distantly related to that in which Honorius³⁹ and, with little difference, Sicardus⁴⁰ and Durandus⁴¹ spoke of the roof-tiles:

Tegulæ tecti, quæ imbrem a domo repellunt, sunt milites, qui Ecclesiam a paganis et hostibus protegunt.

It need hardly be said that the church, whose parts the Norse homilist used for his symbols, was built of timber, although this is not to say, precisely, that it was the kind of church which modern writers would describe as a stave or mast church. Since the church was built of timber, some of the favourite motives of the European symbolists could not be used. Christian men, who formed living stones of which the church was built, were not mentioned in this homily. Instead of a floor of stone, the homilist alludes to one of boards:

N 96/23: Gólfþili í kirkju merkir lítilláta menn, þá er sik lægja í allri virðingu ok veita því meira upphald öllum lýð, sem þeir verða meir fyrir allra átroða (*L* reads: undir fótum troðnir).

These words find their closest parallel in the work of Honorius,⁴² from whom Sicardus⁴³ and Durandus⁴⁴ hardly differ:

Pavimentum, quod pedibus calcatur, est vulgus cujus labore Ecclesia sustentatur.

When he used abstract symbols, the Norse homilist said that the floorboards signified humility, obedience, patience:

38 *PL* 111, 402C.

39 *PL* 172, 586B.

40 *PL* 213, 22C.

41 *Rationale* 1, 1, 36.

42 *PL* 172, 586D.

43 *PL* 213, 20A.

44 *Rationale* 1, 1, 28.

N 98/17: gólfpili merkir lítillæti ok hlýðni ok þolinmæði, þá er eigi skammisk at þola lægning ok vanrétti af mǫnnum.

Rabanus wrote in similar terms:

Pavimentum intelligitur humiliatio atque afflictio animæ . . . humilitas fidelium doctrinam sanctorum patienter suscipientium . . .⁴⁵

The foundation of the timber church is called the *syllustokkr* (groundsel). It represents, in the first series of symbols, the apostles, who are the basis of faith:

N 96/19-20: Syllustokkar kirkjunnar merkja postula guðs, en (*v.l.* er) undirstokkar eru all(r)ar kristni.

When abstract symbols are used, the groundsels signify faith, the basis of all good works:

N 98/12: Syllustokkar þessar kirkju merkja trú, því at yfir þann grundvöll ok undirstokk skulum vér smíða öll góð verk . . .

Similarly, European symbolists claimed that the foundation signified Christ or the Apostles⁴⁶ and Rabanus wrote:

Fundamentum enim allegorice Christus intelligitur, vel fides ejus catholica, super quam fundata est Ecclesia.⁴⁷

The timber church, like many stone churches, was divided into chancel (*songhús*) and nave (*kirkja*). The chancel signified the saints in Heaven, and the nave the Christians on earth:

N 96/12-13: Songhús merkir helga menn á himni, en kirkjan kristna menn á jörðu.

The chancel and the nave were sometimes said, by European symbolists, to signify the contemplative and active life,⁴⁸ but Rabanus signified them in these words:

Sanctum autem, quod velo suspenso a sanctuario separatum est, significat præsentem Ecclesiam, quæ peregrinatione istius mundi versatur; sanctum autem sanctorum illam, quæ in cælis est.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ *PL* 111, 403B-C. ⁴⁶ Cf. J. Sauer, *op. cit.*, 115. ⁴⁷ *PL* 111, 400D.
⁴⁸ Cf. J. Sauer, *op. cit.*, 118-9. ⁴⁹ *PL* 111, 393D.

These sentiments may be compared with those expressed by Honorius: *Duo chori psallentium designant angelos, et spiritus justorum . . .*⁵⁰

The altar was stated by the Norse homilist (*N* 96/14) to symbolize Christ, for sacrifices offered to God were sanctified only over the altar. This motive was also used by Rabanus, Honorius, Hugo of St Victor, Durandus and by most symbolists from the ninth century to the end of the thirteenth century.⁵¹

The altar-cloth was said by the Norse homilist (*N* 96/16) to signify the saints, a thought which finds close parallels in the *Gemmae* and the *Sacramentarium* of Honorius.⁵² When he used abstract symbols, the Norse homilist (*N* 97/29) said that the altar-cloth signified good deeds. Rabanus⁵³ asserted the same of the vestments worn by the priest.

Other parallels between the Norse homily and the expositions of European symbolists could be quoted without looking further afield. Enough has been said to show that nearly every thought expressed in the homily is derived from a foreign source, although the homilist has adapted symbols originally designed for a church of stone to his church of wood.

The form of the Norse homily bears a certain resemblance to dedication homilies ascribed to Honorius⁵⁴ and to Hugo of St Victor.⁵⁵ Most of the symbols used by the Norse homilist are to be found in many continental works, some of which, like those of Sicardus and Durandus, are much later than the Norse homily. But the closest resemblance in motives appears to be between the Norse homily and Book XIV of the *De Universo* of Rabanus. It is, however, improbable that the Norse homilist had access directly to the *De Universo*. It is more likely that he used an early homily based upon that book. Alternatively, it is possible that the Norse homilist used several sources and, in that case, the *Gemmae Animae* may have been one of them. If

50 *PL* 172, 588A.

52 *PL* 172, 587A and 745D.

54 *PL* 172, 1099 ff.

51 Cf. J. Sauer, *op. cit.*, 159 ff.

53 *PL* 111, 397.

55 *PL* 177, 901 f., and 903 ff.

this paper should lead one, better acquainted than I am with the Latin literature of the middle ages, to identify the sole or chief source of the Norse homily, it will have achieved its purpose.

In conclusion it may be worth considering whether the parallel passages in Latin can throw any light on the relationship between the early texts of the Norse Dedication Homily. The three texts were compared in detail by G. Indrebø,⁵⁶ whose work the reader should consult. Indrebø concluded that, except in a few instances of scribal error, the readings of *N* were closer to the original than those of the other two.

It was said above that the differences between the three texts were slight. Few of them have any material significance. On the whole, *L* and *N* resemble each other so closely that they could be considered as one text. *S* stands somewhat apart. This is surprising, because the disparity of age between *L* and *N* appears to be greater than that between *L* and *S*. Considering the great age of *L*, it is probable that the text *LN* represents the original more faithfully than *S*.

I have noted about one hundred and twenty instances of difference between the texts of *N* and *S*. The text of *L* is extant in about seventy of these instances and, in nearly all of them, *L* resembles *N*. The following examples will serve to illustrate this:

A word, or even a sentence, found in *L* and *N* is omitted in *S*:

N (96/31), *L* (162/11) í einu húsi; *S* (100/18) omits.

N (96/34), *L* (162/15) dróttinn sjálfr; *S* (100/21) dróttinn.

N (97/4) tvá veggj, þat er tvinna lýði einni trú (*sic*); *L* (162/19) tvá veggj, þat es tvinna lýða í einni trú; *S* (100/25) tvinna lýði í einni trú.

N (98/28), *L* (183/31) svá sem hann þetta mælti: lúk upp þú munn minn, þá es betr gegnir at mæla en þegja, en þú byrg hann þá er betra er þagat en mælt; *S* (101/22) omits.

Occasionally, *S* has a word or a phrase not to be found in the other two:

S (100/10) en veita inngöngu trúðndum (cf. *N* 96/21, *L* 162/3).
N (96/25), *L* (162/5) því meira; *S* (100/12) þeir því meira.
N (96/32), *L* (162/12) trú; *S* (100/19) trú sinni.

In other instances, similar words are used in *LN* and *S*, but in different order:

N (97/6), *L* (162/22) sjá má öll tíðendi; *S* (100/27) öll tíðendi má sjá.
N (97/9), *L* (162/25) kenningar þeira; *S* (100/30) þeira kenningar.
N (97/22), *L* (163/11) þá er bera píslarmark Krists; *S* (101/4) þá es píslarmark Krists bera.

Here and there, *LN* use one word and *S* another:

N (97/18), *L* (163/7) þeim trjórn; *S* (100/38) dvergum.
N (97/23), *L* (163/12) sik; *S* (101/5) hold sitt.
N (97/29), *L* (163/19) klæði; *S* (101/10) búningr.
N (98/7), *L* (163/30) Davíð mælti í sálmi; *S* (101/21) sálma skáldit mælti.

I note only about thirty instances in which the text of *L* differs from that of *N*. In such instances, the readings of *S* generally resemble those of *N*. This is also remarkable, since *N* is a Norwegian manuscript, while *L* and *S* are Icelandic.

The differences between *N* and *L* may consist in word-order:

N (96/35), *S* (100/22) kirkju ok sönghúss; *L* (162/16) sönghúss ok kirkju.
N (97/32), *S* (101/13) guðs elska (elsku *N*) ok náungs; *L* (163/21) elska guðs ok náungs.

Sometimes different words are used in *L* and *N*:

N (96/31), *S* (100/25) samtengir; *L* (162/20) sem tengir (scribal error?).
N (97/13), *S* (100/33) við regni; *L* (163/1) við élum ok skúrum.
N (98/15), *S* (101/27) hornstafir; *L* (164/4) hornsteinar.
N (99/4), *S* (102/12) góðir bræðr; *L* (164/31) góð systkin.

Here and there, *L* contains a word or a phrase not found in the other two:

N (97/29), *S* (101/11) góð verk; *L* (163/19) merkja góð verk.
N (98/26), *S* (101/37) —; *L* (164/16) meðan vér lifum.
N (99/9), *S* (102/16) í tárurn; *L* (164/35) iðranar tárurn.

There are a number of instances in which different grammatical forms are used in *L* and *N*:

N (97/12), *S* (100/23) ræfr; *L* (162/28) ræfrit.
N (97/13), *S* (100/33) kirkju; *L* (163/1) kirkjunni.

Although small, these examples of similarity between *S* and *N* are sufficient to show that *S* bears a closer resemblance to *N* than to *L*, and that *S* and *N* have some relationship which is not shared by *L*. The few instances in which *S* and *L* have the same readings and *N* differs should probably be explained as errors or spontaneous alterations made by the scribe of *N*:

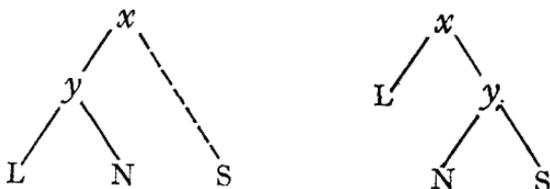
L (162/12), *S* (100/19) hann sjálfr; *N* (96/32) sjálfr.
L (162/17), *S* (100/23) fyr(ir) trú Kristis; *N* (97/2) fyrir Krist.
L (162/21), *S* (100/26) í einni ást; *N* (97/5) einni ást.
L (163/20), *S* (101/12) yfir altara; *N* (97/30) yfir altari.
L (163/35), *S* (101/23) ór; *N* (98/11) í.
L (163/35), *S* (101/24) en; *N* (98/12) ok.
L (164/5), *S* (101/27) vitra; *N* (98/16) vizka.
L (164/22), *S* (102/4) of; *N* (98/32) um.
L (164/29), *S* (102/11) þjónustu; *N* (99/3) til þjónustu.

There are few instances in which all three texts differ and they can have little significance:

N (96/35) er á milli kirkju ok sǫnghúss er;
L (162/16) es á miðli es sǫnghúss ok kirkju;
S (100/22) þat er es á miðli kirkju ok sǫnghúss.
N (97/1) inn fyrir Krist í kristnina;
L (162/17) inn fyr trú Kristis í kristnina;
S (100/23) inn í kristnina fyr trú Kristis.
N (98/1) því síðr guðs gata þrǫng;
L (163/24) því síðr þrǫng gata guðs;
S (101/16) því síðr þrǫng vera guðs gata.

Comparison of the three texts of the Dedication Homily shows that *L* and *N* often resemble each other and contrast with *S*, although, on some occasions, *S* and *N* resemble each other and

contrast with *L*. The relationship between the three might be expressed by either of the following schemes:



Either of these schemes would be consistent with the conclusion that the text *LN* represents the original more faithfully than does *S*. If the first alternative is accepted, it is implied that readings shared by *S* and either *L* or *N* were probably in the homily in its original form. There are some slight indications that this was not always the case.

In one passage *N* (96/23) reads:

Gólfþili í kirkju merkir lítilláta menn, þá er sik lægja í allri virðingu ok veita því meira upphald óllum lýð, sem þeir verða meir fyrir *allra átroða*.

In this passage the reading of *S* (100/11) differs little from that of *N*, but, instead of the words italicized, *L* (162/6) reads: *undir fótum troðnir*. The difference is not material, but the phrasing of *L* accords more closely with that used in parallel passages in Latin. Honorius, from whom Sicardus and Durandus hardly differ, wrote:

Pavimentum, quod pedibus calcatur, est vulgus cuius labore Ecclesia sustentatur.⁵⁷

This example may suggest that, in some instances, *L* preserves the original text more faithfully than either of the other two. In another passage *N* (97/10) reads:

Ræfr kirkju merkir þá menn, er hugskotsaugu sín hefja upp frá þllum jarðligum hlutum til himneskrar dýrðar, ok hlífa svá kristninni í bœnum við freistni, sem ræfr hlífir kirkju *við regni*.

The italicized words are identical in *S* (100/33) but, instead of *við regni*, *L* (163/1) has *við élum ok skúrum*. In this case the reading

⁵⁷ Honorius, *PL* 172, 586D; Sicardus, *PL* 213, 20A; *Rationale* 1, 1, 28.

of *N* (and *S*) might be supported by the words of Honorius, with whom Sicardus and Durandus agree closely:

Tegulæ tecti, quæ imbrem a domo repellunt, sunt milites, qui Ecclesiam a paganis et hostibus protegunt.⁵⁸

But in this Latin passage, the roof-tiles are considered as symbols of active churchmen, not of contemplative, as the roof is considered in the Norse homily. The *él ok skúr* may reflect the *turbines hæreticæ impulsioni*, of which Rabanus wrote in the passage quoted on p. 85 above. At least, there are not sufficient reasons to accept Indrebø's assertion that, in these cases, the readings of *L* are later than those of *N*.

It is possible that *S* may preserve some features of the original which have been obscured in the other two. In one passage *N* (96/19) reads:

Syllustokkar kirkjunnar merkja postula guðs, en (*sic*) undirstokkar eru all(r)ar kristni.

The corresponding passage of *L* has been lost, but *S* (100/5) reads:

Syllustokkar kirkjunnar merkja postula ok spámenn, er undirstokkar eru allrar kristni, sem Paulus mælti: Ér eruð smíðaðir yfir grundvöll postula ok spámanna.

In this instance *S* appears to be following the original text of the homily more faithfully than *N*, which has probably been shortened. Durandus,⁵⁹ who was doubtless following an established tradition, wrote:

Hæc est domus Domini, firmiter ædificata, cujus fundamentum est angularis lapis Christus, super quo fundamento positum est fundamentum apostolorum et prophetarum.

A few lines below, *S* (100/8) reads:

Hurð fyrir durum merkir skynsama menn, þá es hraustliga standa í gegn villum (*sic*) monnum ok byrgja þá fyr utan kristni guðs í kenningum sínum, en *veita inngöngu trúöndum*.

⁵⁸ Honorius, *PL* 172, 586B; Sicardus, *PL* 213, 22C; *Rationale* 1, 1, 36.

⁵⁹ *Rationale* 1, 1, 9.

In this passage the readings of *L* (162/1) and of *N* (96/21) differ little from that of *S*, but both *L* and *N* omit the words italicized above. It is, however, possible that these words were in the homily in its original form. Evidence of this might be seen in the following passage of Rabanus:⁶⁰

Ostium vero in porticu doctores, qui cæteris lucem vitæ, januamque intrandi ad Dominum pandebant, exprimit.

The passage last quoted from the Dedication Homily is rather more distantly related to that of Honorius,⁶¹ with which it has, nevertheless, something in common:

Ostium . . . est Christus, qui per justitiam obstans infideles a domo sua arceat, et fideles aditum ostendendo per fidem introducit.

It might be suggested that the words *en veita inngongu trúðndum* were in the original Norse Homily, but were omitted independently from *L* and *N*, since they were felt to be unnecessary. But the evidence available to me is too slight to permit of conclusions about the relationship of the three texts.

TRANSLATION⁶²

King Solomon first erected a temple to God and, when it was completed, he invited his people to hold a festival. Then Solomon stood praying and he spoke these words: 'Thou didst hear, O Lord, the prayer of Thy servant, which I prayed to Thee when I fashioned the temple for Thee; therefore, bless and hallow this house which I did build in Thy name. Hear, O Lord, the prayer which Thy servant prays to Thee this day, that Thine eyes may be open and Thine ears listening above this house day and night. If Thy people shall transgress and turn to repentance and come to this temple, hear Thou their prayers in this place and deliver them from the hands of their enemies.'

⁶⁰ *PL* 111, 399D. ⁶¹ *PL* 172, 587C.

⁶² The Norwegian text of the homily is translated from Indrebø's edition since this is the most convenient text for general purposes. Some of the variant readings of *S* and *L* are translated in footnotes.

And when Solomon had ended his prayer, the Lord appeared and the whole people witnessed the magnificence of the Lord, coming over the temple, and all present bowed down to God and praised the Lord.

From these origins, churches and all the celebration of dedication days began. And since, dear brethren, we are holding the feast of dedication today, it is of first importance that we realize how great is the grace we receive in the church. When a man first comes into the world, he shall be brought to church and shall there be baptized, and he then becomes the son of God, he who was until then the slave of sin. In the church, the flesh and blood of Our Lord shall be consecrated, and all Christians shall taste of It for their salvation. At this service, the heavens are opened and God's angels join with men in attending the service of the priest. In church, meetings of reconciliation are held between God and men, and all the prayers which we offer in church are those most pleasing to God.⁶³ If we fall into mortal sin and are in disagreement with God, we must go again to church and accept the penance imposed by the clerks and so be reconciled with God. And when a man dies, his body shall be brought to church and buried there and the clerks shall commit his soul to God's keeping.⁶⁴

Therefore, dear friends, we should take great care of our churches, for we go to them when we come into the world, and while we are in the world, and when we depart from it.

Now, since the church and the whole Christian community is denoted by the same name in books, we may explain how the church symbolizes the people and how the Christian people may be called the palace of God. For Paul the Apostle spoke in these words:⁶⁵ *You are the holy temple of God, who dwells in you.* As the church is constructed of many diverse objects assembled together,⁶⁶ so the people are assembled in one faith from diverse races and tongues. A part of the Christian community is in heaven with

63 *S* adds: although God hears our prayers wherever we pray from the depth of our hearts.

64 *S* adds: with many prayers and invocations for his salvation (*sæluſongum*).

65 *S* omits: For . . . words.

66 *S*: of many stones or timbers.

God and others are here on earth. Therefore, some parts of the church signify heavenly glory and some parts Christendom on earth. The chancel signifies the saints in heaven and the nave the Christians on earth. The altar signifies Christ, for just as no sacrifices offered to God are sanctified except over the altar, our words will not be acceptable to God unless they are sanctified in the love of Christ. The altar-cloths are the saints who adorn Christ in good deeds, as Paul the Apostle said: *All of you who are baptized in Christ have adorned Christ.*⁶⁷

The foundation timbers of the church signify the Apostles of God, who are the foundations of all Christendom.⁶⁸ The portal into the church signifies the true faith, through which we are led into the community of Christianity. The door before the portal signifies the wise who boldly resist the heretics in their teaching, and exclude them from God's Christianity.⁶⁹ The floor-boards signify the humble who lower themselves in all dignity and give greater support to the whole community the more they are trodden under foot. The benches in the church signify the merciful who relieve the sufferings of their weak brethren in their mercy, as the benches give comfort to those who sit upon them. The two walls of the church signify the two peoples joined in one Christendom, one of the Jews and the other of the heathen tribes. The front wall, which joins the two walls in the one house, signifies the Lord who joins the two peoples in one faith and is Himself the protection and shield of His Christendom. In this front wall there is a doorway to go into the church and windows which light up the church, for the Lord Himself enlightens all who enter His faith. The rood-screen between the nave and the chancel signifies the Holy Ghost, for just as we enter Christianity by way of Christ, so also do we enter heavenly glory through the gate of mercy of the Holy Spirit. And just as Christ united the two

67 The Vulgate reads: *Quicumque enim in Christo baptizati estis, Christum induistis (Gal. iii, 27).*

68 *S* reads: of all faith, as Paul the Apostle said: You are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

69 *S* adds: but give entry to the faithful.

walls, that is the two peoples, in one faith, so also does the Holy Spirit unite those two peoples in one love. In this rood-screen there is a large doorway through which all that happens in the chancel may be seen from the nave, for every man who finds the doorway of the Holy Spirit may observe many celestial things with his spiritual eyes.

The four corner-posts in the church signify the four gospels, for the teachings contained in them are the stoutest supports of all Christianity. The roof of the church signifies those who raise their spiritual eyes above all earthly things to heavenly glory and thus shelter Christianity from temptation by their prayers, as the roof shelters the church from rain.⁷⁰

The long-timbers of the church, that is to say the ridge-beams and the wall-plates,⁷¹ which support and hold fast both the rafters and the wainscoting of the church—these signify the rulers who are appointed to govern and to further Christianity, such as abbots who govern monks and princes who govern peoples.

The tie-beams, which uphold the wall-plates and strengthen those timbers which support the ridge-beams,⁷² signify those Christians who make peace between⁷³ the worldly chiefs by their counsels, for these support monasteries and holy places with their wealth.

The bells signify the clerks who make a beautiful sound before God and men in their prayers and preachings. The crosses and roods signify the ascetics who bear the marks of Christ's passion on their bodies when they weary themselves in fasting and vigils.

⁷⁰ *L* reads: from storms and showers.

⁷¹ 'Wall-plates' is perhaps not the precise equivalent of ON *staflægjur*. This word appears to be used generally for horizontal beams supported by upright posts along the inside of the wall, but not touching it. The usual word for 'wall-plates' is *vegglægjur*. See Valtýr Guðmundsson, *Privatboligen þaa Island i Sagatiden* (1889), 118; also A. Nilsson in *Forntida gárdar i Island*, ed. M. Stenberger (1943), 296.

⁷² *S* reads: The tie-beams which strengthen the wall-plates and uphold the king-posts (*dvergum*) which support the ridge-beams.

⁷³ *S* reads: strengthen.

But just as we say that the church signifies the whole Christian people, so it may signify each Christian man who verily makes himself the temple of the Holy Spirit by his good works. For every man shall fashion a spiritual church within himself, not with timbers or stones, but rather with good works. The chancel of this church is prayer and psalm-singing. The altar signifies love and the altar-cloth good deeds, which must accompany love. Just as all sacrifices are hallowed over the altar, so all good works are hallowed and made acceptable in love. And this love may be distinguished in two commandments, i.e. love of God and love of our neighbour. The front wall and the rood-screen of the church signify this two-fold love, the front wall love of our neighbour and the rood-screen love of God. In the rood-screen is a large doorway into the chancel; for the more deeply he loves God the less narrow will the path of God appear to every man. In the front wall there are windows, for light is the command of the Lord, said the psalmist,⁷⁴ and it enlightens our eyes. The Lord Himself explained this clear precept more fully when He said: *It is My commandment that each of you love the other.*

The doorway before the portal signifies control of the tongue, as David said in the psalm:⁷⁵ *Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and a door to guard my lips*, and as he spoke in these words: *Open my mouth when it befits better to speak than to be silent, but close it when it is better to be silent than to speak.*⁷⁶ The door may further signify wisdom, which distinguishes good things from evil, so that we open our hearts to good things and shut out all evil fantasies. The foundation timbers of this church signify faith, for over this foundation and basis we shall fashion all our good works, so that we may become temples of God. The four corner-posts⁷⁷ signify the four cardinal virtues which are the stoutest supports of other good deeds,⁷⁸ i.e. wisdom and justice, fortitude and temperance. The floor-boarding signifies humility and

74 S: David.

76 S omits: open . . . speak.

78 S omits: which . . . deeds.

75 S: The psalmist said.

77 L: corner-stones (*hornsteinar*).

obedience and patience, not being ashamed to suffer humiliation and injustice of men. The benches signify those works of mercy which bring comfort to the needy, as the benches give rest to those who sit upon them. The walls signify, all together, good deeds and all useful toil endured for the love of God and one's neighbour. The wall-plates which hold the wainscoting together signify steadfastness in good works. The roof above the walls signifies hope and the regard which we must have for God above all good deeds. The beams which support the roof-timbers signify patience which supports our hope, so that we shall not cease to expect the mercy of God. The tie-beams, which support the walls lest they fall before the storm, signify peace and concord which support and unite all our good works lest they fall before the storm of diabolical temptation. The crosses and roods signify mortification of the flesh, that is fasting and vigils. The bells signify the teachings which awaken us to good deeds, just as the bell awakens us to divine service.⁷⁹ The yard around the church signifies the custody of all these good qualities which have been enumerated here. For we may well take care of all these good qualities, if we contemplate the works of those who have passed from the world before us, so that good example may stimulate us to emulation and bad example warn us against sins. This thought is signified by the burial of bodies in the church-yard. It must be realized that everything needed for the adornment and service of the church may be fulfilled spiritually in us, if we live so purely that we are worthy to be called the temple of God. Therefore, it is necessary for us, dear brethren, when we celebrate this feast of dedication, to purify the churches of our hearts so that God shall not find in His temple, which we are ourselves, anything which may anger Him. And just as we like to appear finely dressed and washed on a feast day, so must we wash the stains of sin in tears⁸⁰ from our spirits within and adorn them with good deeds. And just as we feed ourselves with fine meats on feast days, so must we feed our spirits with festive food, that

79 *S* omits: just . . . service.

80 *L*: in tears of repentance.

is the word of God; for it is unseemly that the body should be finely fed and clothed and the inner man be threadbare and go without food. It is of no avail if we come finely dressed to the outer church, if we neglect the feast of the inner church, that is persistence in good deeds; for it is for this reason that we celebrate feasts of dedication annually on earth, that we may celebrate an eternal day of dedication, which is true rejoicing of all the saints in heaven. And we may win that joy if we give manifold mercy to our neighbours in their needs. It is good to give alms to churches, but it is better to comfort our distressed neighbours in their needs. For churches pass away with the world, but spirits never pass away.

If we wish to be temples of the Holy Spirit, we must show every mercy to our neighbours in need, as the church shows mercy to us. As the church conducts us to God by means of the baptismal font, so must we conduct our neighbours from transgression by means of the font of tears, in weeping for their sins, for tears purify sins like the baptismal font. And just as in church we submit to penance for our sins, so must we punish our neighbours for their sins. And just as we receive spiritual food in church, i.e. *corpus domini*, so must we give bodily food to those in need. And just as the church offers burial to the dead in its precincts, so must we offer prayers for their souls. If we celebrate temporal festivals with such devotion, then we shall win the eternal festival in heaven with our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and rules as God with the Father and Holy Spirit *per omnia sæcula sæculorum. Amen.*

POSTSCRIPT

I

In the same year as this paper was first published an article on the Dedication homily, 'Till Gammelnorsk Homiliebok. Kirke-dagshomilien', by Trygve Knudsen appeared in *Studier tillägnade Rolf Pipping* (= *Studier i nordisk filologi xxxix*, 1949), 28-39. Another paper by him on similar lines, 'Stavkirkeprekenen i Gammelnorsk Homiliebok', later appeared in the volume of his essays published in honour of his seventieth birthday, *Skrifttradisjon og litteraturmål* (1967), 53-72.

Professor Knudsen had not apparently seen my paper in *Mediaeval Studies*, but his conclusions were in some ways similar. He did not attempt to place the homily in its European setting—though he was aware that that was where it belonged—but showed greater interest in word-forms and other textual variants, attempting, especially in his second paper, to find evidence that might decide whether the work was Icelandic or Norwegian in origin and, if Norwegian, from which part of Norway it came. On the whole, Knudsen considered the homily more likely to be Norwegian than Icelandic, but he did not press this conclusion because the evidence was very slight.

A useful, salutary survey of the problems involved in the discussion of the homily and its background has been recently given by Hans Bekker-Nielsen in 'The Old Norse Dedication Homily' in *Festschrift für Konstantin Reichardt* (1969), 127-34.

II

When I wrote this paper in 1949 I was not aware that the homily on the Dedication was also preserved in the fifteenth-century Icelandic manuscript, AM 624 4to, a miscellany in several hands, chiefly containing works of edification. The text of this homily was published by Oluf Kolsrud, parallel with the other

versions, in his *Messuskýringar* (1952), 85–107 (his A, B, C, D correspond to *L*, *N*, *S* and 624). According to Trygve Knudsen, *Skriftradisjon og litteraturmål* (1967), 61, the homily in 624 is of minor interest from a textual point of view (*av mindre teksthistorisk interesse*). I have unfortunately not had an opportunity to study this manuscript at first hand, and the brief remarks following are based on Kolsrud's edition and partly on notes on the 624 homily's textual relations generously placed at my disposal by Mr Hans Bekker-Nielsen of Odense University.

It appears then that when 624 differs from *S*, it more often does so in agreement with *L* and *N*, suggesting that the left-hand stemma on p. 91 is more likely to be the correct one. 624 also has a few striking correspondences with *S*, however, and its exact position in the stemma remains for the present obscure. Taken by itself, the homily in 624 may not be able to throw very much light on the original text, but it is evidently of great importance in helping to clarify relations between the different versions that have come down to us and it deserves more attention than it has received. I hope to consider it more closely in a later study.

VII THE OLD NORSE HOMILY ON THE ASSUMPTION AND *MARÍU SAGA*

THE Old Norse homily on the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is found both in the Stockholm Homily Book¹ (*S*) and in the Norwegian Homily Book² (*N*). In *S* this homily bears the title *Assumptio Sancte Marie*, in *N* it is called simply *Sermo de Sancta Maria*. *S*, Perg. 4:0 nr 15 in the Royal Library, Stockholm, is the work of several hands, and it is commonly believed that it was written about the beginning of the thirteenth century, or perhaps in the latter years of the twelfth century.³ It is thus one of the oldest of Icelandic manuscripts apart from small fragments.

N is thought to be rather later than *S*. Three hands can be distinguished in it, and it was probably written in the neighbourhood of Bergen, although the scribes who made it appear to be following older manuscripts written in other dialects of Norwegian, notably in those of Trondheim, Eastern and South-western Norway.⁴

S contains fifty-six homilies, and *N* thirty-four. Eleven homilies, or parts of them, are found in both books. G. Indrebø⁵ has compared the parallel texts of these eleven homilies. He decided that the texts in *N*, although later, were closer to the originals than those of *S*. He also concluded that the homilies found in both books were first written in Norway and were later transcribed in Iceland. The validity of this last conclusion will not be discussed now, even though some of the examples of differ-

¹ *Homiliu-Bók*, ed. T. Wisén (1872), 4-10; also published in facsimile as vol. VIII of the series *Corpus Codicum Islandicorum Medii Aevi*, with an introduction by F. Paasche (1935).

² For editions of the Norwegian Homily Book see p. 79, note 3, above. References in this paper apply to Indrebø's edition.

³ See A. Holtsmark, *En islandsk scholasticus fra det 12. århundre* (1936), 49 ff.

⁴ Cf. Indrebø, *op. cit.*, 39 ff., and works mentioned there.

⁵ *ibid.*, 42 ff.

ences between Norwegian and Icelandic texts, which Indrebø quotes to show the superiority of the Norwegian, are of doubtful significance.⁶ There are good reasons to believe that homilies were written in Norway in the vernacular before the middle of the twelfth century.⁷

Indrebø⁸ has shown that the scribes of the Norwegian and Stockholm books did not follow identical copies of the texts which appear in both of them, and that their relationship is more distant than that. This implies that the eleven homilies found in both books must be considerably older than either of them. It may be suggested that they go back to originals written about the middle of the twelfth century.

The two texts of the homily on the Assumption differ little. The chief difference between them is that the text of *S* contains a passage of fifty-six lines which is not in *N*.⁹ The subject of this homily and its treatment are somewhat conventional. At the beginning the homilist alludes to Mary's descent from Abraham, and says a few words about her childhood and early youth. He then speaks in general terms about her sanctity and sufferings, and explains why she is superior to all other saints. In the middle passages the homilist departs from this general praise of the Virgin, and describes her virtues in symbols. As in many medieval texts, Mary is the glass through which the rays of the sun shine.¹⁰ Towards the end, the homilist speaks of Mary's death and burial, and of the Assumption of her soul, and perhaps also of her body into heaven. Finally he speaks, again in general terms, of her virtues, and explains that she is superior, not only to the saints, but even to the angels. He urges his listeners to model their lives on her life, and recommends them to implore her intercession, for she is more merciful than other saints.

6 I allude to this question in the essay on the Dedication homily, vii above.

7 Cf. Indrebø, *op. cit.*, especially 40 ff.

8 *ibid.*, 47 ff.

9 *S*, 8/32-10/13.

10 Numerous examples of this are known from Middle English poetry and from Latin hymns. Cf. C. M. Dursch, *Symbolik der christlichen Lehre* (1859), 144; Carleton Brown, *English Lyrics of the 13th Century* (1932), 10.

K. Vrátný¹¹ first showed that this homily on the Assumption was closely related to the *Mariu Saga*,¹² in which the life of the Virgin was told from beginning to end, with many digressions and a fair proportion of theological discussion. Vrátný listed sixteen passages which appeared, with but slight differences, both in the homily and in the saga. Some of these passages amounted to as much as twenty lines of the printed text of the *Mariu Saga*, while others consisted of no more than a single sentence. In the saga the symbolism which depicted Mary as the glass pierced by the rays of the sun is not developed as it is in the homily, and most of the parallel passages consist of reflections on Mary's sanctity, on her sufferings, death, burial and assumption. The following examples will show how closely passages in the two works resemble each other:

- (1) þau (Joachim and Anna) kostgæfðu meirr, at þau hefði mikit kraptalán af guði þar fyrir, en því minna auralán af heimi þaðan í frá (*Mariu Saga*, 2/12-3).
 . . . ok hǫfðu mikit kraptalán af goði, en lítit auralán af heimi (Homily, *S*, 4/24-5).
- (2) Þat finnsk opt í sǫgum heilagra manna, at guðs englar koma ok vitrask í andláti þeirra með miklum ilm ok ljósi, ok þeir er hjá standa kenna himneskan ilm eða heyra fagan sǫng eða sjá bjart ljós. En ef dróttinn Jesus Kristr veitir opt mikla dýrð í andláti þræla sinna eða þjóna, þá megum vér at líkendum ráða þaðan af, hversu mikla dýrð hann mundi veita í andláti móður sinnar, er dróttning er allra heilagra manna, eða elligar hefði hann eigi haldit lög sín sjálfr, þau er hann setti, fyrir því at hann bauð hverjum manni at vegsama fǫður sinn ok móður. Af því skulum vér trúa, at sá, er kom lǫgin at fylla en eigi at eyða þeim, dróttinn sjálfr Jesus Kristr, fór í mót ǫnd móður sinnar með allri himna dýrð ok óumræðiligum ilm, ok var af þeim mǫnnum, er við andlát guðs móður váru staddir, at sumra manna frásǫgn, þeirra er hjá váru, en allra manna trú, sén ok heyrð ok kennd ǫll sú dýrð himneskra fagnaða, er menn megu bera eða standask at sjá eða heyra líkamliga (*Mariu Saga*, 51/6-23).

¹¹ *Arkiv* xxxii (1916), 42.

¹² *Mariu Saga*, ed. C. R. Unger (1871). Unger prints two texts of the saga, but the differences between them are slight. There are numerous manuscripts of *Mariu Saga* (see Unger's introduction, xi ff.), but the relationship between them has not been studied systematically.

Þat finnsk opt í sögum heilagra manna, at englar guðs vitrask í andláti þeirra með ljósi, eða þeir er hjá standa kenna himneskan ilm eða heyra fagran söng. En ef dróttinn Jesus Kristr veitir opt slíka dýrð í andláti þræla sinna, þá megum vér at glíkendum marka, hversu mikla dýrð hann myndi sýna í andláti móður sinnar, er dróttning er omnium sanctorum, eða ella hefði hann eigi haldin þau lög, es hann bauð hverjum manni at gøfga föður sinn ok móður. Af því skulum vér trúa, at dróttinn Jesus Kristr fór í gegn önd móður sinnar með allri himna dýrð ok góðum ilm, ok vas sën í andláti hennar ok heyrð öll sú dýrð, es menn máttu standask at sjá eða heyra (Homily, S, 8/3-13).

Vrátný did not compare the homily with the saga in detail, nor did he discuss the problems raised by the relationship between them. He was, however, satisfied that the homily was a compilation, and that the saga was one of its sources. Indrebø¹³ seemed to accept this conclusion, but it has led to serious difficulties. Since it is found both in the Stockholm and Norwegian books, the homily on the Assumption must have been written a considerable time before the end of the twelfth century. But most critics have assigned the *Martu Saga* to the thirteenth century.¹⁴ Indeed, it cannot have been written in its present form before 1215, because in chapter 23 reference is made to the Lateran Council convoked by Innocent III in that year. Moreover, according to an old tradition, the compiler of the *Martu Saga* was the distinguished cleric, Kygri-Björn Hjaltason. Some details about Björn's career are recorded in several sources, and especially in the various versions of the Saga of Guðmundr the Good. Shortly after the election of Guðmundr as bishop in 1201, Kolbeinn Tumason appointed Kygri-Björn secretary at the see of Hólar.¹⁵ This was contrary to the will of Guðmundr himself, and it is said that relations between him and Björn were unfriendly. Björn was always among the friends of Guðmundr's enemies, first of Kolbeinn Tumason, and later of Sighvatr Sturluson. In 1214 Björn went abroad, first to Norway and then to Rome. It was suspected

¹³ *op. cit.*, 62, note 2.

¹⁴ Cf. F. Paasche, *Norges og Islands litteratur* I (1924), 277 ff.; Finnur Jónsson, *Litt. Hist.*, II 868-9.

¹⁵ *Bps.*, I 475-6.

that he had given the ecclesiastical dignitaries abroad an unfavourable account of Guðmundr's conduct as bishop, and this was perhaps one of the reasons why Guðmundr was ultimately suspended from office.¹⁶ It is not known how long Björn remained abroad on this occasion, but it is recorded that he landed in Iceland in 1224.¹⁷ It cannot be said whether he had been in Iceland in the meantime, or whether he stayed abroad for ten years. In 1236 Björn was himself elected bishop of Hólar in succession to Guðmundr. He then went abroad again, and apparently to Rome to have his election confirmed, but he died on the way back in 1237 or 1238 and never took office as bishop.¹⁸

The ascription of *Mariu Saga* to Björn is based upon a statement found in a version of Abbot Arngrímr's Saga of Bishop Guðmundr, which was written about the middle of the fourteenth century. After speaking of Björn's enmity with his hero, Guðmundr, the author attempts to estimate Björn's character. He writes:

Var Kygri-Björn mikilsháttar klerkr, sem auðsýnask má í því, at hann hefir samsett Maríu sögu.¹⁹

Another reason to suppose that Björn was, in fact, the compiler of *Mariu Saga* may be seen in the assertion of this same Saga of Guðmundr, that Björn arrived in Rome shortly before the Lateran Council of 1215²⁰ and he was probably there while it was sitting. It is not recorded that Björn himself took any part in this Council, but his presence in Rome at that time could well account for the interest shown in chapter 23 of *Mariu Saga* for details of the decisions taken, and for the eloquent description of the delegates present.²¹ If Björn compiled the *Mariu Saga*, he most

¹⁶ *Bps.*, II 92-3.

¹⁷ See *Sturlunga Saga*, ed. Gudbrandr Vigfusson (1878), I 266. It has been suggested that Björn was among the signatories of a diplomatic document made in Iceland about 1218, but this is by no means certain. See *Diplomatarium Islandicum* I (1857-76), 394 ff.

¹⁸ See *Sturlunga Saga*, I 346; cf. *Islandske Annaler*, ed. G. Storm (1888), index s.v. Kygriþjörn.

¹⁹ *Bps.*, II 186.

²⁰ *Bps.*, II 92.

²¹ Interesting problems arise from the latter part of ch. 23 of *Mariu Saga*. The author there describes the Lateran Council in some detail, and not in-

probably did so between 1216 and 1236. If it is right to suppose that he stayed abroad until 1224, he probably compiled it between that date and 1236.

Indrebø²² was aware of the difficulties involved by Vrátný's explanation of the relationship between *Mariu Saga* and the homily on the Assumption. It would seem to imply that *Mariu Saga* must have been written before Björn's time. Moreover, according to Indrebø's explanation of the relationship between the two texts of the homily, the *Mariu Saga* must be a Norwegian rather than an Icelandic work. For the homily, which was influenced by it, was a Norwegian work which was later transcribed in Iceland.

Indrebø suggested two possible explanations of these difficulties. The *Mariu Saga*, which Björn compiled, may have been another and later one than that which is now preserved. Alternatively, Björn may have worked over and revised an older *Mariu Saga*, which was the basis for the homily. In that case the saga survives only in the revised form which Björn gave it.

It will certainly be agreed that *Mariu Saga* cannot be derived from the homily in its present form. In nearly every case the parallel passages are fuller and more detailed in the saga than they are in the homily, which often gives no more than a summary of them. At the same time it is hard to believe that the homilist has eclectically copied passages from the saga. As was noted above, the homilist writes the sentence: *ok hefðu mikit kraptalán af goði en litit auralán af heimi* (*S* 4/24-5), almost in

accurately. He goes on to say that certain decisions about the chronology of the life of Christ were taken at this Council. This passage is closely related to another, printed in *Alfr.* I, 32, where it is also said that the author of the approved chronology was Meistari Gallterius of Paris, who was himself present at the Council. Gallterius and his book are repeatedly cited in the chronological texts of Iceland, cf. N. Beckman, *Alfr.* II, 237, note 4, and see also *Fib.*, III 524, and *Islandske Annaler* (1888), index *s.v.* Gallterus; but I have not been able to identify him or his book in the literature of any other land. See also *Veraldar Saga*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson (1944), App. III, 90-1.

22 *op. cit.*, 62, note 2.

the same words as the *Mariu Saga* (2/12-13). But the passage in which this sentence is found in *Mariu Saga* is a close translation of the *Gospel of the Birth of Mary*, with the exception of the sentence quoted, which cannot be traced to that book. Similarly, the whole of chapter 21 of *Mariu Saga* appears in the homily, although in different order and in shortened form. But neither chapter 20 nor chapter 22 of *Mariu Saga* has had any influence on the homily. In chapter 20 the compiler of *Mariu Saga* had mainly followed the *Antiquities of the Jews* of Josephus,²³ and had included a few sentences from the *Gospel of St Matthew*, ii. At the beginning of chapter 22 the compiler of *Mariu Saga* returned to Josephus, but the sources of the intervening chapter 21 seem at first to be more difficult to trace. Why should the homilist have picked out from *Mariu Saga* those passages whose sources were obscure? It should be mentioned that the sources of the saga are not, in most instances, difficult to trace.

Neither Vrátný nor Indrebø attempted to find sources for the passages which the saga shares with the homily. It will be agreed that they cannot be derived independently from a source in Latin, for the verbal similarity between the saga and the homily is too close to allow such a conclusion. It might, in fact, be thought that the content of the passages common to both works is of so general a kind that it is unnecessary to suppose that they had any foreign source. Most of the sentiments expressed in these passages might be no more than the pious reflections of a Norwegian or Icelandic priest.

It will be noticed that, in chapter 27 of the *Mariu Saga*, the question whether the body of the Virgin was taken up into heaven as well as her soul is discussed, and no conclusion is reached. The author writes:

En þar kveðr Jeronimus prestur skýrt á, at hon andaðisk ok var jörðuð, en hann segir eigi víst, hvárt var heldr, at hon tók upprisú líkama síns litlu eptir andlát sitt, eða væri folginn líkami hennar, til þess at syndugir menn næði eigi at sjá né hǫndla (*Mariu Saga*, 57/12-17).

23 See below, p. 115.

The homilist discusses the question in similar terms, and he writes:

Jeronimus prestr segir skýrt, at hon andaðisk ok var grafin, en hann segir eigi víst hvárt heldr vas, at hon tók upprisu líkams síns litlu eptir andlát sitt, eða guð fal líkam hennar, at syndgir menn megi eigi sjá (*S*, 8/19–22).

In these words the saga and the homily give a clue to the source of most, though not of all, of the passages which appear in both of them. Many of the sentiments expressed in these passages are, in fact, to be found in a letter on the feast of the Assumption, which is popularly ascribed to St Jerome, and addressed to the holy women Paula and Eustochium.²⁴ A part of this letter was also translated into Old English by Ælfric, who made it the basis of his homily on the Assumption.²⁵ After he has described how Mary was buried, Jerome says that her grave is now empty. He continues:

Hæc idcirco dixerim, quia multi nostrorum dubitant, utrum assumpta fuerit simul cum corpore, an abierit relicto corpore. Quomodo autem, vel quo tempore, aut a quibus personis sanctissimum corpus cujus inde ablatum fuerit . . . nescitur . . . (*PL* 30, 123D).

If the Norse homily and the *Mariu Saga* are compared with Jerome's letter, it will be found that the saga follows the letter more closely than the homily does. The following passage found in the letter may be compared with the second example from the saga and the homily quoted on p. 104 above:

Legimus enim quam sæpe ad funera et ad sepulturas quorumlibet sanctorum angelos advenisse, et exsequis eorum obsequia præstitisse: necnon et animas electorum usque ad cælos, cum hymnis et laudibus detulisse: ubi et utriusque sexus chori commemorantur frequenter auditi, laudesque cecinisse: interea et quod perspicacius est, multo nonnumquam lumine eosdem resplenduisse; insuper et adhuc viventes in carne, ibidem miri odoris fragrantiam diutius persensisse . . . quod si ad recreandam spem . . . Salvator noster Jesus Christus . . . talia et tanta

²⁴ *S. Eusebii Hieronymi opera omnia*, *PL* 30, 122–42. On the origins of this letter see D. G. Morin in *Revue Bénédictine* ix (1892), 496–7.

²⁵ Published in *The Homilies of Aelfric*, ed. B. Thorpe, I (1843–4), 437 ff.

dignatus est exhibere per suos cæli ministros circa defunctos: quanto magis credendum est hodierna die militiam cælorum cum suis agminibus festive obviam venisse genitrici Dei, eamque ingenti lumine circumfulsisse, et usque ad thronum olim sibi etiam ante mundi constitutionem paratum, cum laudibus et canticis spiritualibus perduxisse (PL 30, 130B).

Early in his letter Jerome warns the holy women against an apocryphal book *De transitu eiusdem Virginis*, and says that nothing is known about the passing of the Virgin, except that on this day she left her body. He continues:

Monstratur autem sepulcrum ejus cernentibus nobis usque ad præsens in vallis Josaphat medio, quæ vallis est inter montem Sion et montem Oliveti posita . . . ubi in ejus honore fabricata est Ecclesia miro lapide tabulata: in qua sepulta fuisse (ut scire potestis) ab omnibus ibidem prædicatur: sed nunc vacuum esse mausoleum cernentibus ostenditur (PL 30, 123C-D).

The Norse homilist says:

En líkamr hennar var grafinn í dal þeim, es heitir Vallis Josaphat, ok vas þar gʀr síðan kirkja dýrlig henni til vegs, en nú es þar tóm fundin gʀfin (S, 8/15-17).

Mariu Saga says:

En líkami sællar Marie var jarðaðr í dal þeim, er heitir Vallis Josaphat. Þar var síðan dýrlig kirkja gʀr henni til dýrðar. En nú er gʀf hennar tóm fundin.

Staðr sá er en helga mær María andaðisk í, heitir, sem áðr var sagt, Vallis Josaphat. Hann liggr á milli fjalla þeirra, er annat heitir Oliveti en annat Sion (*Mariu Saga*, 51/25-32).

In this last example Jerome's letter is more fully represented by the saga than by the homily. There are, in fact, a number of passages in the letter which reappear in the saga, but not in the homily. In chapter 27 (57/27 ff.) the saga quotes the words of Solomon (*Song of Songs* vi, 9): *Que est ista que ascendit sicut aurora consurgens, pulcra ut luna, electa ut sol, terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata*. Jerome also quotes these words (PL 30, 130A), but the saga devotes no less than three and a half pages (58-61) to

symbolical interpretation of them, which is not found in Jerome's letter.

It was remarked above that the whole of chapter 21 of the *Mariu Saga* appears in the homily, although in different order and in compressed form. In this chapter the author speaks especially of Mary's humility. He then contrasts Mary with those martyrs who endured bodily suffering. Mary suffered spiritually when she saw her son crucified, and she is greater than the other martyrs. He goes on to explain that Mary worked no miracles in this life. Most of these thoughts can also be traced to Jerome's letter. The following examples from chapter 21 of the saga and the corresponding passage of the homily will help to show the relationship between these works and Jerome's letter:

. . . aðrir helgir menn tóku þíning á líkam sínum . . . en ǫnd sancte Maríe var þínd, þá er hon sá augum sínum á, er sonr hennar várr dróttinn var . . . krossfestr (*Mariu Saga*, 43/12-16).

Þeir menn eru ok mikils virðir af guði es þíningar taka af vándum mǫnnum fyrir hans sakar, en þó hefir María þessa dýrð framar en aðrir, þvíat aðrir helgir menn tóku þíningar á líkami sína, en ǫnd Maríu vas þínd, es hon sá augum sínum á þíning dróttins várs (*S*, 5/20-24).

Alii namque sancti, etsi passi sunt pro Christo in carne, tamen in anima, quia immortalis est, pati non potuerunt. Beata vero Dei genitrix, quia in ea parte passa est . . . quia spiritualiter in caro ejus passa est gladio passionis Christi, plus quam martyr fuit (*PL* 30, 138A).

Although Jerome's letter is represented more fully by the saga than by the homily, some passages from the letter appear in the homily, but not in the saga. The homilist says:

Ef dróttinn sagði fǫgnuð vesa englum á himni yfir einum manni, þeim es iðrask synda sinna, þá má sjá at glíkendum hversu mikill fǫgnuðr þeim myndi þá verða, es þangat kom dróttning þeirra ok móðir dróttins þeirra (*S*, 8/24-7).

Jerome writes:

Quod si gaudium fit in cælo de quolibet peccatore converso, multo magis putandum pro tantæ Virginis exaltatione et gloria, quod exsultatio fiat in supernis . . . (*PL* 30, 137B).

Like the letter, the homily is designed to be read on the feast of the Assumption. The homilist says:

Hátíð uppnumningar móður guðs veitir mikinn fögnuð englum á himni ok mǫnnum á jǫrðu . . . á jǫrðu es mǫnnum skylt at fagna dýrð hennar . . . (*S*, 8/22-4).

This passage cannot be traced exclusively to one passage in the letter, for Jerome repeatedly calls on his readers to rejoice in this feast of the Assumption (e.g. *PL* 30, 128C, 126C, etc.), and there can be little doubt that the expression of this thought in the homily is due to the influence of the letter.

Similarly, the homilist advises his audience to model their lives on the life of the Virgin:

En sá dýrkar réttlíga guðs móður, er líf sitt myndir eptir hennar atferð . . . (*S*, 8/29-30).

St Jerome repeatedly urges Paula and Eustochium to imitate the Virgin and to follow her example, although in rhetorical language which would be altogether unsuitable for an early Norse homily (e.g. *PL* 30, 139D, 140C-D, etc.).

Other passages which demonstrate the similarity between Jerome's letter on the one hand and *Mariu Saga* and the homily on the Assumption on the other could be quoted. Enough has been said to show that a great proportion of the passages which the saga shares with the homily are derived ultimately from Jerome's letter on the feast of the Assumption. This letter is represented more fully by the saga than it is by the homily, although each of them contains passages from the letter which are not in the other. This implies that the two works are derived partly from a common source, for which Jerome's letter was the basis. Verbal similarity between the saga and the homily shows that this common source was in the vernacular and not in Latin.

It has also been shown that the homily and the saga have certain passages in common which cannot be traced to Jerome's

letter.²⁶ These passages are found especially at the beginning of the homily and in the early chapters of the saga, where Mary's childhood and youth are described. This shows that the source used by the *Mariu Saga* and the homily was not simply a version of Jerome's letter in Old Norse. It contained a considerable amount of material which is not in the letter, at any rate not in the received form of it.

It may be surmised that this early vernacular source for *Mariu Saga* and the homily was itself a homily, based largely, though not exclusively, on Jerome's letter and designed to be read on the feast of the Assumption. The *Mariu Saga*, as now preserved, reproduces a greater proportion of this lost homily than the existing homily on the Assumption does. But since it is designed to be read on the feast of the Assumption, the existing homily is, in form, a truer representative of the lost homily than the *Mariu Saga* is.²⁷

So far as I am able to see, there is no reason to doubt the traditional ascription of *Mariu Saga* to Kygri-Björn. I should like to discuss the sources of this saga more fully but a few words should be said about them now. It seems that Kygri-Björn 'put this saga together' (*hann hefir samsett Mariu sogu*), and that the material which he used for it was of many different kinds.

As C. R. Unger²⁸ pointed out, the chief source for the first twelve chapters of the saga is the *Gospel of the Birth of Mary*, nearly all of which appears in close translation in these chapters. The *Gospel of the Birth of Mary*, in its turn, appears to be based

26 See above, p. 104, example 1. One passage which appears both in the saga (14/16-23) and the homily (*S*, 4/28-30), but not in Jerome's letter, is related to the apocryphal Acts of St Bartholomew (i.e. the *Apostolic History of Abdias*, ed. J. A. Fabricius in *Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti*, 1703-19, 1 675 ff.). Verbal similarity between the saga and the homily on the one hand and the Icelandic version of the Acts of Bartholomew (*Postola Sögur*, ed. C. R. Unger, 1873, 746 and 759) on the other may perhaps suggest that the passage in the saga and the homily was taken from the vernacular version of the Acts, and not from the Latin text.

27 The influence of Jerome's letter can also be seen in another Icelandic homily on the Assumption (*S*, 2-4).

28 Introduction to *Mariu Saga*, p. III.

upon the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*,²⁹ and like the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* it was commonly attributed to St Jerome. This explains the reference to Jerome made in the Prologue to the *Mariu Saga* (1/5-7):

eptir því sem segir enn gofgi kennimaðr ok enn dýrliði prestr Jeronimus, ok tók hann þat af frásögn Matheus guðspjallamanns . . .

Unger says that the compiler of the saga did not know the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*. It seems probable, however, that he did, although he used it sparingly, perhaps believing it heretical. The following sentences resemble the *Pseudo-Matthew* more closely than they do the *Birth of Mary*:

Hvern dag kómu englar guðs hana at finna ok færðu henni himneska fæzlu. En þá alla vist gaf hon fátækjum mǫnnum, er biskup gaf henni (*Mariu Saga*, 14/28-30).

These words may be compared with *Pseudo-Matthew* (ch. vi):

Cotidie esca quam de manu angeli accipiebat ipsa tantum reficiebatur; escam vero quam a pontificibus consequabatur pauperibus dividebat.

In his first twelve chapters the compiler of *Mariu Saga* has used several sources besides the apocryphal gospels already mentioned. These include the canonical gospels of St Luke and St Matthew. In chapter 8 he follows a late apocryphal work known as the *Trinubium Annae*, which tells how Anna, the mother of Mary, was married three times, first to Joachim, second to Cleophas, the brother of Joseph, and third to Saloma. A translation of the *Trinubium* into Icelandic was made at an early date,³⁰ and a version of it in English, dating from the first decades of the twelfth century, has been published.³¹

The *Gospel of the Birth of Mary* ends with the birth of Christ, and after that the sources of the *Mariu Saga* become more varied. The description of the birth of Christ (ch. 13) resembles that of

29 For the texts of the Gospels of Pseudo-Matthew and of the Birth of Mary see *Evangelia Apocrypha*², ed. C. de Tischendorf (1876), 51 and 113 ff.; cf. *Liber de Infantia Mariae et Christi Salvatoris*, ed. O. Schade (1869).

30 Published in *Alfr.*, 1 56.

31 See M. Förster, *Englische Studien* LIV (1920), 58 ff.

Pseudo-Matthew (xiii) in several features. One of the most interesting chapters is chapter 18, in which the flight into Egypt is described. Here the compiler seems chiefly to follow the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, or a source which resembled it closely. As in *Pseudo-Matthew* (xxiii), the Egyptian idols are said to fall from their pedestals when the Lord and his mother approach. On their way into Egypt the holy family came to an old, withered fig-tree, which suddenly became green with leaves and heavy with fruit (*epli*) when they came near (cf. *Pseudo-Matthew*, xx). Like many other apocryphal texts, *Mariu Saga* describes how Christ met the good thief, Dismas, then a child in arms, on his way into Egypt. Once, when the Virgin was left alone with Dismas, he began to cry, and she gave him suck.³²

Among the sources which the compiler of the *Mariu Saga* used most were the Books xvi and xvii of the *Antiquities of the Jews* of Josephus. These books supplement the canonical gospels and enable the compiler of the *Mariu Saga* to give a fairly detailed background of Jewish history. It is interesting to see how, in chapter 20 of *Mariu Saga*, the work of Josephus (*Ant. Jews*, xvii, vi-viii, xi) is interwoven with the *Gospel of St Matthew* ii. The compiler of *Mariu Saga* chiefly follows Josephus in his descriptions of Jewish politics, cruelty and intrigue in the time of Christ.³³ It is not known in what form the work of Josephus reached the compiler of the *Mariu Saga*, but it is known that versions of Josephus's works in Latin circulated during the middle ages. Brandr Jónsson, who died in 1264, also used the *Antiquities of the Jews*, and probably the *War of the Jews*, for his *Gyðinga Saga*.³⁴ Both of these works might be expected to interest the Icelanders in the thirteenth century. Josephus's descriptions of the ruthless ambition, cruelty and deceit which flourished in Palestine in the time of Christ are not unlike passages in *Sturlunga Saga*.

32 Cf. M. R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (1926), 117, 161.

33 The influence of Josephus is strongest in chs. 20 and 22 of *Mariu Saga*.

34 Cf. *Gyðinga Saga*, ed. Guðmundur Þorláksson (1881), v ff.

In addition to the historical and pseudo-historical works already mentioned, the compiler of *Martu Saga* made extensive use of the fathers and commentators, some of whom he names, *viz.* Augustine, John Chrysostom, Gregory. Like many teachers of his age, he delights in symbolism. The fifteen steps of the temple, up which Mary runs unaided at the age of three, are symbolized in two ways (chs. 4-5). The gifts of the Kings from the East have each a symbolical meaning (ch. 15),³⁵ as have the words of the *Magnificat* (ch. 11) and of the *Song of Songs* (ch. 27). In chapter 26 the Last Judgement is described in a way which recalls the *Lucidarius*, attributed to Honorius Augustodunensis.³⁶

The compiler of the *Mariu Saga* was a man of immense learning, and he could rightly be described as *mikilsháttar klerkr*. The method which he employed in compiling the *Mariu Saga* was similar to that used by Snorri for his books of Norse history. Like Snorri he used various sources, but while the sources for the *Heimskringla* were native ones, those for *Mariu Saga* were foreign. Like Snorri, the compiler of the saga has put his own stamp on his work. He is cautious and restrained in his religious beliefs, and perhaps even a little sceptical. He condemns the belief in the Immaculate Conception (ch. 3), and follows the letter attributed to Jerome in his doubts about the assumption of Mary's body (ch. 27), although it may be deduced from chapter 25 that he knew some version of the *Transitus Mariae*. He is aware that the fathers do not always agree in their interpretations of Holy Writ, and in such cases he thinks it wiser to refrain from drawing conclusions:

En þar, sem á þykkir greina í frásögnum heilagra feðra, þar er sá háttur tekinn af vitrum mönnum, at segja hváratveggju frásögn, en dæma hvárki ómætt, en þó þykkir þat bjartast ok óerfðast, at hafa fleiri manna vitni til máls sönnunar (38/8-12).

In one passage (22/20 ff.) the compiler alludes to the faulty

³⁵ On the symbolical meaning of these gifts see O. Schade, *op. cit.*, 35, note 213.

³⁶ See *The Elucidarium and other Tracts in Welsh*, ed. J. Morris Jones and J. Rhys (1894), Latin text, 217-8; cf. *Alfr.*, III 8.

Latin of his countrymen. He rebukes those who are so careless that they render: *Magnificat anima mea dominum* by *miklar dróttinn ogd mína*.

It would not be suprising if so thoughtful and careful a scholar as this one had little in common with a fanatic like Bishop Guðmundr of Hólar.

VIII GÍSLI SÚRSSON AND HIS POETRY: TRADITIONS AND INFLUENCES

AMONG the most popular of the family sagas are *Gunnlaugs Saga*¹ and *Gísla Saga Súrssonar*.² Their popularity, especially in the case of *Gunnlaugs Saga*, has been even greater in foreign countries than it has in Iceland. The reason for this is fundamentally the same in each case. It is not because they are typical examples of the saga literature, but because they are not. *Gunnlaugs Saga* and *Gísla Saga* have both been strongly influenced by literatures of another kind.

In *Gunnlaugs Saga* the extent and sources of this influence are not obscure. Although it is cast in the conventional form of a family saga, it shows the influence of foreign taste and thought. This may be seen in its treatment of the love-motive, in the chivalry of Gunnlaugr, and even more clearly in the conduct of the heroine, Helga fagra. She is not a woman whom most saga writers would admire. As she sits passively gazing into the embroidered cloak of her dead lover, at the end of the saga, Helga reminds us of Isabella gazing at the Pot of Basil.

Helga is less forcible than the more classical heroines of the Icelandic sagas. She may be contrasted with Hildigunnr in *Njáls Saga*.³ Just as Helga preserved Gunnlaugr's cloak, so Hildigunnr preserved the cloak in which her husband had been

1 The text of *Gunnlaugs Saga* has been printed about twenty-five times, and the saga has been printed in translation about sixty times. The translations include Polish, Czech, Finnish and Faroese versions. *Gunnlaugs Saga* has inspired some notable literary works, including John Masefield's 'Daffodil Fields', *Collected Poems* (1932), 253 ff.

2 The popularity of *Gísla Saga* has not been so great as that of *Gunnlaugs Saga*, but it has been published in translation at least twenty times. The translations include seven in German and one in Polish. *Gísla Saga* has inspired literary works, e.g. B. H. Barmby, *Gíslí Súrsson, a drama* (1900), and Maurice Hewlett, *The Outlaw* (1919). The saga has formed the subject of numerous essays and monographs, some of which will be mentioned below.

3 *Brennu-Njáls Saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson (ÍF XII, 1954), ch. 116.

slain, and in it she wrapped his clotted blood. But Hildigunnr preserved the blood-stained garment, not to indulge her emotions, but to incite her husband's relatives to vengeance. This was Hildigunnr's purpose when she cast the cloak, crackling with dried blood, over the shoulders of her kinsman, Flosi.

It is plain that the author of *Gunnlaugs Saga* modelled his taste largely on the standards of Europe. Possibly he had studied foreign romances in Latin or French, or even in German, though it seems more probable that these reached him in Icelandic or Norwegian versions, the *Riddara Sögur*. It is chiefly the continental taste of its author which has made *Gunnlaugs Saga* agreeable to those trained to appreciate the medieval and post-medieval literature of Europe. For them, the detached formalism of *Víga-Glúms Saga* is too rigid; the disparaging cynicism of *Ljósvetninga Saga* is too severe.

*Gísla Saga*⁴ is certainly greater as an artistic achievement than *Gunnlaugs Saga*. Nevertheless, it is apparent that the author of *Gísla Saga* has not modelled his taste exclusively on earlier family sagas, and that influences other than they have been at work. This may be seen when Gísli is compared with other outlaws whose lives the saga writers relate. For example, Grettir Ásmundarson remained an outlaw for nearly twenty years because he was self-willed and headstrong, and altogether ill-adapted to the social conditions of the age in which he lived. Gísli was made an outlaw because he slew his sister's husband, Þorgrímr. In this deed, Gísli had fulfilled the duty of avenging his friend and sworn brother Vésteinn, whom Þorgrímr had slain

4 References to the prose of *Gísla Saga* apply, unless otherwise specified, to Benedikt Sveinsson's edition (1922), in which the shorter and longer versions are both printed in full. References apply to the shorter version unless otherwise stated. I number the strophes attributed to Gísli according to Finnur Jónsson, *Skj.*, A I 101-9, and B I 96-104. Other useful editions of the saga are those of Konráð Gíslason (1849), of Finnur Jónsson (1903), and of Finnur Jónsson (1929). The last has not been available to me while preparing this paper. On the relations between the shorter and longer versions of the saga see Finnur Jónsson, *Gísla Saga* (1903), xxii-xxvii; Finnur Jónsson, *Litt. Hist.*, II 451 ff.; Gudbrand Vigfússon and F. York Powell, *Origines Islandicae* II (1905), 188 f.; B. M. Ólsen, *Um íslendinga sögur* (1937-9), 198 ff.

secretly. Sworn brotherhood, undertaken at will, was among the most binding of human ties. For Gísli, vengeance for Vésteinn was a sacred duty. Consequently, in the suffering which he endured because of it, Gísli resembled a Christian martyr, and he himself seemed to realize this. Gísli's brother, Þorkell, from whom he had the right to expect support, forsook him, and he became an outcast. But, unlike most outlaws, Gísli is not in any way an unsocial or anti-social man. He remained bound to society chiefly through his wife, Auðr, to whom he had an emotional, sentimental devotion. In this, Gísli may again be contrasted with Grettir. Love motives played small part in Grettir's life. Grettir's chief contacts with society were through his blood-relatives, especially his mother and his brother, Illugi. Grettir is more characteristically an Icelandic hero than Gísli.

Most family sagas describe the relations between one man and another. Several of them show how one man rises above those around him. Sometimes this is because, like Hrafnkell, he has greater will-power than the others, or, like Snorri goði, he is more cunning, or, like Guðmundr ríki, he is more ruthless and vindictive. Several sagas describe human friendship. *Njáls Saga* is an outstanding example. The characters of Njáll and Gunnarr were complementary, and each of them benefited from this mutual friendship. One was straightforward, brave and physically well-endowed, but rash. The other was wise, prudent and learned, but not physically a strong man.

Gísla Saga is concerned with human relations, too, but it does not treat them as most family sagas do. The author is not primarily interested in what his heroes do, nor even in what they think, but in what they feel. His chief concern is with the emotions.

In the early chapters of *Gísla Saga*, the most striking feature is Gísli's friendship with his brother-in-law, Vésteinn. Gísli and Vésteinn travel abroad together (chs. 7-8). In Denmark they are brought into touch with Christian teachers, and are influenced by Christian ways of life. Gísli returns to Iceland earlier than

Vésteinn. Before they parted, Gísli cunningly fashioned a coin, which could be divided into two parts, one to be carried by his sworn brother and the other by himself. He persuaded Vésteinn to promise that he would never again leave Iceland without his consent.

Much of the saga describes the mutual love of Gísli and his wife, Auðr, the sister of Vésteinn. The loyalty of Auðr to her husband is emphasized in many chapters, as is the tragedy of their enforced separation during the days when Gísli lived in hiding as an outlaw.

Gísli's relations with his brother and sister, Þorkell and Þórdís, are of particular interest, and are used to disclose the hero's character. Þorkell and Þórdís are remarkably similar, and Gísli loves them both in a way which they do not deserve. More than once, in his early years, Gísli had risked his life to defend Þórdís from the shaming advances of disreputable suitors (ch. 2). But Þórdís did not repay this solicitude. She married Þorgrímr, whom Gísli slew, and she afterwards married Þorgrímr's brother, Þorkr. When she learned that Gísli had slain her first husband, she denounced him to Þorkr (ch. 16).

When Gísli speaks of his sister's disloyalty he uses a plaintive tone which is unusual from the hero of a family saga. He once says (ch. 19):

ok þóttumsk ek eigi þess verðr frá henni, því at ek þykkjumsk þat lýst hafa nokkurum sinnum, at mér hefir eigi hennar óvirðing betri þótt en sjálfs míns; hefir ek stundum lagt líf mitt í háska fyrir hennar sakir, en hún hefir nú gefit mér dauðaráð.

Gísli's brother, Þorkell, is one of those whom the saga describes best. He is a weak and ungenerous man, vain, foppish and lazy. It is perhaps because he is himself so ineffectual that he chooses noticeably forceful characters for his friends. These include Þórdís's husband, Þorgrímr, and her viking suitor Bárðr, both of whom Gísli slew. The bad company which Þorkell kept damaged his relations with Gísli, as is apparent already in ch. 2. Þorkell's vanity led him to take an inactive part in the murder of Vésteinn,

Gísli's foster-brother. In spite of Þorkell's weaknesses, Gísli appears to be deeply attached to him. It is told how concerned Gísli was about Þorkell's happiness (ch. 9), and how grieved he was when he parted from him (ch. 23). Þorkell was not ill-disposed towards Gísli, and was ready to help him in his distress, but only so long as he ran no risk himself. Gísli reproaches his brother for his lack of magnanimity in much the same bitter tone as he uses when he speaks of Þórdís. On one occasion he says: *Ok munda ek eigi þér svá svara, sem þú svarar mér nú, ok eigi heldr gera* (ch. 19), and, on another: *Nú þykkisk þú öllum fótum í etu standa ok vera vinr margra höfðingja ok uggir nú ekki at þér; en ek em sekr, ok hefi ek mikinn fjandskap margra manna . . .* (ch. 24).

Subsidiary relationships and the sentiments of the minor characters are also described in some detail. Several times the author shows how much Auðr loved her brother, Vésteinn (ch. 10). In ch. 14 he describes Auðr's grief at Vésteinn's death.

Ch. 9 is among the most remarkable in the saga. It is told there how Ásgerðr, the wife of Þorkell, and Auðr, the wife of Gísli, accuse each other of unfaithfulness to their respective husbands. Ásgerðr admits, according to the longer version (ch. 14), that she loved Vésteinn more than her husband, though she knew that this love could never be expressed. Þorkell overheard this conversation. His vanity was injured and his jealousy was roused. It was on this account that Þorgrímr slew Vésteinn at the instigation of Þorkell. At first we merely suspect Þorkell's part in this murder. It is not until ch. 28 that all doubts are removed. In that chapter it is told how the young sons of Vésteinn slew Þorkell.

The whole tragedy of Gísli's life develops from ch. 9. Gísli slew his brother-in-law, Þorgrímr, to avenge his sworn brother, Vésteinn (ch. 16). This deed, which Gísli committed in fulfilment of his duty, led to his outlawry and death.

The episode described in ch. 9, when Ásgerðr and Auðr quarrel in their apartment, has been compared with the scene in the Burgundian story, when the rival heroines Brynhildr and Guðrún quarrel in the river. Both incidents appear in themselves to be

trivial. They provoke jealousy and lead to slaughter and catastrophe.

The emotional situations are sometimes described with a stylistic tenseness, or emphasis, such as is seldom found in the historical prose of Iceland. In ch. 14 Þorkell questions Gísli about Auðr's grief for Vésteinn's death. He twice uses the same words: *Hversu bersk Auðr af um bróður dauðann? Hvárt grætr hon mjök?* As Vésteinn rides to his death at Hóll, he is warned by three people, whom he encounters on his way, of the dangers which await him. Each of them uses the same words: *Ver(tu) varr um þik* (ch. 12).

Sometimes the prose of the saga seems to show the influence of poetic style. In ch. 9 Þorkell speaks in such a way that it is hard to say whether he is using prose or verse: *Heyr undr mikit, heyr orlygi, heyr mál mikit, heyr manns bana eins eða fleiri*. In ch. 18 Gísli gazes at Þorgrímr's howe and discloses, in a cryptic strophe, that he had slain him. The strophe is introduced, in the shorter text, with the words: *Gísli kvað þá visu, er æva skyldi*. The word *æva* is archaic, and is hardly ever found in historical prose. It is preserved in poetic diction, and is especially common in heroic poetry. The phrase *æva skyldi* is also found in *Völundarkviða* (41). The proverb *sér æ gjof til gjalda* is used in *Gísla Saga* (ch. 15) in much the same form as it is in the *Hávamál* (145).

Poetical tendencies in the prose of *Gísla Saga* appear so frequently that there is little need to call attention to them. This tendency is combined with an interest in nature, which is also unusual in Icelandic prose. The following passage (ch. 18), describing the witch Auðbjörg, will serve as a typical example:

Veðr var kalt úti, ok logn ok heiðríkt. Hon gengr nokkurum sinnum andsælis um húsin ok viðrar í allar ættir ok setr upp nasirnar. En við þessa hennar meðferð þá tók veðrit at skipask, ok gerir á fjúk mikit ok eftir þat þey, ok brestr flóð í hlíðinni, ok hleypr snæskriða á bæ Bergs, ok fá þar tólf menn bana, ok sér enn merki jarðfallsins í dag.

It has been rightly said that, while Icelandic poetry is more poetical than other poetry, Icelandic prose is more prosaic. *Gísla*

Saga is one of the few historical sagas to which this sharp distinction does not apply.

Just as the story of *Gísla Saga* and the prose in which it is told differ from those of other family sagas, so the strophes in *Gísla Saga* differ from those which other sagas preserve. The saga attributes 36 strophes to its hero. Like the saga itself, most of these are concerned with the emotions, especially with love, sorrow, and apprehension. Such themes are not usually the subjects of scaldic verse. Probably the complicated metrical form of scaldic poetry did not readily lend itself to subjects of this kind. Scaldic poetry was better suited to objective, visual description. It tended to be concrete and picturesque. It appeals to the mind, as jewellery appeals to the eye, for its brilliance and workmanship.

In str. 3 Gíslí expresses his grief at Vésteinn's death and alludes to the intimacy of their friendship. He says:

komskat maðr á miðli
mín né hans at víni.

No one could come between us, as we sat drinking our wine.

In str. 4 the poet describes Auðr's grief at the death of her brother, Vésteinn. At first Auðr maintained her self-control, and wept only in secret:

Hylr á laun und líni,
linnvengis, skap kvinna,
Gríðar leggsk ór góðum,
Gefn, él kerum svefna.

The gold-adorned goddess (Auðr) hides her woman's temper beneath the veil, while her tears flow from the fair cups of sleep.⁵

In str. 5 Auðr conceals her tears no longer:

⁵ For alternative interpretations of these difficult lines see Finnur Jónsson, *Skj.*, B 196; E. A. Kock, *NN*, §§ 346, 1938; K. Reichardt, *Studien zu den Skalden* (1928), 187-8. My interpretation bears some resemblance to that of Jón Þorkelsson, *Skýringar á vísum í Gísla Sögu* (1873), 3.

The chief difficulty is in the interpretation of *Gríðar él*. I take this as a kenning, though possibly a defective one, meaning 'shower of the giantess, tears', cf. *Gríðar byrr, tröllkvenna vindr* 'spirit, emotion', cf. R. Meissner, *Die Kenningar der Skalden* (1921), 138-9.

Hrynja lætr af hvítum
 hvarmskógi Gná bógar
 hrauns fylvinga; hyljar
 hlátrs bann í kné svanna.

The bracelet-bearing goddess lets the nuts (tears) fall from the fair forest of her eyelids (lashes); the enemies of laughter pour down into the knees of the woman.⁶

This rich description of the weeping Auðr is unique in the scaldic poetry of the family sagas. But comparable passages may be found in the heroic poetry. Unlike scaldic poetry, many of the heroic lays are concerned chiefly with the great emotions, love, sorrow and fear. Among the most intensely emotional of the heroic lays are those of the Burgundian cycle, especially the First and Second Lays of Guðrún (*Guðr.* I and *Guðr.* II) and *Sigurðarkviða en skamma*. The characters whose emotions are most fully described in these lays are Brynhildr and Guðrún. The weeping Auðr of *Gísla Saga* is reminiscent of Guðrún Gjúkadóttir, rather than of any heroine in the family sagas.

In *Guðr.* I the heroine is described sitting beside the dead body of Sigurðr. Guðrún does not weep at first, but, when the sheet is withdrawn and the body is exposed, her tears fall fast:

	hlýr roðnaði
en regns dropi	rann niðr um kné.
Þá grét Guðrún	Gjúka dóttir,
svá at tár flugu	tresk í gognum,
ok gullu við	gæss í túni (str. 15-16).

It has long been recognized that some of the strophes assigned to Gísli are influenced by lays of the *Edda*, and particularly by those of the Burgundian cycle.⁷ This influence is plainly evident in str. 9, where the poet alludes directly to Guðrún Gjúkadóttir. There is no other strophe in the whole of scaldic poetry in which so direct an allusion is made to heroic legend.

⁶ Cf. E. A. Kock, *NN*, § 348. For another interpretation see Finnur Jónsson, *Skj.*, B 197.

⁷ E.g. Gudbrand Vigfússon and F. York Powell, *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* (1883), II 331. Cf. notes below.

The subject of str. 9 is Þórdís, Gísli's sister. In str. 8 Gísli had told Þórdís that it was he who had slain her husband, Þorgrímr. Þórdís reported this news to Þorkr, whom she had married after Þorgrímr's death. Þorkr was the brother of Þorgrímr, and was, therefore, obliged to avenge him.

These circumstances lead Gísli to contrast the unstable character of his sister with the unshakeable loyalty of the Burgundian heroine, for whom the blood-tie was stronger than that of marriage. It is related in *Atlakviða*, *Guðr.* II, and in some other sources, how Guðrún slew her husband Atli and her own sons in revenge for her brothers, Gunnarr and Högni. Guðrún had no greater reason to love her brothers than Þórdís had to love Gísli. Gunnarr and Högni had caused the death of Guðrún's first husband, Sigurðr, just as Gísli had caused Þorgrímr's death.

Þórdís was a more complex character than Guðrún, and it was partly for that reason that she was less constant. After she had learned that Gísli had slain Þorgrímr, she could no longer observe all the duties of loyalty which society expected of her. She was faced with a hard choice. She could either hold her peace, and shirk the duty of avenging Þorgrímr, in which case she would offend Þorkr, or else she could denounce her brother, ignoring the blood-tie. Unlike Guðrún, the real Germanic heroine, Þórdís chose the second course. This was why Gísli contrasted Þórdís with Guðrún in str. 9:

Gatat sál fasta systir
sveiga mín at eiga
gætnar Gjúka dóttur,
Guðrúnar, hugtúnum.
Þá er log-Sága lægis
lét sinn—af hug stinum
svá rak snjallra bræðra
sør-Freyja—ver deyja.

My inconstant sister had not the firm heart of wise Guðrún, Gjúki's daughter, in her breast.—For that gold-adorned goddess, the necklace-

bearer (Guðrún), caused her husband's death. Thus did Guðrún stoutly avenge her valiant brothers.⁸

The choice which Þórdís made was followed by remorse, which was inevitable in one so vacillating as she. No more is said of her until the end of the saga, but she is not forgotten. It is told in ch. 37 how the assassin, Eyjólfur, came to Þorkr and Þórdís to tell them of Gísli's death. Þorkr rejoiced at the news, and told Þórdís to prepare sumptuous food to welcome the assassin. But Þórdís said that she could only weep for her brother's death. Later in the same evening, Þórdís seized the sword, which had been taken from Gísli, and tried to stab the assassin. When her husband restrained her, Þórdís called her witnesses and divorced him. In all the saga literature there are few characters described so completely in so few lines as Þórdís.

Gísli slew Þorgrímr secretly by night (ch. 16). His guilt was suspected, but not publicly known. A howe was raised for Þorgrímr beside the lake, Seftjörn. Þorgrímr had been a devotee of the god Freyr, and was known as 'Freyr's Priest'. In return, the god loved Þorgrímr so much that he would not allow frost to come between him and Þorgrímr. The howe, in which Þorgrímr lay, remained green and free of frost, though the lake, Seftjörn, and the soil around were frozen hard. As he sat beside the frozen lake, Gísli disclosed his guilt in these cryptic lines (str. 8), which he addressed to his sister, Þórdís:

Teina sék í túni
tál-Gríms vinar fálu,
Gauts þess, er geig of veittak,
Gunnbliks, þáar miklar.

⁸ My interpretation of the first half of this strophe is very different from those of Finnur Jónsson (*Skj.*, B 197), E. A. Kock (*NN*, § 350) and other commentators. According to my interpretation there is no kenning in the first half-strophe. This might be thought improbable. But it is not unlikely that a poet whose subject was derived from heroic lays might also be influenced by the simpler syntax of those lays.

On the adj. *sveigr* (vacillating, pliable) see Fritzner, s.v. *sveigr*, *torsveigr*, *torsveigðr*. Cf. Modern Icelandic *sveigjanlegr*.

I see sprouting shoots on Þorgrímr's howe; I see great patches of thawed turf on the tilled field of that warrior whom I struck down.⁹

Several critics¹⁰ have remarked on the verbal similarity between this strophe and str. 40 of *Guðr.* II, which says:

Hugða ek hér í túni teina fallna,
þá er ek vildak vaxna láta . . .

In this strophe Atli is telling Guðrún about an evil dream, and the young shoots (*teinar*) symbolize his doomed sons.

In 22 of the 36 strophes attributed to him, Gísli describes visions which had appeared to him in dreams. Magnus Olsen¹¹ has developed the suggestions of earlier scholars that both *Gísla Saga* and the strophes in it have been influenced by heroic legends and lays. He draws especial attention to four of the dream strophes (32-5), in which he again sees the influence of *Guðr.* II.

These four strophes of *Gísla Saga* contain four dream pictures, each of which is introduced with the word *hugðak*. The first lines of str. 33 may be cited as an illustration:

Hugðak blóð um báðar,
baug-Hlín, knáar mínar
herðar hvössu sverði
hrænets Regin setja . . .

Goddess adorned with rings, I thought that Reginn of the corpse-net (warrior) was smearing blood on both my sturdy shoulders with his sharp sword . . .¹²

In the corresponding passage of *Guðr.* II (str. 38-42), four dream pictures are also introduced, each with the word *hugðak*. The contents of the two sets of dreams are also, in some respects,

9 For alternative interpretations of these lines see E. A. Kock, *NN*, § 1075; Finnur Jónsson, *Skj.*, B I 97. The plural form *þáar* is doubtful. Cf. B. M. Ólsen, *Tímarit hins íslenska bókmentafélags* XVI (1895), 57.

10 E.g. B. M. Ólsen, *op. cit.*, 57-8; Finnur Jónsson, *Gísla Saga* (1903), 45; Magnus Olsen, *Festskrift til Finnur Jónsson* (1928), 6-7.

11 *loc. cit.* See also the same author's paper in *Arkiv* XLVI (1930), 150-60.

12 For alternative interpretations see Finnur Jónsson, *Skj.*, B I 103; E. A. Kock, *NN*, § 365.

similar. They both forebode death and disaster, symbolized in each case by blood and gore.¹³

The suggestion that some of the strophes of *Gísla Saga* have been directly influenced by heroic legends and lays need not be doubted. Str. 9 shows plainly that its author was well versed in the story of Guðrún. Str. 8 and the dream strophes 32–5 suggest that *Guðr. II* was one of the lays which influenced the strophes of *Gísla Saga*. Str. 4–5 suggest the influence of *Guðr. I* or of a lay of similar taste. It has also been shown that the story of *Gísla Saga* has something in common with heroic legend. M. Olsen suggests that it has been influenced by *Sigurðarkviða en skamma* and perhaps by parts of *Sigrdrífumál*. Even the prose in which *Gísla Saga* is told shows the influence of poetry, most probably that of heroic poetry.

Several scholars have sought to explain how it is that both the strophes and the saga itself have been influenced by heroic legends and lays. The most interesting conclusion is perhaps that of Magnus Olsen.¹⁴

Olsen suggests that Gísli, to whom the saga attributes the strophes, was himself a student of heroic poetry. He remarks that, according to the saga, Gísli spent his early years in Norway. In Olsen's view, Norway was the home of most of the heroic lays. Gísli must have known these lays intimately, especially *Guðr. II*. He must, indeed, have known them so well that they influenced, not only his thoughts, but also his career. Olsen further suggests that, at a much later date, when the prose of the saga was written in Iceland, the author (*forfatteren*) was again influenced by heroic lays. Olsen believes that the author of the prose was influenced by *Sigurðarkviða en skamma* and by parts of *Sigrdrífumál*. Like many other scholars, Olsen assigns these lays to a later date than *Guðr. II*.

A similar conclusion is plainly expressed by K. Liestøl. Liestøl writes: 'The heroic poems lived so vividly in the mind of Gísli that he compared his own experiences with occurrences in these poems. And this resemblance must also have been evident to the

13 Magnus Olsen, *op. cit.*, 8–9.

14 *op. cit.*, 8–14.

sagamen, including the last of them, to whom *Gísla Saga* owes its final and perfect form.¹⁵

This conclusion implies a remarkable coincidence. Early scaldic poets are seldom inspired by the stories and diction of heroic lays. Scaldic and heroic poetry may, as has often been said, be two branches of one tree, but the two branches are generally kept apart. The authors of family sagas, writing in the thirteenth century, are comparatively rarely influenced by the substance or style of heroic lays.¹⁶ The two outstanding exceptions to these general rules are, therefore, said to be the poet Gísli Súrsson, who lived in the tenth century, and the biographer of Gísli, who lived in the thirteenth century.

Magnus Olsen uses his conclusion to establish the date of *Guðr.* II, which he believes to have influenced the poet Gísli. He maintains that this lay was of Norwegian origin, and that it must have been composed before the middle of the tenth century. For, according to traditional chronology, Gísli was born about 930, and left Norway about 955.

Whenever these lays were composed, it is obvious that they were known in Iceland in the thirteenth century. If it could be proved that they were composed in the tenth century, it would not show when the strophes of *Gísla Saga* were composed, or whether the author of the saga was right in ascribing them to Gísli Súrsson. If, on the other hand, it could be established that lays of this kind were not composed until after the tenth century, it would suggest that the author was historically inaccurate in ascribing the strophes to Gísli Súrsson.

It would be beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the general problems about the dating of the *Edda* lays. It may, nevertheless, be helpful to consider briefly, without reference to *Gísla Saga*, the ages of the two lays of Guðrún, which appear

¹⁵ *The Origin of the Icelandic Family Sagas* (1930), 173.

¹⁶ The influence of heroic lays may also be seen in *Laxdæla Saga*, though less plainly than in *Gísla Saga*; cf. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Laxdæla Saga* (ÍF, v, 1934), xlv ff. See also K. Liestøl, *op. cit.*, 169 ff.; W. P. Ker, *Epic and Romance* (1922), esp. 209 ff.

to be among those which have influenced the strophes assigned to Gíslí. The dates to which scholars assign these lays of Guðrún differ by as much as 500 years.

The similarity between the first and second lays of Guðrún is so close that one of them must have influenced the other. I shall not attempt to decide which has supplied the motives common to both. G. Neckel¹⁷ has suggested that *Guðr. I* has influenced *Guðr. II*, and has adduced several important arguments to support his case. Finnur Jónsson,¹⁸ on the other hand, supposes that *Guðr. II* is the older of the two. This conclusion is supported by the designation *en forna*, which the Codex Regius applies to *Guðr. II*. Finnur Jónsson believes that *Guðr. II* was composed about 950, and he assigns *Guðr. I* to the latter years of the tenth century.

Finnur Jónsson's conclusions about these lays are in agreement with his general views about the age of the heroic poetry. It would be impossible, in this paper, to discuss the arguments which have led Finnur Jónsson to his conclusions. Nevertheless, the reader does not escape the impression that his methods are somewhat arbitrary. In dealing with this problem, Finnur Jónsson seems reluctant to assign literary monuments, which he so rightly admires, to a date which he considers post-classical.¹⁹ The artistic value of the lays may not be impaired if they are found to date from the twelfth or thirteenth instead of from the ninth or tenth century, but their value as monuments of antiquity is certainly reduced.

It was probably considerations of this kind which prompted Finnur Jónsson to write: 'The spirit and culture of the Viking Age (ninth and tenth centuries) come so vividly to light in the heroic poems, that it is hardly conceivable that they were composed much later.'²⁰ General statements of this kind do not bear

¹⁷ *Beiträge zur Eddaforschung* (1908), 295 ff.

¹⁸ *Litt. Hist.*, I 286 ff., 295 ff.

¹⁹ General problems relating to the age and home of the Edda lays are discussed by Finnur Jónsson, *Litt. Hist.*, I 37-54, and in many other books and papers by the same author. ²⁰ *Bókmenntasaga Íslendinga* (1904-5), 66.

scrutiny. It is largely from the heroic lays that we try to form our ideas of the spirit and culture of the Viking Age. Nevertheless, the picture which they give us may well be that of another age, or of a conglomeration of ages. The differences of taste and culture which the heroic lays display are greater than we should expect if they arose merely from individual differences of taste among poets who lived in one period. *Hamðismál* and *Brot* do not read as if they belonged to the same stage of cultural development as the lays of Guðrún or *Sigurðarkviða en skamma*. It is largely on grounds of this kind that some scholars seek to distinguish between older and later strata among the heroic poems.²¹

If they are considered from this point of view, such poems as the lays of Guðrún can hardly be assigned to any but the latest period of heroic tradition. Their motives and their 'spirit' are both typical of romantic medieval culture, even though they are cast in a strophic form which dates from an early phase of Scandinavian poetry.

Comparatively little is known about the development of heroic poetry among Germanic peoples. It seems, however, that the earliest poets were seldom inspired except by action. They sang of heroic deeds rather than of the motives which prompted them, or of the memories which they left. If this is correct, the oldest, or at any rate the most archaic, poems of the Icelandic collection must include *Brot*, parts of *Hamðismál* and parts of the 'Battle of the Goths and the Huns'. In these lays, the psychological interest is little developed. Dialogue is used only to press the action forward, and not to disclose the mind of the speaker. Long speeches and monologue have no place.

As the heroic tradition developed, the interests of those who fostered it changed in Scandinavia, just as they did in Europe. The old stories became so well known, that there was little need for poets to retell them. The new poets were interested, not in

²¹ On these questions see especially A. Heusler, 'Die Lieder der Lücke im Codex Regius' in *Festschrift für H. Paul* (1902); G. Neckel, *op. cit.*; H. Schneider, *Germanische Heldensage* 1 (1928), esp. 134-57. A number of the statements made below are derived from these works.

what their heroes did, but in why they did it, and in how the heroes suffered after the well-known action had taken place. The author of *Sigurðarkviða en skamma*, one of the longest of the heroic lays, shows how little he is interested in the murder of Sigurðr when he dismisses it with the words (str. 21):

Stóð til hjarta hjórr Sigurði.

This poet did not stint his words when he described the moral conflict in Brynhildr's mind before Sigurðr's murder and Guðrún's sorrow after it.

In the two lays of Guðrún the interest in psychology is developed as highly as it is in *Sigurðarkviða en skamma*. The authors of these lays pay little heed to action. Sentiment is their sole concern.

In *Guðr. 1* the heroine is depicted sitting beside the dead body of her husband. The love motive, in which the older poets had little interest, is here the central theme. The intensity of the love of Guðrún and Sigurðr is described in these words, which Gullrond addresses to Guðrún (str. 17):

Ykkar vissa ek	ástir mestar
manna allra	fyr mold ofan.
Unðir þú hvárki	úti né inni,
systir mín,	nema hjá Sigurði.

Earlier tradition knew nothing of this passionate love of hero and heroine.

The situation described in *Guðr. 1* is similar to that described in *Âventiure xvii* of the *Nibelungenlied*. We read in this *Âventiure* how Kriemhilt (Guðrún) stood beside the murdered body of Sigfrid outside her door.

In *Guðr. 1* the poet describes how Gullrond uncovered the body of Sigurðr, so that Guðrún might gaze upon it (str. 13):

Svipti hon blæju	af Sigurði
ok vatt vengi	fyr vífs knéum:
'líttu á ljúfan,	leggðu munn við grön,
sem þú hálsaðir	heilan stilli.'

Similarly, it is related in *Âventiure xvii* (1068-9)²² how the hero's coffin was uncovered, so that Kriemhilt might gaze for the last time on Sigfrid:

Dô bat si's alsô lange mit jâmers sinnen starc,
 daz man zebrechen muose den vil hêrlîchen sarc.
 Dô brâhte man die vrouwen dâ si in ligen vant.
 Si huop sîn schœne houbet mit ir vil wîzen hant;
 dô kuste s'alsô tôten den edelen ritter guot.
 Ir vil liechten ougen vor leide wéinêten bluot.

It is described in str. 16 of *Guðr. I* how Guðrún wept so loud that the geese in the courtyard shrieked in terror (cf. p. 125 above). This scene is described even more extravagantly in *Sigurðarkviða en skamma* (str. 29), which says:

svá sló hon sváran sínar hendr,
 at kváðu við kálkar í vá,
 ok gullu við gæss í túni.

Whether the version of this strophe preserved in *Guðr. I* or that in *Sigurðarkviða en skamma* is the earlier, its source cannot have been far removed from that of the *Nibelungenlied* (xvii, 1025), which describes how Sigfrid's friends and kinsmen weep for him:

Sigemunt der herre den fürsten umbeslôz.
 dô wart von sînen vriunden der jâmer alsô grôz,
 daz von dem starken wuofe palas unde sal
 and ouch diu stat ze Wormez von ir wéinén erschäl.

Guðr. II is a strange poem. Nothing happens before our eyes. Guðrún merely tells her audience about the sufferings of her past life. It is a kind of elegy, a tragic and pathetic poem. It is introspective, and leaves the impression that the heroine is sorry, not so much for her dead husband as for herself. The following lines will serve as an example (str. 12):

22 *Das Nibelungenlied*, ed. K. Bartsch (1931).

Nótt þótti mér	niðmyrkr vera,
er ek sárla satk	yfir Sigurði,
úlfar þóttumk	öllu betri,
ef þeir léti mik	lífi týna
eða brendi mik,	sem birkinn við.

The figure of Grímhildr, mother of the Gjúkungar, plays a notable part in *Guðr.* II. This woman appears only in sources which we have reason to assign to a late date, and we may suppose that she did not exist in the earliest Scandinavian traditions. She was probably introduced, in the first place, as a witch to mix the magic potion, so that Sigurðr might forget his betrothal to Brynhildr without staining his spotless honour. The author of *Guðr.* II has moved a step further and, in his hands, Grímhildr has come to life. Now she mixes a second magic potion, this time so that Guðrún might forget her love for Sigurðr and her hatred of her brothers. The author has borrowed the character of Grímhildr from Norse lays which themselves belong to the later, Christian period. The hatred which Guðrún shows of her brothers in the early part of *Guðr.* II (e.g. in str. 9) contrasts with her traditional loyalty to them, such as she shows in *Atlakviða*. But this preference of husband for brothers finds its parallel in the *Nibelungenlied*. It is characteristic of medieval morality, rather than of the heroic age.

B. Sijmons²³ did not believe that the greater part of *Guðr.* II (str. 1-36) was composed so early that it could have influenced the historical Gísli, who lived from about 930-78. He remarked, however, that the passages of *Guðr.* II which appear to have influenced Gísli's poems were all to be found at the end of the lay, between str. 37 and 44. He suggested that str. 37-44 had been wrongly attached to *Guðr.* II, and that they were originally part of some other lay, which might have been older. He inferred that the supposed older lay might even have been composed before 950, though he admitted that its extant strophes (str. 37-44 of *Guðr.* II) did not give the impression of great antiquity.

²³ B. Sijmons and H. Gering, *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda* II (1931), 290-1.

It must be conceded that the two sections of *Guðr.* II hang badly together. In the first section modern taste and motives predominate, and Guðrún's love for Sigurðr is emphasized. In the second, the older tradition, Guðrún's loyalty to her brothers, is brought out. But the means whereby the poet combined the conflicting traditions are evident, the more so because of his unskilful hand. It was largely to combine the version of the story which he had learnt from modern sources with that which he knew from the older sources that the poet introduced the witch Grímhildr with her magic potion.

Both these lays of Guðrún show how Scandinavian poets were influenced by changes of taste in medieval Europe, and how they combined the traditions of Christian Germany with the legends which had reached them, as pagans, several centuries earlier.

Gísla Saga and Gísli's poems also show the influence both of older and of later traditions. Gísli remembers the older Guðrún when, in str. 9, he says that his sister has not so steadfast a heart as she. He is inspired by later traditions when he describes the weeping Auðr (str. 4-5), and when he discourses on the virtues of helping the blind, the lame and the armless. He is a product of medieval culture when he plaintively rebukes his sister and brother for their failing loyalty towards him, and when he suffers for many years as a martyred outlaw.

Several scholars have doubted whether all the strophes which the saga assigns to Gísli were really composed by him. Guðbrandur Vigfússon held somewhat different views about these poems at different periods of his life. In his *Tímatal*²⁴ Vigfússon said that Gísli was one of the grandest poets of the old tradition. His dream strophes were among the finest monuments of Old Norse poetry. When he wrote his *Prolegomena* to *Sturlunga Saga*,²⁵ Vigfússon still admired the strophes of *Gísla Saga*, but he then believed that they were the work of a poet who lived, not in the tenth, but in the thirteenth century. In the *Corpus Poeticum*

²⁴ *Um tímatal í íslendinga sögum* (1855), 362.

²⁵ *Sturlunga Saga* (1878), I lii.

*Boreale*²⁶ he writes of the author of these strophes as a 'versifier', who had taken genuine old verses and worked them up into bastard *dróttkvætt*. Vigfússon now detected the influence of the heroic lays on the strophes of *Gísla Saga*. He suspected that the 'versifier' had had access to the so-called *Kárukjóð* (i.e. *Helgakviða Hundingsbana* II, 1-13). But he thought this versifier was poorly acquainted with ancient poetry, and consequently his whole work was 'clumsy and botched'. In *Origines Islandicae*²⁷ Vigfússon maintained that the strophes were composed after the saga itself. He distinguished two types of poetry in *Gísla Saga*. The author of the first type, which included some of the dream strophes, was in touch with heroic tradition, and had probably read a few lines of an Eddaic lay. The other strophes were mere verbiage of the thirteenth century, added by an editor to ornament the saga. It seems that Vigfússon's taste was now dictated by his keen historical sense and his love of antiquity.

Other scholars have also doubted whether Gísli really composed all the strophes which the saga assigns to him. Guðmundur Þorláksson,²⁸ who questioned Gísli's authorship, was satisfied that they must be much older than the saga, and this view has been widely held. B. M. Ólsen²⁹ said that the dream strophes were probably not Gísli's work, but he did not discuss their authorship in detail. He suspected that the complicated psychology, the dual personality which the rival dream women symbolized, could hardly have been appreciated by an outlaw in pagan Iceland. Ólsen suggested that some of these dream strophes were so deeply Christian in outlook that they must be the work of a cleric. If this were so, Ólsen thought it likely that some of the other strophes were also composed by a poet who lived later than Gísli. He once suggested that this poet might perhaps also have been the author of the saga.

Finnur Jónsson³⁰ spoke more emphatically than his predecessors.

26 II (1883), 331.

27 II (1905), 190.

28 *Udsigt over de norsk-islandske Skjalde* (1882), 46-7.

29 *Um íslendinga sögur* (1937-9), 118 ff.

30 *Gísla Saga* (1903), xxi ff., cf. *Litt. Hist.*, I 507 ff.

For a time he nearly dispelled the suspicion that the saga was historically inaccurate in ascribing its strophes to Gísli. He said that there was not the slightest reason to doubt the saga's statement. Form, content and language all showed that the strophes were Gísli's work. A later author could not have imagined the trials of the outlawed man so vividly that he could depict them in strophes like these. Many scholars have accepted this view. It may, however, be helpful to re-examine the question.

No one can read these strophes without being struck, as B. M. Ólsen was struck, by the Christian piety which colours them. According to the saga (chs. 8 and 10), Gísli had met Christian men when he visited Denmark. He was influenced by Christian teaching and, when he returned to Iceland, he abandoned some, though not all, of the conventional pagan ritual. According to the longer version, Gísli was marked with the Cross in Denmark.³¹ But both Norway, where Gísli was brought up, and Iceland, where he spent most of his adult years, were pagan lands. It is hard to believe that, after such casual contact with Christianity, Gísli had all the appreciation of Christian thought, and had such deep experience of Christian mysticism, as the saga implies that he had.

In ch. 22 the good dream woman appears to Gísli. She tells him to abandon pagan beliefs and practices: 'at láta leiðask enn forna sið ok nema enga galdra né forneskju . . .' The words of this guardian spirit are preserved in str. 16, which the hero addresses to his wife, Auðr:

Blakkskyndir hjalp blindum,
Baldr drygg at því skjaldar,
illt kveða háð at holtum,
handlausum Tý granda.

This strophe offers many textual difficulties, and admits of various readings and interpretations, though its general meaning is not obscure. It might be rendered: 'Sea-farer, help the blind;

³¹ *Í þenna tíma var kristni komin í Danmörk, ok létu þeir Gísli félagar þringsnask* (ch. 13).

think of that, warrior. It is wicked to mock the lame, and to injure the armless man.'³²

These sentiments are exclusively Christian. F. Paasche³³ sees in this strophe the direct influence of the *Ezra Apocalypse*, which says: 'Laugh not a lame man to scorn, defend the maimed and let the blind man come unto the sight of my glory.'³⁴

Str. 16 is the last of a group of four strophes, which the poet addresses to his wife on one occasion. These four strophes have much in common, and must be regarded as a single poem or *flokkr*. In str. 15 the poet describes how his guardian spirit had warned him to pay no heed to the magic charms and pagan thoughts of evil poets (*gerskat næmr galdrs*).³⁵ He must learn nothing of poetry but that which is fine and ennobling.

In str. 13-14 the poet tells how his dream guardian leads him into a hall where he meets his friends and relatives. She shows him seven fires, which signify the number of years he has yet to live. The hall in which Gísli is united with his dead friends and relatives is reminiscent of the story of Þorsteinn Þorskabítr.³⁶ When Þorsteinn died, the hill, Helgafell, opened to receive him, and there he joined his dead kinsmen. There are many similar tales, both in old and later Icelandic. The flickering flames, some of which have nearly burnt out, are reminiscent of the story of the lamp of life, as told in *Norna-Gests Þáttr*.³⁷ Norna-Gestr does not die until the candle which he carries is burnt out. This motive is unquestionably of foreign origin. The number seven also suggests the use of standard European motives.³⁸

32 On this strophe see also Jón Helgason, *Acta Philologica Scandinavica* VI (1931), 55-62; Finnur Jónsson, *Skj.*, B 199.

33 *Festskrift til Finnur Jónsson* (1928), 200-2.

34 *II Esdras*, ed. W. Oesterley (1933), 11.

35 The general sense of str. 15 is plain. Several critics object to the construction *gerskat næmr galdrs* because it implies a strained word-order. The construction is, however, supported by the prose of ch. 22. The poet is warned: *at nema enga galdra né forneskju*. For other interpretations see E. A. Kock, *NN*, § 354; K. Reichardt, *op. cit.*, 86-7.

36 *Eyrbyggja Saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson (*ÍF* IV, 1935), ch. 11.

37 ed. E. Wilken in *Die prosaische Edda* (1912), 235-61.

38 Cf. Finnur Jónsson, *Litt. Hist.*, II 839-40; N. Kershaw, *Stories and Ballads*

Since str. 13-14 are prophetic, they lead to the suspicion that Gísli did not compose them himself. It is more likely that they are the work of a later poet, who knew the course of Gísli's life. If these strophes are composed by Gísli, we must conclude, not only that Gísli was fully Christianized, but also that he was a prophet. Even this conclusion would be preferable to that of Finnur Jónsson.³⁹ Finnur Jónsson supposes that Gísli dreamed the dreams and composed the strophes, but that he did not die precisely seven years later. It was merely tradition which had made Gísli's life conform with his own prophecy.

If the dream strophes of ch. 22 were composed by a poet who lived later than Gísli, it is unlikely that those preserved in the other chapters are Gísli's work. Most of them are prophetic, even though their prophecies are not all so precise as those in ch. 22. In several of the dream strophes the poet describes visions of the future life. He relates how the good spirit promises him relief from his sufferings, and shows him a bed, upon which he will rest on soft cushions (str. 23). In str. 26 it is told how the Lord of Men (*Allvaldr alda*) had driven Gísli alone from his house, in order that he may learn to know 'another world' (*annan heim*). This last allusion is somewhat obscure. The 'other world' probably has some relation to the Christian heaven, and perhaps to Christian faith, which the poet will learn to value in his solitary life.

In all the dream strophes the dominant theme is the conflict between good and evil. Thus the good spirit represents Christian teaching, while the evil one, her hands besmirched with blood, symbolizes the old religion. The one gives the poet good advice, while the other tells him wicked things, and offers him only evil prospects (ch. 22).

The conduct of these two spirits is less like that of traditional *fylgjur* than of the good and evil guardian angels, who played so great a part in medieval Christianity. These divine and Satanic

(1921), 13; H. Dehmer, *Primitives Erzählungsgut in den Íslendinga Sögur* (1927), 108-9. 39 *Gísla Saga* (1903), xxii.

guardians were well-known to the early theologians of Norway and Iceland.⁴⁰ But it is unlikely that a man like the historical Gísli, who had spent nearly all his life among pagans, would have understood these symbols of the abstract qualities of good and bad. For it is doubtful whether Scandinavian pagans recognized any sharp distinction between good and evil. The poets of the *Hávamál* knew of no such sharp distinction.

No less than 22 of the 36 strophes assigned to Gísli are concerned with dreams. S. A. Krijn,⁴¹ in a very useful paper, attempted to divide these dream strophes into three groups, in which she saw three distinct poems. Str. 13-16, 22-24 and 32-35 hang closely together, and may be said to form distinct groups. But the thoughts expressed and the symbols used in these dream strophes are so uniform, and so distinct from other scaldic poetry, that they can hardly be the work of more than one poet.

The dream strophes are the result of Christian experiences such as an Icelander of Gísli's age could not have known. But this does not show at what date they were composed. They might be assigned to a poet who lived at any time between the Conversion (A.D. 1000) and the time when the saga was written in its present form.

Several scholars have maintained that, even though Gísli was not their author, the dream strophes must be much older than the saga. It is said that their style and language both lead to this conclusion. Hence, some scholars conclude, the strophes were composed, not by Gísli, but by a Christian poet who lived soon after Gísli's death.

It is hard to decide the age of these strophes from their style or technique. The metrical form used in most of them is an ancient one, but this does not show that they are old. The same metre was still used by Icelandic poets of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

⁴⁰ See e.g. *Michaels Saga in Heilagra manna sögur*, ed. C. R. Unger (1877), I 683; *Gammel norsk Homiliebog* (1864), 183; cf. *Gamal norsk Homiliebok*, ed. G. Indrebø (1931), 142.

⁴¹ *Arkiv* LI (1935), 69 ff.

It may be helpful in determining the date of the dream strophes to consider their 'spirit', their thoughts and the symbols in which they are expressed. If they are considered from this point of view, these strophes appear to have something in common with the mystical poetry of the late twelfth century. They seem sometimes to be influenced by the kind of symbolism which is used at its best in such poems as *Harmsól* and *Sólarljóð*. Both of these poems describe visions of Heaven and Hell. The place where Gísli is to rest on a bed of soft cushions (str. 23) is not altogether unlike the scene of heavenly repose described in *Sólarljóð* (str. 72):⁴²

Hvílur þeirra
váru á himingeislum
hafðar hagliga.

Like the dream strophes of *Gísla Saga*, *Sólarljóð* is a Christian poem which uses a pre-Christian technique. It is also influenced, though superficially, by the sentiments of *Hávamál* and of other pagan poetry. It could not be suggested that the dream strophes have been influenced directly by *Sólarljóð* or *Harmsól*. But it is not extravagant to suppose that the author of the dream strophes had read the great Christian poems of the twelfth century, as well as the older and younger lays of the heroic tradition.⁴³

The saga attributes 14 strophes other than the dream strophes to its hero. The most striking of all these is str. 9, which was mentioned above (p. 126). In this strophe the poet alludes in plain words to the tragedy of Guðrún Gjúkadóttir. He is citing heroic legend, though it cannot be clearly decided which heroic lay has inspired him. The story of Guðrún's fraternal loyalty is told in

42 *Sólarljóð*, ed. Björn M. Ólsen (1915), 21.

43 F. Seewald, *Die Gísla Saga* (1934), 118, suggested that the diction of str. 5 had been influenced by *Máruflökkr* (fragmentarily preserved, printed *Skj.*, B 1 634), which describes Mary weeping at the Cross. The evidence for direct influence of the *Máruflökkr* on str. 5 is not strong, though it is possible that the figure of the weeping Auðr was partly coloured by traditions about the weeping Mary. There must have been many poems and legends on this subject. The fourteenth-century *Márugrátr* (esp. the diction of str. 49, *Skj.*, B 11 519) might also be compared with Gísli's str. 4-5. The influence of the weeping Mary would not, of course, preclude the influence of the weeping Guðrún. See p. 125 above.

Atlakviða and several other sources. It was evidently part of the oldest, as well as of the latest, Scandinavian tradition about Guðrún. On such evidence, str. 9 might be assigned to any period between 850 and 1300. But since it is preserved in the same saga, str. 9 should probably be ascribed to the same poet as the other strophes which bear the unusual marks of heroic tradition. I have suggested that the emotional romanticism, which is inherent in some of the strophes of *Gísla Saga*, as in some of the eddaic lays, belongs to Christian Iceland rather than to pagan Norway.

It has been argued that some of the strophes of *Gísla Saga* contain ancient linguistic forms which prove that they were composed at an early date.⁴⁴ The metre sometimes demands forms with uncontracted vowels, such as *áar*, *gráum*, *féi*, instead of the contracted forms *ár*, *grám*, *fé*. The vowels in such forms as these were generally contracted towards the end of the twelfth century. It was not, however, long before the uncontracted forms began to reappear, because of analogy. It is doubtful whether the contraction was ever completed. As has already been observed, Icelandic poets did not conform with this phonological law.⁴⁵ They often used uncontracted forms after the contracted ones had become common in prose, and continued to use contracted ones after the uncontracted forms had been restored. This argument cannot, therefore, be used to show when the strophes were composed. It has also been suggested that the use of the archaic form *Þorketill* (for *Þorkell*), in str. 21, is indicative of an early date. But *Þorketill* continued to be recognized by scribes as a poetic form of the name long after *Þorkell* had become common in prose.⁴⁶

The diction of the strophes of *Gísla Saga* does not give any clear indication of their age. The apparent use of the word *sál* (soul, spirit) in str. 9 suggests a late date of composition. This

⁴⁴ See Finnur Jónsson, *Gísla Saga* (1903), xxi; *Litt. Hist.*, I 508 ff.

⁴⁵ Cf. Björn K. Þórólfsson, *Um íslenskar orðmyndir* (1925), xxi f.; A. Noreen, *Altisländische Grammatik*⁴ (1923), § 130.

⁴⁶ E. H. Lind, *Norsk-isländska dopnamn* (1905-15), s.v. *Þorkell*.

word is generally regarded as a loan from English. It is rarely found except in specifically Christian texts, where it generally has the meaning 'immortal soul'. Its presence in str. 9 is demanded by Finnur Jónsson's interpretation, and by most others, no less than by mine, but undue weight should not be attached to this argument, for these interpretations may be at fault.⁴⁷

It has been shown that influences which appear to belong to the medieval period are to be found both in the dream strophes and in others which the saga preserves. Since these influences are distinctive, and are not often found in scaldic strophes of family sagas, it seems probable that they should be traced to one and not to several poets. There remain a number of strophes which have not been mentioned in this paper. Most of these bear a certain resemblance to the dream strophes. Two of them (10 and 11) are composed in *kviðuhátt*. This is the metre of *Ynglingatal*, of *Háleygjatal* and of Egill's *Arinbjarnarkviða* and *Sonatorrek*. It is certainly one of the most ancient metres, but it is scarcely ever used for detached scaldic strophes (*lausavísur*). Its use in *Gísla Saga* suggests the hand of a late poet with antiquarian tastes, rather than that of an ancient poet.⁴⁸

Str. 2 is somewhat exceptional. It describes the burning of Gísli's home in Norway. Unlike most of the strophes in this saga, it is objective and picturesque. It has characteristics of the older period of scaldic verse, and is perhaps an ancient strophe. But this does not show that str. 2 is Gísli's work. It is preserved only in the longer text of the saga, and in a passage which most critics believe to be an interpolation. It seems possible, therefore, that this is an ancient strophe which has been assigned wrongly to Gísli.

It has already been shown that the plot and the prose of *Gísla Saga* bear some of the same distinctive marks as the strophes. The saga itself is sentimental and romantic, and appears to be

⁴⁷ On *sál* see H. Falk and A. Torp, *Etymologisk Ordbog* (1903), s.v. *sjæl*. For another view see Seewald, *op. cit.*, 122.

⁴⁸ Str. 18 is in rhyming couplets (*hin minnsta rúnhenda*), which suggests a late date of composition; cf. A. Heusler, *Deutsche Versgeschichte* 1 (1925), 280 ff.

influenced by poetic diction and thought. It may, therefore, be suggested that the prose and the verse are both the work of the same author. This seems more probable than Liestøl's suggestion which would imply that the author of the strophes and a series of successive 'sagamen' were all subjected to the same exceptional influences.

It has been argued that statements made in the prose do not always agree precisely with those made in the strophes. On these grounds it has been concluded that the prose and the verse cannot be by the same author. In fact, the differences are very slight, and might easily have arisen during scribal transmission.⁴⁹ The textual histories of many sagas show how great were the alterations made by scribes in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.⁵⁰ The similarity between the prose and the verse of *Gísli Saga* is much more striking than the differences.

There are reasons to doubt that the historical Gísli was a poet. Snorri and the other critical writers of the thirteenth century say nothing of him. Probably these early critics would have mentioned him if he had really been so great a poet as the author of the strophes attributed to him certainly was. But there is no positive reason to doubt that Gísli lived. The outline of his life, as it is told in the saga, may perhaps be true. *Landnámabók* gives evidence that Gísli lived,⁵¹ even though the genealogies drawn in *Landnámabók* do not agree precisely with those of *Gísli Saga*. Gísli is rarely mentioned in other sources,⁵² and it is doubtful whether he was a famous man until the saga was written. It is unlikely that the character of the historical outlaw bore a close resemblance to the artistic description of the thirteenth century.

49 The more important of these inconsistencies are pointed out in Benedikt Sveinsson's edition, 197-217.

50 Cf. *Víga-Glúms Saga*, ed. G. Turville-Petre (1940), xxii ff.

51 *Landnámabók*, ed. Finnur Jónsson (1900), *Hauksbók*, 39, 46; *Sturlubók*, 162, 169. Gísli's relationship with Snorri goði is mentioned in *Njáls Saga*, ch. 114.

52 *Íslendinga Saga (Sturlunga Saga)*, ed. G. Vigfússon, 1247) in a story relating to the year 1221 mentions a spear called *Grásiða*, which people said had once belonged to Gísli Súrsson (cf. Björn M. Ólsen, *Um íslendinga sögur*, 128-9). It is not possible to decide from this passage whether Sturla knew *Gísli Saga* when he wrote *Íslendinga Saga*.

The author probably used traditional tales about Gísli, but there is little reason to believe that these were very many or very full. The author drew freely on standard motives, such as were applied to many heroes in his day.⁵³ He treated his subject according to the taste of a medieval and Christian culture. He was influenced, strongly though probably indirectly, by the changing artistic fashions of Europe. Consequently his work lacks the austerity which characterizes many of the best Icelandic sagas. It is for this reason that *Gísla Saga* appeals especially to those trained to appreciate the romantic literatures of medieval and post-medieval Europe.

I shall not attempt to decide who was the author of *Gísla Saga*, nor precisely when he lived. Some idea of the age of *Gísla Saga* may perhaps be obtained by comparing it with other sagas. The slaughter of Þorgrímr by Gísli, as told in ch. 16, closely resembles the story of the slaughter of Helgi Ásbjarnarson, which is related in *Droplaugarsona Saga* (ch. 13). The similarity of the phrases and motives used in these two sagas is so close, that one of them must have copied directly from the other. Björn K. Þórolfsson⁵⁴ and A. Heusler⁵⁵ both concluded that *Gísla Saga* had influenced *Droplaugarsona Saga*. Heusler believed that this influence was exercised mainly through an oral medium, and that it took place before either saga was written. His conclusion was based on a forced and unnecessarily complicated hypothesis. In reality the verbal similarity between the two passages is so close that it can only be concluded that the author of one copied from a written version of the other.

I. Gordon⁵⁶ studied the relationship between *Gísla Saga* and

53 A number of these are cited by H. Dehmer, *op. cit.*, esp. 46, 88, 93, 101. The story of the vengeance taken by the youthful sons of Vésteinn for their father (*Gísla Saga*, ch. 28-9) seems also to contain stock motives. It has something in common with the story of Gestr Þórhallsson and Víga-Styrr (*Heiðarvíga Saga*, ch. 8-9). Ultimately such stories may be related to legends like that of Váli who avenged his brother Baldr when one night old (*Völuspá*, str 31 f.).

54 'Droplaugarsona Saga' in *Festskrift til Finnur Jónsson* (1928), 45-66.

55 'Berührungen zwischen den Isländergeschichten' in *Deutsche Isländforschung* (1930), 220-31.

56 *Medium Ævum* III (1934), 79-94.

Droplaugarsona Saga in considerable detail. Her conclusion was the opposite to that of Björn Þórólfsson and Heusler. She showed that, as told in *Droplaugarsona Saga*, the story is, in many ways, more logical and better placed than it is in *Gísla Saga*. She concluded that the author of *Gísla Saga* had borrowed the story from *Droplaugarsona Saga*. In this case, *Gísla Saga* must be a later work than *Droplaugarsona Saga*.

Einar Ól. Sveinsson⁵⁷ compared *Gísla Saga* with *Eyrbyggja Saga*. He suggested that *Eyrbyggja* had borrowed the story of Gíslí's death and a few other incidents from *Gísla Saga*, for the relevant passages of *Eyrbyggja* appear to be summarized from *Gísla Saga*. If this is so, *Gísla Saga* must be older than *Eyrbyggja Saga*.

Droplaugarsona Saga is probably among the oldest family sagas, even though it can hardly be as old as 1180, as Björn Þórólfsson supposed⁵⁸ (he later changed his opinion). *Eyrbyggja Saga* was assigned by its latest editor to about the year 1220, though there are reasons to believe it is somewhat later than that. Earlier scholars have suggested that it was written 1240-50.

There are indications that Styrmir fróði (died 1245) did not know *Gísla Saga*, or, at any rate, that he did not use it when he made his version of *Landnámabók*. Styrmir probably worked in the third decade of the thirteenth century. There are similar indications that Sturla Þórðarson (died 1284) used *Gísla Saga* when he compiled his version of *Landnámabók*.⁵⁹ Sturla probably worked after 1260, perhaps even after 1270. It may be suggested that *Gísla Saga* is later than *Styrmisbók* but older than *Sturlubók*.

Gísla Saga cannot be among the oldest family sagas. Its author shows a studied artistry, which is typical of the later rather than of the older period. His taste is romantic and even sentimental. His work shows influences which the authors of the oldest family sagas avoided. But he lived at a time when the scholarly interest in heroic lays and scaldic poetry was still at its height. It might

⁵⁷ *Eyrbyggja Saga* (ÍF IV, 1935), xxi-xxii.

⁵⁸ *op. cit.*, 64.

⁵⁹ Cf. Jón Jóhannesson, *Gerðir Landnámabókar* (1941), 105 ff.

be suggested that he belonged to the generation of Ólafr hvíta-skáld (born 1210) rather than to that of Snorri Sturluson (born 1178).

POSTSCRIPT

After some doubt, I have decided to republish this paper in the form in which it appeared in 1944.⁶⁰ Much valuable work on *Gísla Saga* and the verses in it has appeared since that date,⁶¹ and I hope that my paper contributed something to the discussion, although the problems involved remain far from solution. Recent critics seem generally to agree that most of the verses ascribed to Gísli are the work of one poet. Not only the plaintive tone, but also the striking similarity of imagery suggests this. I may mention the kennings for 'woman' in which, time and again, the basic word is the name of a goddess or valkyrie, e.g. *sör-Freyja*, *Eir aura*. A list of such expressions was given by Björn K. Þórólfsson in his edition of the saga.⁶²

It is also agreed by most scholars that the bulk of these verses was not by Gísli, since the Christian sentiments which predominate, not least in the dream verses, are not likely to be those of an Icelander of the mid-tenth century. Influence of Christian poetry assigned to the twelfth century had been detected, as was emphasized in the present paper. But here agreement stops.

It is said that the verses cannot be the work of Gísli himself, living in the tenth century, nor of the author of the saga, who probably worked towards the middle of the thirteenth century; the poet must have lived between those two dates. Grammatical

⁶⁰ *Modern Language Review* xxxix (1944), 374-91.

⁶¹ Björn K. Þórólfsson's authoritative edition of the saga in *Vestfirðinga Sögur* (ÍF vi) was published in 1943 but, for obvious reasons, was not then available to me. References in this note apply to his edition unless otherwise stated.

Among the most important recent works on *Gísla Saga* I would mention: Ida L. Gordon, 'The Origins of Gísla Saga', *Saga-Book* xiii (1946-53), 183-205; Anne Holtmark, *Studies in the Gísla Saga* (*Studia Norvegica* vi, 1951); Peter G. Foote, 'An Essay on the Saga of Gísli', appended to *The Saga of Gísli*, translated by George Johnston (1963).

⁶² *op. cit.*, viii.

forms are said to show that the verses belong to the twelfth century and not to the thirteenth; forms such as *féi*, *þvísa* might be seen as archaic. Attention was called, particularly by Björn K. Þórólfsson (*op. cit.*, vi ff.), to hiatus forms, such as *bráa*, *þáa*, *gráum*, sometimes demanded by the metre. At some time during the thirteenth century, these forms would have been contracted to *brá*, *þá*, *grám*. The uncontracted forms were later restored by force of analogy. It is, therefore, difficult to say at which time, in which areas and among which classes uncontracted forms were avoided. To quote another work by Björn K. Þórólfsson: 'Sjálfsgagt hafa ósamandregnar myndir altaf verið til. . .' ('Undoubtedly uncontracted forms always existed . . .').⁶³ The argument from contraction or its absence carries little weight, although a more thorough study of the subject might prove rewarding. I may pass over the uncontracted form *Þorketil* (acc. sg., str. 24), instead of the later *Þorkel*, also said to show that the verse is older than the thirteenth century. Since Icelanders of the thirteenth century and later continued to write this form, they knew of its existence and may well have used it in daily speech. The purely grammatical arguments, said to show that the verses belong to the twelfth century rather than the thirteenth, appear to be inconclusive. Cf. p. 143 above.

The prosody of the verses in *Gísli Saga* should be considered briefly, although it is not likely that this will help greatly in deciding their age. In the first place, it must be recognized that the saga does not claim that Gísli was a court or professional poet. We cannot expect such stringency as we find, for example, in the work of Þjóðólfr Arnórsson (died c. 1066). Gísli is liberal in his distribution of rime and half-rime; he frequently omits the half-rime in odd lines, although sometimes he has a full rime where we might expect a half. Like most scalds, he is strict in his use of full rime at the end of each half-strophe.

It is generally agreed that, whatever the reason, the older scalds in their rimes regarded *o* and *a* as identical, but towards

63 *Um íslenzkar orðmyndir á 14. og 15. öld* (1925), xxii.

the end of the twelfth century the two sounds came to be heard as distinct.⁶⁴ Gísli sometimes treats them as if they were identical in full rime, but sometimes as if they were distinct using them in half-rime. I doubt whether this has great significance since, as already remarked, Gísli (or pseudo-Gísli) was not a strict poet. In one verse (21) Gísli uses a six-syllable line with end-rime. As Peter Foote pointed out (*op. cit.*, 114), this form is so rare in scaldic poetry which we can assign to an early period, that the verse is unlikely to belong to the historical Gísli. But since this verse forms part of a sequence, it is hardly likely, as remarked by Foote, that the rest of the sequence could be the work of a tenth-century poet.

It has been widely said that there is some discrepancy between the verse and the story told in the prose. This implies that, while the author of the saga used the verse as a source, he did not understand it as well as we do. This is a dangerous hypothesis. Very few sagas are preserved in the form in which they were first written. Scribes of the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries rewrote the sagas which came into their hands, intending to improve them in one way or another, especially compressing the style, and sometimes incorporating material not in the original.⁶⁵

Gísli's last verse (40), as he faced death, is said to conflict with the prose. According to the prose, Gísli's wife, Auðr, was present or near by, but the poet seems to say that she will hear of (*fregna*) his valour. The discrepancy, if such it is, is thus in the one word, *fregna*. But Auðr might still hear talk of Gísli's valour, even if she had witnessed it herself.

Peter Foote also called attention to another apparent discrepancy, which is particularly interesting, since it may throw light on the saga in its scribal, rather than oral transmission. The half-strophe (39) reads in the received text:

64 The problem was discussed in detail by Hreinn Benediktsson in *Acta Philologica Scandinavica* xxvi (1963), 1-18.

65 *Víga-Glúms Saga* provides an excellent example of both of these processes.

ok hjorraddar hlýddi
 hegr rjúpkera tveggja,
 koma mun dals á drengi
 dagg, læmingja hoggvi.

These difficult lines are explained differently in the two versions of the saga. The differences between them are instructive, for they show how much sagas may be altered by their scribes. According to the supposedly later version (Y),⁶⁶ Gísli had a dream: *rennr á hann hofgi, ok dreymir hann þegar, at fuglar tveir koma á húsit ok hjoggusk at í læmingi; þeir váru heldr meiri en rjúpkera, ok létu heldr illiliga; þeir váru allir litaðir í blóði einu.*

If we had only this version, and believed it to be the original text, we might safely say that the author had misunderstood the verse. But the writer of the 'older' version (E) interpreted the lines in a different way, and his explanation may also be incorrect: *rennr á hann svefnhofgi, ok dreymir hann, at fuglar kæmi í húsit, er læmingar heita, þeir eru meiri en rjúpkera ok létu illiliga ok hofðu válkazk í roðru ok blóði.*⁶⁷

Recent critics have concentrated on the word *læmingjar* (*læmingar*). According to Björn K. Þórólfsson,⁶⁸ *læmingr* cannot be a bird because we do not know of any bird with such a name. To quote Peter Foote: 'All are agreed that it cannot possibly mean any sort of bird.' But the diminutive suffixes *-ing-*, *-ung-* are particularly common in bird-names; *titlingr* and *fýlungr* may be cited among many examples.⁶⁹ In Icelandic the word *lómr* (cf. English *loom*, Danish *lom*) is applied to the red-throated diver (*colymbus stellatus*). The description of the birds which Gísli saw in his dream corresponds closely with that of the red-throated diver. This bird is much larger than a cock ptarmigan; on his throat he has a patch of dull red, the colour of gore. His

66 *Tvær Sögur af Gísla Súrssyni*, ed. Konráð Gíslason, with notes on the verses by Sveinbjörn Egilsson (1849), 155.

67 *op. cit.*, 67-8; cf. Björn K. Þórólfsson's edition, 110.

68 *op. cit.*, 110, note 1.

69 See Bjarni Sæmundsson, *Fuglarnir* (1936), 686 ff., and particularly W. B. Lockwood, *Faroese Bird Names* (1961).

conduct is unpleasing, for he utters 'eerie wails, growls, hoots, goose-notes, screams and howls'.⁷⁰ It was not until after I had written this note that I realized that Sveinbjörn Egilsson must have had similar thoughts when he translated the lines: 'Og jeg hørte tydelig, at denne Lyd kom fra nogle Læminger (Fugle; maaskje en Art Lomfugle), der sloges med hverandre . . .'⁷¹

If this explanation of the word *læmingr* is correct, we should, according to modern convention, spell it *læmingr*.

I have not attempted in this note to prove that the verse and prose of *Gísla Saga* are by the same author, but only to show that the arguments that they are not so are inconclusive. If the verses are older than the saga, they have coloured the thoughts and tastes of the saga-writers. The poet thought of heroic legend when he contrasted his fickle sister, Þórdís, with Guðrún Gjúkadóttir (p. 126 above). The saga itself has much of the tragic tone of the 'Burgundian' lays, the loyal Auðr filling the place of the loyal Guðrún and the blameless, brave Gísli that of Sigurðr. Loyalties are thus reversed, for a pagan woman's first loyalty was to her brothers, but a Christian woman's to her husband.

Let us suppose that the verses in *Gísla Saga* are older than the saga itself, even if not so old as Gísli. In this case, the verses must have been a main source for the author of the saga, and he may have known more verses than those now preserved. It could be, as some have argued,⁷² that the author of the saga received the verses in written form. But the written text would need explanatory notes, for the verses would not be comprehensible without them. If this were so, the verses and the explanatory notes might be regarded as the 'saga' in its most primitive form.

A much more subtle and interesting suggestion was made by Peter Foote.⁷³ He remarks on many words and phrases, used in the verses, which are characteristic of the twelfth century, and

70 Cf. J. Fisher, *Bird Recognition* II (1951).

71 *Tvæ Sögur af Gísla Súrssyni*, 187-8.

72 See Björn K. Þórolfsson's edition, xi.

73 See note 61 above.

suggests that the verses in *Gísla Saga* belong to that period. This implies that much of the material of the saga was transmitted orally in explanatory tales which went with the verses. If this is so, we cannot tell what words were used in the prose, but the story need not have been very different from that which we have now. Foote seems to be returning to the theory of the oral saga, although in a much modified form. He would not say, as Heusler did: 'Bei vielen Sagas denkt man zuerst an ein Diktat: das Pergament fängt die gehörte Sprache des Geschichtenmannes mit der Treue des Phonographen auf.'⁷⁴

74 A. Heusler, *Die Anfänge der isländischen Saga* (1914), 61.

IX *DRÓTTKVÆTT* AND IRISH SYLLABIC MEASURES

IN this article I intend to make a comparison between the poetry of the Scandinavian people and that of the Irish. But first of all it may not be out of place to recall shortly the principal episodes of Irish history during the viking period.

It is impossible to say for certain when the Scandinavians made their first contact with Ireland. It is possible that the great fleet which plundered the island of Tory in the year 617 was manned by Scandinavians, but that can never be more than conjecture. However, reliable sources relate that Scandinavian vikings plundered the islands of Iona and Lambay in the year 795 and Inish Patrick, not far from the Isle of Man, in the year 798. A few years later, vikings plundered Inishmurray near Sligo and bands of them made forays inland as far as Roscommon. The Irish annalists tell of many attacks and landings in the following years, principally in the south of Ireland. In the year 823 Bangor on Belfast Lough was attacked and a short time later further attacks were made on the east coast of Ireland. By this time Scandinavians seem to have begun to settle in Ireland and the annalists of that period imply that whole bands of them had settled in East Meath about the year 826 and on the coast of Wicklow about the year 835.

It is impossible to say for certain to which of the Scandinavian nations these first vikings belonged. But one may assume that some of them were Norwegians who had settled in the Orkneys and in Shetland. These islands had been settled from Norway a few decades earlier.

In the year 832, according to the Irish annalists, the Norwegian Turgesius landed in the north of Ireland at the head of a large royal fleet. Other fleets, which were probably also under the leadership of Turgesius, landed in other Irish harbours. Turgesius

was recognized as king of all the Scandinavians in Ireland and probably held sway over many Irish people also.

The organization of Irish society fell to pieces under the tyranny of Turgesius. He took possession of the monastery of Armagh, expelled the abbot and installed himself in his place. His wife, Ota, assumed a similar dignity in Clonmacnoise and gave oracles from the altar of the cathedral church in her capacity as a priestess.

The Irish annalists of this period describe Turgesius in extreme terms, as though he were in his person the incarnation of paganism and Anti-Christ himself. The historians of a later period held that his object was to uproot Christianity and to establish an utterly pagan kingdom in Ireland. But it is hardly likely that such a thought could have occurred to him. The pagans had no hard and fast dogmas in matters of religion and bothered little about the religious beliefs of other people. Turgesius plundered churches and monasteries, because in them were kept the valuables and wealth of the people. He made himself abbot of the monastery in Armagh because he was ambitious for the abbatial power.

The kingdom of Turgesius lasted only thirteen years. Then he was captured by one of the Irish chieftains who had him drowned. The opposition of the Irish grew for a while thereafter, and the annalists speak less frequently of battles between the Scandinavians and the Irish than of battles between the fair and the dark foreigners, that is between the Norwegians and the Danes on the coasts of Ireland. Irish chiefs fought on the side of the Norwegians or the Danes as it suited themselves.

Large bands of Danes came to Ireland about the middle of the ninth century and fierce battles were fought at that time. It is said that on one occasion when the battle was going against the Danes they called on St Patrick, the favourite saint of the Irish, and carried off the victory. Such accounts show how insignificant was the opposition of the Scandinavian pagans to Christianity and Christian customs. At first the Danes were successful in their battles against the Norwegians, but their power was later broken

when the Norwegian chief Amhlaíbh landed in the year 853. It was said of Amhlaíbh that he was the son of the king of Lochlann, and many scholars have assumed that he was identical with Ólafr hvíti who is often mentioned in Icelandic sources dealing with the period of the settlement of Iceland. But the Icelandic texts do not support that identification. Amhlaíbh became head of the foreigners in Ireland and Irish chieftains fought sometimes with, sometimes against him.

By this time the Irish and the Scandinavians had lived as neighbours for about a generation and influenced each other's way of life. The Norwegian scholar, Carl Marstrander,¹ investigated the loan-words which Irish borrowed from Scandinavian and came to the conclusion that the majority of them were derived from the dialect which was spoken in southwest Norway. He holds that some of these loanwords show Norwegian forms which cannot be later than the middle of the ninth century.

This hybrid Scandinavian-Irish culture becomes clearly visible in the accounts of the people called Gall-Ghaedhil or foreign Irish. These people appear first in history about the middle of the ninth century, when they are mentioned by the Irish annalists. Some say they were Irish who had been fostered by Scandinavians. Others say that they were Irish people who had abandoned Christianity and adopted the customs of the Scandinavians. Many of them were doubtless the sons of Scandinavian fathers and Irish mothers. For a short period the Gall-Ghaedhil appear as a separate nation, warlike and independent. They fought sometimes with the Irish, sometimes with the Scandinavians, just as they pleased. They surpassed the Norwegians in fierceness and cruelty. They attacked the churches just as the Norwegians did and were called the 'sons of death' (*maic báis*). The name of one of their chiefs tells its own story. His name was Caitill Finn. That is the Norwegian name Ketill with the Irish epithet *finn* 'fair'. Caitill was defeated and killed by the Norse leader Amhlaíbh about 856. After his time there are few accounts of

1 *Bidrag til det norske sprogs historie i Irland* (1915).

attacks by the Gall-Ghaedhil in Ireland. But the mixed Norse-Irish nation which lived in Western Scotland and the Hebrides was also called Gall-Ghaedhil in later times.

Amhlaibh visited Ireland every now and again up to the year 870. Then it is said that he returned to Norway where his father was faced with internal disturbances. This is not at all unlikely, because the Icelandic historians relate that in those years there was internal conflict in Norway, when Haraldr hárfagri rose to power. Now begins a period of peace in Ireland, probably because the Norwegian chieftains were fully occupied at home and were unable to send any strong force to Ireland.

It was during this period that the Scandinavians first became aware of Iceland, though it is likely that the Irish had gone there many generations previously. It is possible that the Scandinavians first heard of Iceland from the Irish. The earliest settlers of Iceland found Irish hermits there before them. The dialect which the majority of the settlers of Iceland spoke was the same as that which was spoken in southwest Norway and was also that which was most commonly spoken in the Norwegian colonies of Ireland. The settlement of Iceland was, of course, the result of many causes. One of them was the tyranny of Haraldr hárfagri, as the Icelandic historians tell us. But it would also appear that further causes are attributable to conditions in Ireland. After Amhlaibh had left for home, the outlook for the Norwegians was gloomy. Many of them found it desirable to emigrate to Iceland. And indeed a considerable number of the first settlers came from Ireland and the Hebrides, not from Norway itself.

According to the Icelandic genealogies, many of the first settlers were of mixed race, and tradition implies that they were also mixed in religion and culture. They were men of the type called Gall-Ghaedhil by the Irish annalists.

One of the most prominent settlers was Helgi hinn magri who settled the whole of Eyjafjörður. His father, Eyvindr, was a native of Gautland but had settled in Ireland. Helgi's mother was Rafarta, daughter of an Irish sub-king called Kjarval (Cerrball).

It is said that Helgi was of very mixed religion, that he believed simultaneously in Thor and in Christ. Auðr hin djúpúðga settled a large region of western Iceland. She had been reared in the Hebrides, where her father had held sway as jarl of Haraldr hárfagri. Auðr was a Christian and deeply religious. One of her followers, Erpr, was son of a Scottish jarl and of an Irish princess.

Ørlygr was also a well-known settler and a relative of Auðr. Just like his kinswoman, Ørlygr had been reared in the Hebrides by a bishop called Patrick. He built a church on Kjalarnes where his descendants adopted the custom of devotion to St Colum Cille, one of the principal saints of the Irish, even though they themselves were no longer Christians.

Many Icelandic leaders have Irish names or epithets, such as Njáll, Kormákr, Helgi bjólan, Ólafr feilan. But the slaves who bore Irish names were proportionately more numerous. I need only mention Dufþakr and Melkólfr.

Thus the culture of the Icelanders was mixed from its very beginning. In its principal features it was Scandinavian, but influences from the British Isles and Ireland were considerable. Scholars debate how strong these Irish influences on Icelandic culture were and in which fields they are to be found. In this article I intend to examine this problem from one point of view only. I wish to look at certain metres which were in use among Irish and Scandinavian poets in those countries.

First, it is desirable to trace the history of metrics in Ireland in broad outline. In this I rely on the specialist works of R. Thurneysen, Douglas Hyde and Kuno Meyer.² Otherwise I follow my own paths.

As far as can be seen, the earliest metres which the Irish poets used were similar to those of early Germanic verse. Their prin-

² The following works have been indispensable: Douglas Hyde, *Irish Poetry* (1903). R. Thurneysen 'Zur irischen Accent- und Verslehre', *Revue Celtique* VI (1885), 336 ff. R. Thurneysen, 'Mittelirische Verslehren' in *Irische Texte* III (ed. W. Stokes and E. Windisch, 1891). K. Meyer, *Über die älteste irische Dichtung* I-II (1913-14). K. Meyer, *Bruchstücke aus der älteren Lyrik Irlands* (1919). Some of the opinions about Irish poetry which appear in this article are borrowed from these works. See also G. Murphy, *Early Irish Metrics* (1961).

cial characteristics were rhythm and alliteration. The rhythm was dependent on the principal stress or 'rise' which was repeated at determined intervals. The number of unstressed syllables was not fixed and varied from one line to another, as happens in *Beowulf* and in the earliest Scandinavian heroic poems, *Hamðismál* and *Hlōðskviða*.

Alliteration in the earliest Irish poems was governed by the same rules as in early Germanic poetry. Alliteration took place between accented syllables which began with the same consonant or with any vowel. However, in the earliest Irish poetry alliteration was not used, as in the earliest Germanic poetry, to bind one line to the next, but each accented syllable alliterated with the following to form a sort of chain which was broken only when another alliterative chain began. The following example shows how this alliteration usually appeared:

/ Brūisius, / brēosus
/ bārnia / lond / Labraid,
/ lāth / Elggae,
/ ane / Luirc / Lōiguri.

The alliteration did not have to bind the lines together in pairs as in early Germanic and Icelandic poetry. But, as the above example shows, the third line may be connected by alliteration with the second and the fourth with the third. Stanzas can be joined together in the same way. The lines quoted above continue as follows:

/ Lugaid / lōig, / lond
/ Labraid, / sanb / Sētne,
/ sochlu / Cōil / Cobthach,
/ conn / Māl / Muiredach.

Kuno Meyer has investigated these primitive Irish poems with great care. He cites only a few poems which are composed in this metre and concludes that the majority of them were composed at the end of the sixth or in the seventh century. The subject matter of these poems is not very interesting. The pedigrees of chieftains are traced to Adam and other famous Old Testament characters.

Sometimes the heroic feats of ancestors are recalled, and superficially these poems are not all unlike *Ynglingatal*, *Háleygjatal* and *Nóregskonungatal*, in which the pedigrees of the Norwegian and Swedish chieftains are traced. It is worth noting that, while the Scandinavian poets begin with Óðinn or the earliest ancestors and trace the genealogy down to the chieftains who were still alive, the Irish poets begin with the living chieftains and trace the pedigree backwards, just as is done in *Biskupaættir* in Icelandic.

Irish poems of this type can usually be divided into strophes or sections. Each section is composed of four lines. In many poems each line has two stresses, as was usual in early Germanic poetry. In some of the poems which Meyer quotes the lines have three stresses while others have two and three in alternate lines:

/ Dind / Ríg
/ rūad / tūaim / tenbai,
/ trīcha / fuirech
fo / brōn / bebsait.

The lines in Irish poems are often bound together in pairs and these pairs are called long lines (German *Langzeile*). The alliteration which binds one line to another is sometimes unreal, i.e. when stressed syllables alliterate with unstressed, as in the example:

/ trīcha / fuirech
fo / brōn / bebsait.

The long lines are usually joined together with end-rhyme. In some examples, such as those above, there is no end-rhyme, and this seems to be the oldest form. In the Book of Leinster, which was written in the second half of the twelfth century, it is said that Ross Ruad, king of Leinster, was the first to use end-rhyme. This can hardly be true, for Ross Ruad is thought to have lived in the second century after Christ, but this assertion serves to show that the medieval metrical scholars in Ireland were aware that end-rhyme was an innovation in Irish poetry.

The grouping of lines in strophes or stanzas would seem to be

another innovation. Thurneysen³ has drawn attention to many early fragments which cannot be divided into stanzas of equal length, in spite of regular alliteration and rhythm.

Such examples lead one to suspect that the earliest poets in Ireland did not divide their compositions into stanzas. Both strophic division and end-rhyme may probably be regarded as derived from hymns and popular songs in Latin, though end-rhyme only reached its full development with the Irish poets.

This primitive rhythmic poetry fell into disuse among the Irish in the seventh or eighth century and was largely replaced by the so-called syllabic poetry. This derives its name from the fact that the number of syllables in the line is fixed.

Poetry of this type has a rhythm which is every bit as strong as that of the previous type, but the basis for the rhythm is different. It no longer depends on the stress but on the number of syllables in the line, on the last stress in the line, and on the form of the line-end.

The majority of scholars agree that this syllabic poetry originated in the Latin hymns and popular songs of the fifth and sixth century. Thurneysen in a famous article in *Revue celtique* in 1885 pointed to some early Latin poems which he regarded as the models followed by the early Irish poets.

It is noticeable that in those examples which Thurneysen cites the number of syllables in the line is fixed, each line ends in a particular way, and the position of the final stress in the line is determined by rule. In the example given here below the line is formed of fifteen syllables but is divided into two by the caesura which occurs after the eighth syllable. Therefore the long line is equivalent to two short lines, the first of which has eight and the second seven syllables:

Caesar Gallias subegit
Nicomedes Caesarem,
Ecce Caesar nunc triumphat
qui subegit Gallias.

3 *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* XIX (1933), 205-6; cf. *ibid.*, XII (1918), 365.

These continental poems cited by Thurneysen differ from Irish syllabic poetry in that the stresses in each line are repeated at regular intervals. There exist still more primitive poems in Latin which in some points more closely resemble Irish syllabic verse.

The hymn which St Augustine composed against the Donatist heretics in the fourth century after Christ is a good example.⁴ Each line is composed of sixteen syllables, but is divided into two short lines, each of eight syllables. Each line contains the same number of stresses and the position of the last stress in the line or in the half-line is always the same. Therefore the line-end always has the same form. In this hymn the end of the line always consists of a trochaic dissyllable. One line is as follows:

Propter hoc dominus noster
voluit nos praemonere

and another runs:

congreganti multos pisces
omne genus hinc et inde.

Sometimes the final syllables are joined together by assonance:

Omnes qui gaudetis de pace
modo verum iudicate.

Sometimes Latin metricists regard this type of poetry as rhythmic. Irish metricists would probably regard it as unrhythmic. But I doubt if they are right in doing so. This poetry exhibits the same qualities as Irish syllabic verse: the syllables are counted, the end of the line has a fixed form and all stresses except the final one are variable both in number and position. Stanzas of eight-syllable lines ending in a dissyllable, like the hymn of St Augustine, are to be found in Old Irish where it is called *Rannaigecht bec mor* or *Sedrud* (Murphy, *Early Irish Metrics*, 54). But it is not a common metre. I cite here one example from an Irish medieval metrical tract:

4 Cf. F. J. E. Raby, *Christian Latin Poetry* (1927), 20 ff.

A mic rig na cairce a / Cualaind
 fin duid is mid mailte / maidim
 Is rut a milid a / Malaind
 do laim do ririb i / Croirind.⁵

The most popular metre with the Irish was called *debidé*. It consisted usually of seven-syllable lines. In this metre the form of the line-end was variable but only within the limits imposed by strict rules. For example, if the last stress in the first line fell on the final syllable, the final stress in the next line would fall on the penultimate or antepenultimate syllable:

Inmain tír an tír út / thoir
 Alba cona / hingantaib:
 nochá ticfuinn eisdi il/le
 mana tísainn le / Noíse.⁶

Irish syllabic poetry is divided into stanzas and each stanza usually consists of four lines. As I have already said, stanzaic division seems to have been in use before syllabic metres were perfected. But whatever the truth of that, the stanzaic division probably originated in Latin hymns and popular songs.

I do not intend here to discuss the wide variety of Irish metres, elision, or the shortening of lines. Neither do I intend to speak of end-rhyme, *comhardadh slán* (perfect rhyme), or *uaithne* (consonance) in Irish poetry. But I will turn now to Scandinavian metrics and will endeavour to see in what way they can be compared to the Irish.

The earliest poems which have been preserved in the northern countries are rhythmic with regular alliteration. As in the earliest Irish poetry, the stress is the basis of the metre and the stress is repeated at regular intervals. Lines are formed and each line contains two stressed syllables. The lines are bound together in pairs by alliteration. Here one must distinguish between *stuðlar*, which is alliteration in the narrow sense and falls on one or both of the

⁵ See Thurneysen in *Irische Texte* III (ed. Stokes and Windisch, 1891), 146.

⁶ From *Oidheadh Chloinne Uisnigh*, ed. W. Stokes in *Irische Texte* II (1887), 127.

stressed syllables in the first line, and *hofuðstafr*, which usually falls on the first stressed syllable in the second line of the pair. Each line contains the same number of stresses, but the number of unstressed syllables which precedes or follows the stresses varies from one line to the next, as this example shows:

Sjau eigu vit salhús
sverða full,
hverju eru þeira
hjölt ór gulli.

It is doubtful whether it is right to divide these early poems into stanzas. Modern editors most frequently do so. But even the most diligent of them are often unsuccessful in making the stanzas equal in length. This early metre is very similar to that which is used in the Old English *Beowulf* and in the heroic poetry of the Germanic peoples on the European mainland. Early Germanic poetry is not divided into stanzas.

But gradually stanzaic division appeared in Scandinavian poetry and the full stanza usually contains eight lines and is divided into two half-stanzas with a notable pause after the fourth line. Each half-stanza is complete in itself in form and the sentences in it are generally grammatically perfect. Therefore, the Scandinavian half-stanza contains four lines and is similar to the stanza which was in use among Irish and Latin poets. Rhythmic or accented poetry of this type forms about one-third of the poetry which is preserved in early Icelandic manuscripts. A great part of it is preserved in the Codex Regius of the *Poetic Edda*. Its metrical ancestry is to be found among the heroic poems of the English and other Germanic peoples.

However, the great majority of early Icelandic and Norwegian poems differ basically in form from the eddaic poetry. They may be called by the name *dróttkvæði* or court poetry or scaldic poetry. No one doubts that the metres used by the court poets are later than those which the eddaic poets used. But there is considerable disagreement about their age and origin.

Scandinavian scaldic verse resembles Irish syllabic poetry in many points but differs from it in others.

As in Irish poetry, the syllables are counted and in most of the scaldic metres the end of the line has a fixed form. Usually, but not always, this consists of a trochaic dissyllable. In the most popular of the Irish metres, *debide*, the lines consist of seven syllables. But in the most popular of the scaldic metres, called *dróttkvætt*, the line consists of six syllables and ends always in a trochaic dissyllable:

Pél høggr stórt fyr stáli
 stafnkvígs á veg jafnan
 út með éla meitli
 andærr jötunn vandar . . .

It is only right to mention that in the half-stanza, as in all poetry composed in the *dróttkvætt* metre, alliteration is governed by stricter rules than in the eddaic poetry. In the stricter form, the first stressed syllable in the second line must always alliterate and its first sound is called *hofuðstafr*. Two stressed syllables in the first line must also alliterate and they are called *stuðlar*.

The above half-stanza is composed in the metre *dróttkvætt*, but the poet has followed stricter rules than is usual. The lines are joined together in pairs with alliteration, as is usual in eddaic poetry. But, in addition to that, each line has a kind of internal rhyme, *hending*, which falls on the last stressed syllable and on another stressed syllable within the line. *Hending*, as illustrated in the second and fourth line above, is called *aðalhending*, i.e. the consonants at the end of the syllable are the same and are preceded by the same vowel: *stafn* : *jafn*, *and-* : *vand-*.

Irish poets used *aðalhending* no less than the Scandinavians, but in Irish poetry it is formed in a different manner and its position is not the same as in the *dróttkvætt* metre. The vowels had to be identical but the consonants which followed them needed only to belong to the same consonantal group. In many Irish metres *aðalhending* was used as an end-rhyme to join the line-ends together, but it was also used to connect a word in the middle of

one line with a word in the middle of the next. In the first and third lines of the example given above, the rhyme is called *skothending*. There the vowels are dissimilar but the consonants which follow them are identical: *Þél : stál, út : meit*. *Skothending* is not unlike *uaithne* (consonance) in Irish poetry. As in the case of *uaithne*, *skothending* is formed with identical consonants but different vowels. But *skothending* differs from *uaithne* in so far as the consonants must be identical, whereas in *uaithne* they need only belong to the same consonantal group. In Irish metrics the consonants are divided into six groups: soft (c, p, t), hard (g, b, d), rough (ch, ph, th), strong (ll, m, mm, ng, nn, rr), light (bh, gh, dh, l, mh, n, r), while s stands alone.⁷ The stanza in the following example is composed in the metre *Rannaigecht Mhór*. There is *comhardadh slán* or *aðalhending* between the final syllables of the second and fourth line and *uaithne* or *skothending* between the first and third line.

Imdha broc ag dol fa a / dhíon
ann is míol muighe nach / mall,
is édan rionntanach / róin
ag techt on muir móir an / all⁸

The metres in use among the Scandinavian scalds were almost as varied as those of the Irish. There are approximately one hundred metres preserved in Old Icelandic. Each of them has its own name and the medieval metrical scholars distinguished between them just as the Irish metricists did in the *Metrical Tracts*. One variation which the scalds used was to shorten or truncate alternate lines by removing the unaccented final syllable, so that the rhythm is completely changed, as is illustrated in the following half-stanza by the early settler Þórir snepill:

Hér liggr, kjóla keyrir,
kaldakinn of aldr,
en vit fǫrum heilir,
Hjǫlmun-Gautr, á braut.

⁷ Cf. D. Hyde, *op. cit.*, 89; E. Knott, *Irish Syllabic Poetry* (1935), 4-5.

⁸ Cf. *The Adventures of Suibhne Geilt*, ed. J. G. O'Keeffe (1913), 136; second edition in *Medieval and Modern Irish Series I* (1931), 72.

In other examples each line is truncated, as in the following, which Óttarr svarti composed in the first years of the eleventh century:

Fold verr folk-Baldr,
fár má konungr svá,
ǫrn reifir Áleifr,
es framr Svía gramr.

Irish poets also used this trick which has a very noticeable effect on the rhythm. The following Irish example is written in a type of *debide*, but the first line is shortened to three syllables, so the metre is called *debide gairit*, 'shortened *debide*':

Do chath / rod,
A Dhé nime, ní ma / lott,
ba Suibhne Geilt m'ainm iar / sin,
mh'aonar dhamh a mbarr / eidhin.⁹

The seven-syllable *rannaigecht*, which has rhyming words at the end of the alternate lines, can be shortened in the same way. The following stanza is put in the mouth of the hero Fer Diad before he began his tragic duel with his foster-brother, Cú Chulainn:

Truag, a Dhé,
teacht do mhnaoi eadrom as / é,
leth mo croidhe in Cú cen / col
agus leth croidhe na Con / mé.¹⁰

I have cited only a few examples, but I think that they suffice to show the principal resemblances between Irish and Scandinavian metres. In the scaldic metres, as in the Irish, each syllable is counted and there is very little room for variation in this. In Irish metres, as in those of the scalds, the form of the line-end is an important factor. New metres are formed not only by changing the number of syllables, but also by changing the form of the line-end. In Irish and in Scandinavian poetry, both *aðalhending* (*comhardadh slán*) and *skothending* (*uaithne*) are used, but they are

⁹ *ibid.*, 38; second edition, 21.

¹⁰ *Táin Bó Cuailnge*, ed. E. Windisch (1905), 455. *The Stowe Version of Táin Bó Cuailnge*, ed. C. O'Rahilly (1961), 2697 ff.

formed somewhat differently and have different positions within the stanza. Both the Irish and Scandinavian poets were conscious craftsmen and were therefore always willing to experiment and form new metres.

In many points, however, the metres of the scalds differ from those of the Irish. Alliteration occurs in both but in the syllabic Irish poems it is used only as an ornament, whereas in the poetry of the scalds it is an indispensable structural feature. In the matter of alliteration the metres of the scalds resemble those of the eddaic poets and other early Germanic poets.

There is a further difference which I have hardly mentioned. In the majority of Irish syllabic poems the line-ends are joined by rhyme. In many metres this rhyme is in alternate lines. But in *debide*, which is the most common of all Irish metres, the line-ends rhyme in pairs. Arising out of this stressed syllables are made to rhyme with unstressed as in the following example:

Sirfidh Éirinn 'na gheilt / ghlas
agus bidh do rinn / raghas.¹¹

End-rhyme was not a very important feature of scaldic poetry but the oldest examples of it are probably those found in *Höfuðlausn*, attributed to Egill about the middle of the tenth century. As far as I know, the scalds never used alternating rhyme but rhymed the line-ends together in pairs and sometimes the rhyme continued right through the stanza. One seldom finds the scalds rhyming stressed and unstressed syllables, but there are examples of it. Egill has one in *Höfuðlausn*:

Vasat villr staðar
vefr darraðar.

Some scholars have sought to show that it is a great difference between Irish metres and those of the scalds, that in Irish the line is usually of seven syllables, whereas the most popular length of line among the scalds is of six syllables. But this difference is hardly of importance and may well owe its origin to poetic taste

¹¹ *The Adventures of Suibhne Geilt* (1913), 6; second edition, 4.

and the nature of the two languages. The Irish metre *Rinnard*, which is not at all uncommon, consists of six-syllable lines which always end in a trochaic dissyllable, just as do the lines of the *dróttkvætt* metre, for example:

An clog sin ro / ghonais
 notchurfi-si ar / cráobhaibh
 gurbat aon re / hénaihb
 an clog náomh re / náomhaibh.¹²

There exists, however, a more important difference between the Irish and Scandinavian metres. I have already mentioned that in Irish poems the number of the stressed syllables varies from line to line but the position of the final stressed syllable is fixed according to predetermined rules. The examples which have already been cited are sufficient to show this. They will also show that the form of the line-end contains a rhythm which is repeated at regular intervals. But it is said that in the *dróttkvætt* line the number of stressed syllables is unchangeable, just as is the number of syllables and the form of the line-end. In the most common metre, *dróttkvætt*, there are three stresses in each line, in some metres there are two, and in others there are four.

It is not to be denied that in the majority of scaldic poems the number of stressed syllables is the same in each line, but I am not at all convinced that this is always so. For this reason I have sometimes been in doubt as to how a line should be scanned, especially those composed in the metre *haðarlag*. Other metricists besides myself have had the same difficulty and have come to different conclusions. Some have asserted that *haðarlag* is a type of *málaháttr*. If such is the case, its lines have two stresses. On the other hand, some would hold that *haðarlag* is a type of *dróttkvætt* metre and, if such is the case, the lines should have three stresses.¹³

¹² *ibid.*, 12; second edition, 6.

¹³ Snorri Sturluson (*Háttatal* 79) seems to regard *haðarlag* as a type of *dróttkvætt* metre, as does also A. Heusler, *Deutsche Versgeschichte* I (1925), 216, 301 ff. On the other hand Finnur Jónsson, *Stutt islenzk bragfræði* (1892), 52-3, and E. Sievers, *Altgermanische Metrik* (1893), 113, regard *haðarlag* as a type of *málaháttr*.

But as far as I can see, some lines in *haðarlag* have three stresses and some have only two. But the number of syllables is fixed and the form of the line-end is invariable. I cite the following example from the poem *Hrafnsmál* which Þormóður Trefilsson composed about Snorri goði:

Saddi svangreddir
 sára dynbóru
 orrn á ulfs virði
 í Alptafirði;
 þar lét þá Snorri
 þegna at hjörregni
 fjörvi fimm numna:
 svá skal fjandr hegna.

If all scaldic verse were examined in this light I expect that further doubtful lines would be found. I well realize that this guess of mine will seem far-fetched to many.

Fifty years ago there were many scholars who thought that the scaldic metres and their great variety of language was the result of influence from Irish poetry.¹⁴ Few would agree with this at the present day. Instead of this the majority hold that the complex language of the scaldic poems and their great variety of metres were formed by Scandinavians who had never heard any poetry other than early Germanic heroic verse and the like, more or less the same as is to be found in the *Poetic Edda*. It is thought that the poetic language and even the strict counting of syllables originated in magical formulas.¹⁵ The half-stanza in the *dróttkvætt* metre

14 Among the older scholars who held that the scalds were influenced by Irish poets one may name A. Edzardi, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* v (1878), 570 ff., Gudbrandur Vigfússon, *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* 1 (1883), esp. 446 ff., and S. Bugge, *Bidrag til den ældste Skaldedigtning: Historie* (1894). In more recent times A. Heusler, *Deutsche Versgeschichte* 1 (1925), 299 ff., came to the same conclusion but did not investigate the problem fully.

15 Finnur Jónsson denied that the Irish could have had any real influence on the poetry of the scalds. He considered that the relations between the Irish and the vikings were so unfriendly that such cultural influence could not have occurred. See *Bókmenntasaga Íslendinga* (1904-5), 7 ff., *Litt. Hist.*, 1 18 ff. and elsewhere. E. Noreen, especially in *Eddastudier* (1921), 32 ff., *Studier i forvästnordisk diktning* II (1922), 1 ff., and *Den norsk-isländska poesien* (1926),

consists of twenty-four syllables and the number 24 is thought to have great magical importance because that was the number of the runic letters. It is also held that the scaldic poets cannot have been under any Irish influence because, it is said, *dróttkvætt* was being composed before the Scandinavians came into contact with the Irish.

Here we must consider when the earliest scaldic poems were composed. The earliest court poet mentioned in reliable sources is Bragi Boddason the Old. Little is known with certainty about his life but accounts concerning Bragi and genealogies in which he and his kinsmen are named seem to indicate that he lived in western Norway.

It is difficult to determine when Bragi lived. Most of those who have discussed the question in recent years have been convinced that his floruit lay in the first decades of the ninth century. The principal reasons for this opinion are that, according to several sources, Bragi composed poems about King Bjørn of Haugr. None of these poems has survived and it is nowhere said that he composed them in scaldic metres. In *Egils Saga* mention is made of Bjørn and he is said to have been king of the Swedes. For that reason many scholars have concluded that he is identical with Bernus, a king who ruled over part of Sweden when St Ansgar came there as missionary about the year 830. It is clear that the name Bernus is nothing other than Bjørn in its Latin form. But apart from this there is little to support this identification of these two rulers. There are many arguments which would seem to contradict this identification.

Bjørn at Haugi is named in many Icelandic genealogies. They disagree, however, about the date at which he lived. He is called a king of the Swedes in one version of *Hervarar Saga* where he is

143 ff., also denied that there could be any question of Celtic influence. He was of the opinion that the peculiar qualities of scaldic verse were derived from magical and tabu formulas and the like. F. Askeberg, *Norden och kontinenten i gamal tid* (1944), 108 ff., agrees with Noreen. J. de Vries, *Altnordische Literaturgeschichte I* (1941), 70 ff., seems to be undecided in his opinion. Other scholars who discuss the origin of scaldic verse avoid this problem.

also made a great-grandson of Ragnarr loðbrók. If that were true Bragi could not have been born before the tenth century. But the genealogies in *Hervarar Saga* are not to be trusted.

The genealogies in *Landnámabók*¹⁶ imply that Björn flourished in the last decades of the ninth century, about the time when Iceland was settled. It is said there that Þormóðr hinn rammi had fled from Björn and settled in Iceland. In two versions of *Landnáma* (*Hauksbók* and *Þórðarbók*) it is said that Þormóðr was a Swede and that may well be true. But in *Þórðarbók*, which seems to preserve the original text of this chapter, Björn is said to have expelled Þormóðr from Norway and not from Sweden. The reason was that Þormóðr had killed a man called Gyrðr and it is possible that this Gyrðr was the great-grandfather of Erlingr Skjálǫgsson, who lived in western Norway and died about 1028. But of course this is only conjecture.

In *Þórðarbók* it is also said that a certain settler, Ólafr bekk, was a refugee from Björn on account of murder. Ólafr was the son of Karl from Bjarkey in Hálogaland, and so it is likely that Björn would have expelled him from Norway and not from Sweden. Nevertheless it is possible that the author of *Landnámabók* had confused Bjarkey in Hálogaland with Bjarkey on the Løgr (Mälaren).

There is a further account in *Landnámabók* about Þórðr knappr, a settler. According to one version of the book, *Hauksbók*, Þórðr was a Swede. According to the other two versions he lived in Sogn in western Norway. Haukr calls Þórðr a nephew of King Björn, but according to *Þórðarbók* and *Sturlubók* he was Björn's son.

It is clear that according to the most reliable Icelandic sources Björn of Haugr flourished not in the first but rather in the later decades of the ninth century. It is unlikely that he was king of the Swedes, but it is possible that he was a sub-king in western Nor-

¹⁶ On these pedigrees see the article of Jón Johannesson in *Afmælisrit dr. Einars Arnórssonar* (1940), 1-6, translated into English by G. Turville-Petre in *Saga-Book* xvii (1966-9), 293 ff.

way. The word *haugr* is not uncommon as an element in Norwegian place-name compounds. It is possible that some medieval historians made Björn king of the Swedes because they wished to identify him with Bernus whom they knew from Adam of Bremen's 'History of the Bishops of Hamburg' or from other learned sources.

In *Landnámabók* and elsewhere Bragi is said to have composed a verse about Geirmundr and Hámundr, the twin sons of Hjǫrr, king of Rogaland. This verse is preserved but it is not composed in any type of scaldic metre. When the twins, Geirmundr and Hámundr, grew up, they spent some years on viking expeditions and finally went to Iceland and settled there. They appear to have left Norway some years after the battle of Hafsfjörðr, about 885-90, and can hardly have been born earlier than 855-60.

It is difficult to draw conclusions about Bragi's dates from genealogies in which he is himself named. He was the great-grandfather of Arinbjörn who was the friend of Egill Skallagrímsson. According to *Egils Saga*, Arinbjörn was somewhat older than Egill, who was apparently born about 910. If we suppose that Arinbjörn was born about 905, we may consider that Bragi was born about 830. A similar conclusion may be drawn also from the genealogies of the poets Gunnlaugr ormsunga (born about 984) and Tindr Hallkelsson, both of whom were descendants of Bragi. But opinions based on such a weak foundation are not to be relied upon.

It should be mentioned that Guðbrandur Vigfússon in his book *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* (II, 2 ff.), which has not received the attention it deserves, concluded that Bragi lived in the years 835-900.

The earliest poem by Bragi which is preserved is called *Ragnarsdrápa*. Eight stanzas and eleven half-stanzas of it are preserved in *Snorra Edda*. One may conclude from these that this poem was composed in honour of a certain chieftain, Ragnarr Sigurðarson. Medieval historians identified him with the famous Danish viking, Ragnarr loðbrók. Scholars of a more recent period, how-

ever, denied that they were one and the same, and it may well be that this is the sounder opinion. It is not at all unlikely, however, that, though he was a Dane, Ragnarr loðbrók may have had a kingdom in Norway. We have little information about him from reliable sources, except that he sailed up the Seine and that his sons waged war in England for twelve years, from 865 to 877.

Most scholars agree that the verses attributed to Bragi are the earliest we have in any of the scaldic metres. They are composed in *dróttkvætt* metre, which is seen to be fully developed, even though the rules followed by Bragi are not as strict as those which we find in those poems which were composed at a later period. Some have assumed that there had been scaldic poets before Bragi whose poems are lost. I doubt whether this is correct. One might perhaps conclude from the sources that Bragi was the originator of the *dróttkvætt* metre and of other metres used by the court poets.

Medieval Icelandic mythologists speak of the god of poetry whom they call Bragi. In spite of the arguments put forward by Jan de Vries¹⁷ and others, there is nothing in the sources to show that the god Bragi was at any time the subject of a cult. He must surely be identical with the poet Bragi, who in the mind of later generations was raised to divine status because he was responsible for this great revolution in metrics.

But if Bragi was the originator of this new art, it is difficult to believe that he had never heard any poems other than those composed in the early Germanic metres. If Bragi lived in western Norway, in the last decades of the ninth century, it is quite possible that he was in contact with Irish poets or even with the poets of the Gall-Ghaedhil.

I do not wish at present to discuss the vocabulary of the scalds, but a few words must nevertheless be said on the subject. As is well known, this differs very greatly from the vocabulary of all other types of Germanic poetry. The difference lies principally in its use of kennings. The scalds were not the first to use ken-

¹⁷ *Altg. Rel.*, II 272 ff.

nings, because they occur in early English poetry and in eddaic poetry. But kennings were perfected in the hands of the scalds and became much more complex and varied than they had previously been. In their use of kennings the scalds use as comparisons not only visible things, as the early English poets did when they called a sword 'ray of battle' or the sun 'the jewel of heaven'. The scalds in their kennings made frequent use of early heroic tales and mythology. Already in the ninth century Bragi called the sea *Leifa lǫnd* 'the lands of Leifi', because Leifi was the king of the sea. In the work of another poet the sea is called *Meita vǫllr* 'the plain of Meiti' and the waves *Meita hliðir* 'the slopes of Meiti'. Other Germanic poets made very little use of kennings of this kind, but one may find examples of them in Irish poems. In *Immram Brain* the waves are called *gabra Lir* 'Ler's horses', while the sea is called *crích Manannáin maic Lir* 'territory of Manannan mac Lir'.¹⁸

In scaldic verse kennings are often *rekit*, that is they are composed not only of two parts but of three or even more. Bragi has many kennings of the type *rekit*. In *Ragnarsdrápa* the shield is called *lauf Leifa landa* 'leaf of the lands of Leifi', where the poet was thinking of the bright shields decorating the gunwale of the long ships. As far as I know, there are no kennings of this type in early English poetry. Neither have I found any unambiguous examples in early Irish poetry. But I think that such kennings might be found in the so-called rhetorics often inserted in Irish tales. These rhetorics or runs have not yet been thoroughly examined and are often unintelligible. In the tale *Tochmarc Emire*, Cú Chulainn is made say to his beloved: *femmir i tig fir adgair búar maige Tethrai*, 'We slept in the house of the man who tends the cattle of the plain of Tethra.' These strange words are later explained. Tethra was the king of the people who were called Fomoiré and so may be regarded as the god of the sea. His plain is the sea. The cattle of that plain are fish, while the man tending

¹⁸ W. Krause gives some examples in *Die Kenning als typische Stilfigur der germanischen und keltischen Dichtersprache* (1930).

them is the fisherman. Such figures of speech remind one of the kennings of the court poets like *Meita vøllr*. If the court poet had spoken of the 'cattle of the plain of Meiti', he would have meant fish.

Some have argued that the Scandinavians understood too little of Irish culture to be influenced by the Irish poets. However, it is well known that the Scandinavians were quick to appreciate the beauty of Irish jewellery and sculpture and that Scandinavian craftsmen were considerably influenced by Irish models. There is also reason to believe that they appreciated Irish poetry. There exists a fragment of a poem which was composed in honour of one Amhlaíbh who was king of the men of Dublin. The name Amhlaíbh is the same as Ólafr and this chieftain was clearly a Scandinavian prince. It is not unlikely that he was that son of the king of Lochlann who came to Ireland in the year 853, but this is only an assumption.

There is an account of an Irish poet called Rumann who came into the fortress of the Scandinavians in Dublin and entertained the people with poetry. At first the vikings refused to pay him the fee to which he was legally entitled under Irish law. Then Rumann asked for one penny from every bad viking and two pennies from every good viking. Since no one wished to be called a bad viking, none of them gave less than two pennies. Then Rumann composed a poem about a storm at sea which the vikings could well appreciate. In this poem there are figures of speech or kennings which could just as well be found in Scandinavian court poetry. I shall quote a few stanzas:¹⁹

Anbthine mór ag muig Lir
 dána tar a hardimlib;
 at-racht gáeth, ran-goin gaim garg
 co tét tar muir mórgelgarb . . .

Is lán ler, is lomnán muir,
 is álainn in etharbruig

¹⁹ See K. Meyer, *Otia Merseiana*, II 79 ff. Cf. R. Flower, *The Irish Tradition* (1947), 51; D. Greene and Frank O'Connor, *A Golden Treasury of Irish Verse* (1967), 126.

Fordath eala forda-tuig
mag mílach cona muintir . . .
glúastar mong mná Manannáin . . .

There is a great tempest on the plain of Ler, bold over its high borders. The wind has risen, rough winter has killed us, and comes to us over the great wild sea . . .

The ocean is full, the sea in flood; beautiful is the palace of the ships . . .

The pallor of the swan has covered the plain of whales and its inhabitants . . .

The hair of Manannan's wife blows loose . . .

This poem is attributed, in the single manuscript in which it has been preserved, to Rumann mac Colmáin who died in the year 747. But scholars are in agreement that the poem is much later and was not composed before the tenth or even the eleventh century. However that may be, the author of the poem may have belonged to that group of poets who taught the Scandinavians to look on poetry as a craft which gave the poet the right to demand great rewards and valuable jewellery.

One can hardly avoid the conclusion that the metres of the scalds first came into use in the later years of the ninth century and that their originators were poets from the west of Norway. If this is so, the earliest scalds belonged to that part of the Scandinavian nations which had closest connections with the Irish. The metres of the scalds differ in many important points from the earlier Germanic metres. Many characteristics might be traced to the sophisticated metres of the Irish *filid*. But the syllabic metres of the Irish were originally derived from those used in Latin popular songs and hymns. Some of those innovations which the Scandinavian court poets adopted may also point to Latin hymns which the Scandinavian poets heard in the British Isles. End-rhyme was probably adopted by the court poets from such Latin poetry.

I have not compared the matter of the Scandinavian poetry or its spirit with the matter and spirit of Irish poetry. The difference

here is great. But I do not think that the Irish taught the court poets of Scandinavia what the matter of poetry should be. The Irish taught them rather how they should compose their poetry. The Irish poems which I have read are for the most part lyrical and delicate. But Scandinavian poems are often stiff and hard. The Irish poets composed their best work about love and the beauty of nature, while the scalds paid little attention to such matters. Nevertheless there are interesting descriptions of love and nature in Scandinavian poetry, as in this stanza by Kormákr:

Heitask hellur fljóta
 hvatt sem korn á vatni,
 enn emk auðspöng ungri
 óþekkr, en bjöð sökva.
 Færask fjöll en stóru
 fræg í djúpan ægi,
 auðs áðr jafnfögr tróða
 alin verði Steingerði.

Finally, I wish to thank those who read the manuscript of this article and commented on it. I would name especially Professor Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Dr Jón Jóhannesson, and Eiríkur Benedikz.

POSTSCRIPT

The above paper was published in Icelandic in *Skírnir* CXXVIII (1954), 31-55. I expressed in it the opinions which I then held on the origins of scaldic verse-forms. These opinions were not new, but were as little fashionable then as they are today. H. Lie, in *Maal og Minne* (1952), 1-92, and other scholars of recent times have seen the scaldic, syllable-counting discipline as a purely native development.

Celtic and Germanic traditions have much in common. To think only of the stories of Sigurðr and Finn: these have so many similarities that they must be related, although it does not seem possible to say that one has influenced the other. In this case, it seems that they are both part of a Celto-Germanic culture, and could have originated at a time when Celts and Germans lived

close together on the Continent. I cannot enter into such general problems in this short note.

The traditional Germanic verse-forms as exemplified in *Beowulf* and in some of the lays of the *Edda* are, in some ways, like the Irish rhythmical forms, such as those published by Kuno Meyer in *Über die älteste irische Dichtung* (1913-14) and *Bruchstücke aus der älteren Lyrik Irlands* (1919). Both the Irish and Germanic forms are rhythmical and alliterative, although the place of the alliterating syllables and their function are not determined in Irish in the same way as they are in Germanic. But in both Irish and Old Norse other forms of poetry are found. In these the syllables are counted more or less strictly, and the line ends in a given form.

C. Watkins recently published a most learned paper (*Celtica* VI, 1963, 194 ff.), suggesting that Irish syllabic forms, with their fixed line-ending, were relics of Indo-European verse-forms. Many students of Irish, on the other hand, have regarded the Irish syllabic forms as 'imitation by vernacular poets of the Latin hymns sung by seventh-century Irish monks' (G. Murphy, *Early Irish Metrics*, 1961, 12).

I am not able to decide between the two conclusions just quoted, but I think it safe to say that the syllable-counting scaldic forms cannot descend from Indo-European, for we have no record of them except in the Scandinavian lands. No examples of poetry in scaldic form older than those of Bragi are preserved, and recent research suggests that Bragi worked in the second half of the ninth century, rather than in the early years of it—see the paper by Jón Jóhannesson referred to in note 16 above.

Most of the verses ascribed to Bragi are in the measure *dróttkvætt*, which is undoubtedly the basis of most scaldic measures and the one most used. Many have maintained, as I have in the paper above, that Bragi was the founder of the scaldic art, but the arguments of the late Jan de Vries (*Ogam* ix, 1957, 13 ff.) suggest that both the diction and the metrical form of Bragi's verses are so sophisticated that he cannot have

been the first of the scaldic poets. But de Vries evidently found the scaldic and Irish verse-forms too close for it to be likely that the two developed independently. On the evidence offered by the archaeologist A. W. Brøgger in his work *Den norske Bosetningen paa Shetland-Orknøylene* (1930; cf. H. Shetelig, *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* I, 1940, 23 ff.) de Vries suggested that there had been peaceful contacts between Norse and Gaelic-speaking peoples before the Viking Age, as early as 750. Influence of Gaelic forms on Norse might well have taken place at that period.

Typical scaldic forms resemble the traditional Germanic in many ways, but differ in certain essentials. In these the scaldic forms generally resemble the Irish, particularly in the fixed syllable count and the concentration on the form in which the line ends. The line-ending contributes much to the rhythm of scaldic poetry, although even more to that of Irish.

Unlike *Beowulf* and the oldest eddaic poems, scaldic poems, like the Irish, are essentially stanzaic, but, while Irish stanzas commonly consist of four lines, those of the scalds consist of eight. But each half-stanza (*helmingr*) is generally complete in syntax; it can, and often does stand alone. It seems, therefore, that the basic scaldic unit is the half-stanza of four lines.

I have appended this note to show that my opinions today are not precisely the same as they were in 1954. I have discussed the problem in closer detail in a book on scaldic poetry, which is not yet published, nor even completed. The present paper was intended to show only one possible approach. It is to be hoped that the subject will be studied by those who are expert in Celtic as well as in Old Norse. Much that I have said may be out of date, and there may be faults which I have overlooked.